

The Fictive Experience of Time

The distinction between utterance and statement within narrative provided an appropriate framework in the last chapter for studying the games with time that result from the division into the time taken to narrate and the time of the things narrated, which itself parallels this distinction. Our analysis of this reflexive temporal structure has shown the necessity for assigning these games with time the aim [*finalité*] of articulating *an experience of time* that would be what was at stake in these games. In doing this we open the field for an investigation in which the problems of narrative configuration border on those of the refiguration of time by narrative. However, this investigation will not for the moment cross the threshold leading from the first problematic to the second, inasmuch as the experience of time at issue here is a fictive experience that has an imaginary world for its horizon, one that remains the world of the text. Only the confrontation between the world of the text and the life-world of the reader will make the problematic of narrative configuration tip over into that of the refiguration of time by narrative.

Despite this restriction, posed as a matter of principle, the notion of the world of the text requires us to "open up"—to return to the expression employed earlier¹—the literary work to an "outside" that it projects before itself and offers to critical appropriation by a reader. This notion of an opening does not contradict that of closure implied by the formal principle of configuration. A work can be at one and the same time closed upon itself with respect to its structure and open onto a world, like a "window" that cuts out a fleeting perspective of a landscape beyond.² This opening consists in the pro-position of a world capable of being inhabited. And in this regard, an inhospitable world, such as that many modern works project, is so only within the same problematic of an inhabitable space. What I am calling here the fictive experience of time is the temporal aspect of this virtual experience of being-in-the-world proposed by the text. It is in this respect that the literary work, escaping its own closure, "relates to . . .," "is directed toward . . .," in short, "is about. . . ." Short of the reception of the text by the reader and the intersection between this fictive experience and the reader's actual experience, the

*Intentional device - temporal structure
of the text
virtual world of being-in-the-world
proposed by text.*

world of the work constitutes what I shall term a transcendence immanent in the text.³

The, at first sight, paradoxical expression "fictive experience" therefore has no function other than designating a projection of the work, capable of intersecting the ordinary experience of action—an experience certainly, but a fictive one, since the work alone projects it.

To illustrate what I am saying, I have chosen three works, *Mrs. Dalloway* by Virginia Woolf, *Der Zauberberg* by Thomas Mann, and *A la recherche du temps perdu* by Marcel Proust. Why this choice?

First, because these three works illustrate the distinction proposed by Mendilow between "tales of time" and "tales about time."⁴ All fictional narratives are "tales of time" inasmuch as the structural transformations that affect the situations and characters take time. However only a few are "tales about time" inasmuch as in them it is the very experience of time that is at stake in these structural transformations. The three works I shall discuss are such tales about time.

Moreover, each of these works explores, in its own way, uncharted modes of discordant concordance, which no longer affect just the narrative composition but also the lived experience of the characters in the narrative. I shall speak of "imaginative variations" to designate these varied figures of discordant concordance, which go far beyond the temporal aspects of everyday experience, whether in the sphere of praxis or of pathos, as I described them in volume 1 under the title of mimesis. These are varieties of temporal experience that only fiction can explore and they are offered to reading in order to refigure ordinary temporality.⁵

Finally, these three works have in common their exploration, within the limits of the fundamental experience of discordant concordance, of the relation of time to eternity, which already in Augustine offered a wide variety of aspects. Literature, here again, proceeds by way of imaginative variations. Each of the three works under consideration, freeing itself in this way from the most linear aspects of time, can, in return, explore the hierarchical levels that form the depth of temporal experience. Fictional narrative thus detects temporalities that are more or less extended, offering in each instance a different figure of recollection, of eternity in or out of time, and, I will add, of the secret relation between eternity and death.

Let us now allow ourselves to be instructed by these three tales about time.

BETWEEN MORTAL TIME AND MONUMENTAL TIME: Mrs. Dalloway

Before beginning my interpretation, I must stress once again the difference between two levels of critical reading with respect to the same work. On the first level, our interest is concentrated on the work's configuration. On the second level, our interest lies in the worldview and the temporal experience that

this configuration projects outside of itself. In the case of *Mrs. Dalloway*, the first type of reading, while not impoverished, is clearly truncated.⁶ If the narrative is configured in the subtle manner I shall describe, this is to allow the narrator—I do not say the author but the narrative voice that makes the work speak and address itself to a reader—to offer the reader an armful of temporal experiences to share. On the other hand, I do not hesitate to admit that it is the narrative configuration of *Mrs. Dalloway*—a quite unique configuration, although one that can easily be situated in the family of “stream of consciousness” novels—that serves as the basis for the experience that its characters have of time, and that the narrative voice of the novel wants to communicate to the reader.

The fictive narrator limits all of the events of the story being told to the span of time between the morning and the evening of a splendid June day in 1923, hence a few years after the end of what was called the Great War. The subtlety of the narrative technique is matched by the simplicity of the story-line. Clarissa Dalloway, a woman of around fifty belonging to upperclass London society, is giving a party that very evening, and the vicissitudes of this gathering will mark the culmination and the closure of the narrative. The emplotment functions to form an ellipse, whose second focal point is the young Septimus Warren Smith, a veteran of the Great War, whose madness leads to suicide a few hours before Clarissa’s party. The knot holding these elements of the plot together consists in having the news of Septimus’s death announced by Dr. Bradshaw, a medical celebrity who belongs to Clarissa’s circle of social acquaintances. The story begins with Clarissa in the morning when she is getting ready to go out to buy flowers for her party and it will leave her at the most critical moment of the evening. Thirty years before, Clarissa had almost married Peter Walsh, a childhood friend whom she expects to see soon, as he is returning from India, where his life has floundered in subordinate occupations and unsuccessful love affairs. Richard, whom Clarissa preferred to Peter in those days and who, since then, has become her husband, is an important man in parliamentary committees, without being a brilliant politician. Other characters frequenting the London social world gravitate around this core of childhood friends. It is important that Septimus not belong to this circle and that the relationship between the fates of Septimus and Clarissa is reached (by narrative techniques I shall speak of below) at a deeper level than the *coup de théâtre*—the unexpected news, midway through the party, of Septimus’s suicide—that allows the plot to reach its culmination.

The narrative technique displayed in *Mrs. Dalloway* is highly subtle. The first procedure I might mention, and the easiest to detect, consists in marking out the passing of the day as it progresses by means of numerous small events. Except for Septimus’s suicide, of course, these sometimes minor events draw the narrative toward its expected end—the party given by Mrs. Dalloway. The list of comings and goings, of incidents and meetings, is long indeed: in the

morning, the Prince of Wales or some other royal figure crosses her path; an airplane skywrites its advertising, tracing out capital letters that are spelled out by the crowd; Clarissa goes home to get her dress ready for the party; Peter Walsh, just back from India, surprises her while she is sewing; after having stirred the ashes of the past, Clarissa kisses him; Peter leaves in tears; he passes through the same places as Clarissa had and comes across the couple, Septimus and Rezia (she is the little Milanese milliner who has become Septimus’s wife); Rezia takes her husband to a first psychiatrist, Dr. Holmes; Richard considers buying a pearl necklace for his wife but chooses roses instead (roses that circulate from one end of the narrative to the other, roses fixed for a moment on the wallpaper of Septimus’s room, after he has been sentenced to a rest home by the medical profession); Richard, too bashful, cannot pronounce the message of love that the roses signify; Miss Kilman, the pious and ugly tutor of Elizabeth, the Dalloway’s daughter, goes shopping with Elizabeth, who leaves her governess in the middle of her chocolate eclair; Septimus, told by Dr. Bradshaw to leave his wife for a clinic in the country, throws himself out of the window; Peter decides to go to the party given by Clarissa; then comes the big scene of Mrs. Dalloway’s party, with Dr. Bradshaw’s news of Septimus’s suicide; Mrs. Dalloway takes the news of the suicide of this young man whom she does not know in a way that determines the tone she herself will give to the termination of the evening, which is also the death of the day. These events, large or small, are punctuated by the tolling of the powerful strokes of Big Ben and other bells in London. I shall show below that the most important meaning of this remainder of the hour is not to be sought at the level of the configuration of the narrative, as if the narrator were limited to helping the readers situate themselves in the narrated time. The strokes of Big Ben have their true place in the experience that the various characters have of time. They belong to the fictive refiguration of time that this work opens out to.

To this first procedure of progressive accumulation is grafted another, even more widely recognized one. As the narrative is pulled ahead by everything that happens—however small it may be—in the narrated time, it is at the same time pulled backward, delayed so to speak, by ample excursions into the past, which constitute so many events in thought, interpolated in long sequences, between the brief spurts of action. For the Dalloway’s circle, these reported thoughts—“he thought,” “thought she”—are in the main a return to their childhood at Bourton and especially to everything that may be related to a lost love, to the refusal of a marriage between Clarissa and Peter. For Septimus and Rezia, similar plunges into the past are a desperate rumination on the series of events that led to a disastrous marriage and to utter misfortune. These long sequences of silent thoughts—or what amounts to the same thing, of internal discourse—not only constitute flashbacks that, paradoxically, make the narrated time advance by delaying it, they hollow out from within

the instant of the event in thought, they amplify from within the moments of narrated time, so that the total interval of the narrative, despite its relative brevity, seems rich with an implied immensity.⁷ Along the line of this day, whose advance is punctuated by the strokes of Big Ben, the fits of memory, the calculations by which each character attempts to guess the conjectures the others are making about his or her appearance, thoughts, secrets—these form a series of loops that gives its specific distension to the narrated time's extension.⁸ So the art of fiction here consists in weaving together the world of action and that of introspection, of mixing together the sense of everydayness and that of the inner self.

For a literary criticism more attentive to the depiction of character than to the exploration of narrated time and, through this, the time lived by the characters in the narrative, there is no doubt that this plunge into the past along with the incessant weighing of souls that the characters practice on one another, contribute along with the actions described from the outside to reconstruct from within the characters in their present state. By giving a temporal depth to the narrative, the entanglement of the narrated present with the remembered past confers a psychological depth on the characters without, however, giving them a stable identity, so discordant are the glimpses the characters have of one another and of themselves. The reader is left holding the scattered pieces to a great game of character identification, but the solution to it escapes the reader as much as it does the characters in the narrative. The attempt to identify the characters certainly corresponds to the promptings of the fictive narrator, when this voice leaves the characters to their interminable quest.⁹

Another procedure that belongs to the narrative technique used in *Mrs. Dalloway*—a procedure not quite so obvious as the preceding one—also deserves our attention. The narrator—to whom the reader readily grants the exorbitant privilege of knowing the thoughts of all the characters from the inside—is provided with the ability *to move* from one stream of consciousness to another, by having the characters meet in the same places (London streets, a public park), perceive the same sounds, be present at the same incidents (the Prince of Wales's car passing by, the airplane flying overhead, etc.). It is in this way that the story of Septimus, completely foreign to the Dalloway's circle, is incorporated for the first time into the narrative field. Septimus, like Clarissa, heard the rumors stemming from the royal incident (we shall see later the importance this takes on in the view the various protagonists have of time itself). By resorting to this same process the narrator jumps from Peter's ruminations on his lost love of yesteryear to the fatal exchange of thoughts between Rezia and Septimus, going over the disaster of their own union. The unity of place, the face-to-face discussion on the bench in the same park, is equivalent to the unity of a single instant onto which the narrator grafts the extension of a span of memory.¹⁰ The procedure is made believable by the resonance-effect that

compensates for the rupture-effect created by the jump from one stream of consciousness to another: over and done with, leaving no possibility of return, is Peter's love of yesteryear; over, and without any possible future, is also the marriage of Rezia and Septimus. We later move from Peter to Rezia through a similar transition, by way of the harpings of the old invalid woman, singing of faded loves. A bridge is built between these souls both through the continuity of place and the reverberation of an internal discourse in another person. On another occasion, the description of lovely clouds in the June sky allows the narrative to bridge the gap that separates the thoughts of young Elizabeth, returning from her escapade after escaping Miss Kilman, and Septimus's stream of consciousness as he lies on his bed under the order of the psychiatrists. A point in space, a pause in time form the footbridges between two temporalities foreign to each other.

That these procedures, characteristic of the temporal configuration, serve to bring about the sharing of a temporal experience by the narrator and the reader, or rather of a whole range of temporal experiences, therefore serves *to refigure time itself in our reading*—this is what it is now important to show by penetrating into the tale about time that runs through *Mrs. Dalloway*.

Chronological time is, quite clearly, represented in the fiction by the striking of Big Ben and the other bells and clocks, as they ring out the hours. What is important is not this reminder of the hour, striking at the same time for everyone, however, but the relation that the various protagonists establish with these marks of time. The variations in this relation, depending on the character and the occasion, themselves constitute the fictive temporal experience that the narrative constructs with such extreme care in order to be convincing to the reader.

Big Ben strikes for the first time when Clarissa, on her way to the deluxe shops of Westminster, goes over in her mind the breakup of her idyll with Peter, without realizing yet that he is back. The important thing is what Big Ben's striking signifies for her at this moment: "There! Out it boomed. First a warning, musical; then the hour irrevocable. The leaden circles dissolved in the air" (p. 5). This sentence, which is repeated three times in the course of the narrative, will of itself recall the sameness of clock time for everyone. The hour irrevocable? And yet in this June morning, the irrevocable is not burdensome; it gives new impetus to the joy of being alive, in the freshness of each moment and the expectation of the brilliant evening to come. But a shadow passes. If Peter were to come back, would he not call her again, with his tender irony, "The perfect hostess"? Thus passes internal time, pulled back by memory and thrust ahead by expectation. *Distentio animi*: "she always had the feeling that it was very, very dangerous to live even one day" (p. 11). Strange Clarissa, symbol of the preoccupation forged by the world's vanity, concerned about the image of herself that she displays for the interpretation of

others, on the watch for her own changing moods and, above all, *courageously* taken with life despite its precariousness and its duplicity. For her the refrain of Shakespeare's *Cymbeline* sings and will sing again in the course of the narrative:

Fear no more the heat o' the sun
Nor the furious winter's rages.¹¹

But before we look at the other occasions when Big Ben strikes, it is important to note that the official time with which the characters are confronted is not only this time of clocks but all that is in complicity with it. In agreement with it is everything that, in the narrative, evokes monumental history, to use Nietzsche's expression, and to begin with, the admirable marble decor of the imperial capital (the "real" place, in this fiction, of all the events and their internal reverberations). This monumental history, in its turn, secretes what I will venture to call a "monumental time," of which chronological time is but the audible expression. To this monumental time belong the figures of authority and power that form the counterweight to the living times experienced by Clarissa and Septimus; of the time that, because of his severity, will lead Septimus to suicide, and that, because of her pride, will push Clarissa to confront life head-on.¹² However the highest authority-figures are the horrible doctors who torment poor Septimus, lost in his suicidal thoughts, to the point of pushing him to his death. For what indeed is madness for Sir William Bradshaw, that eminent medical personage elevated even higher by his knight-hood, other than "not having a sense of proportion"? (p. 146). "Proportion, divine proportion, Sir William's goddess" (p. 150). It is this sense of proportion that sets his entire professional and social life within monumental time. The narrator is not afraid to add to these authority figures, so consonant with official time, religion as it is embodied by Miss Kilman, the ugly, hateful, pious tutor who has stolen the affection of Elizabeth away from her mother, before the young girl escapes and acquires a time of her own, with its promises and its dangers. "But Proportion has a sister, less smiling, more formidable. . . . Conversion is her name" (p. 151).

Clock time, the time of monumental history, the time of authority-figures—the same time! Dominated by this monumental time, more complex than simple chronological time, the hours are heard to ring out—or better, to strike—throughout the course of the narrative.

Big Ben sounds a second time, just when Clarissa has presented her daughter to Peter.¹³ "The sound of Big Ben striking the half-hour struck out between them with extraordinary vigour, as if a young man, strong, indifferent, inconsiderate, were swinging dumb-bells this way and that" (p. 71). It is not, like the first time, a reminder of the inexorable but of the introduction—"between them"—of the incongruous. "The leaden circles dissolved in the air," the narrator repeats. For whom, then, has the half-hour sounded? "Remember my

party tonight," Mrs. Dalloway calls after Peter as he goes away rhythmically modulating these words to the striking of Big Ben. Only half past eleven, he thinks. Then the bells of St. Margaret's join in, friendly, hospitable, like Clarissa. Joyous, then? Only until the sound as it dies away brings to mind Clarissa's old illness, and until the strength of the final stroke becomes the death knoll tolling her imagined death. What resources fiction has for following the subtle variations between the time of consciousness and chronological time!

Big Ben rings out a third time (p. 142). The narrator has noon strike once for Septimus and Rezia on their way to give themselves up to Dr. Holmes, whose hidden relation to official time has already been stated, and for Clarissa spreading out her green dress on her bed. For each one, for no one, "the leaden circles dissolved in the air" (*ibid.*). Shall we say once again that the hour is the same for all? Yes, from outside; no, from inside. Only fiction, precisely, can explore and bring to language this divorce between worldviews and their irreconcilable perspectives on time, a divorce that undermines public time.

The clock strikes again, half past one; this time we hear the clocks in the wealthy business district. To Rezia in tears, they "counselled submission, upheld authority, and pointed out in chorus the supreme advantages of a sense of proportion" (pp. 154–55).

Big Ben strikes three o'clock for Richard and Clarissa. For the former, full of gratitude for the miracle that his marriage with Clarissa seems to mean to him, "Big Ben was beginning to strike, first the warning, musical, then the hour, irrevocable" (p. 177). An ambiguous message—a punctuation of happiness or of time lost in vain preoccupations. As for Clarissa in her drawing room, absorbed in the problems of her invitations, "the sound of the bell flooded the room with its melancholy wave" (p. 178). But here is Richard, before her, holding out flowers. Roses, yet again roses. "Happiness is this, is this, he thought" (p. 180).

When Big Ben strikes the next half hour, it is to punctuate the solemnity, the miracle, the miracle of the old woman glimpsed by Clarissa across the way, framed in her window, then withdrawing back into her room; it is as if the blows struck by the huge bell were reimmersing Clarissa in a domain of peacefulness where neither the vain regret of the love Peter once sought, nor the overbearing religiousness professed by Miss Kilman are able to penetrate. But two minutes after Big Ben, another bell rings, and its light sounds, messengers of futility, are mixed with the final majestic echoes of the bells of Big Ben, pronouncing the Law.

When the clock strikes six it is to inscribe within public time the supremely private act of Septimus's suicide. "The clock was striking—one, two, three: how sensible the sound was; compared with all this thumping and whispering; like Septimus himself. She [Rezia] was falling asleep. But the clock went on striking, four, five, six" (p. 227). The first three bells, like something con-

crete, solid, in the tumult of whispers—the last three, like a flag raised in honor of the dead on the battlefield.

The day advances, pulled ahead by the arrow of desire and expectation shot off at the beginning of the narrative (this evening's party to be given by Mrs. Dalloway) and pulled back by the incessant retreat into memory that, paradoxically, punctuates the inexorable advance of the dying day.

The narrator has Big Ben strike the hour one last time when the announcement of Septimus's suicide throws Clarissa into the contradictory thoughts I shall speak of below. And again the same phrase returns: "the leaden circles dissolved in the air." For everyone, for every sort of mood, the noise is the same, but the hour is not simply the noise that inexorable time makes in passing. . . .

We must not stop with a simplistic opposition between clock time and internal time, therefore, but must consider the variety of relations between the concrete temporal experience of the various characters and monumental time. The variations on the theme of this relation lead fiction well beyond the abstract opposition we have just referred to and make of it, for the reader, a powerful means of detecting the infinitely varied way of combining the perspectives of time that speculation by itself fails to mediate.

These variations constitute a whole range of "solutions" here, the two extremes of which are depicted by the deep agreement between monumental time and the figures of authority epitomized by Dr. Bradshaw, and by the "terror of history"—to use Mircea Eliade's expression—represented through Septimus. Other temporal experiences, that of Clarissa first and foremost, and that of Peter Walsh to a lesser degree, are ordered in relation to these poles, following their greater or lesser kinship with the primary experience that the narrator sets up as a standard for the entire exploration of temporal experience: the experience of the mortal discordance between personal time and monumental time, of which Septimus is both the hero and the victim. We must therefore start from this pole of radical discordance.

Septimus's "lived experience" abundantly confirms that no gulf would have opened up for him between the time "struck" by Big Ben and the horror of history that leads to his death, if monumental history, everywhere present in London, and the various figures of authority, epitomized in the medical profession, did not give to clock time the train of power that transforms time into a radical threat. Septimus, too, saw the royal car pass by; he heard the murmurs of respect from the crowd, just as he perceived the airplane flying overhead with its trail of advertising—all of which only makes him cry, the beauty of the places making everything seem terrible. Horror! Terror! These two words sum up for him the antagonism existing between the two temporal perspectives, just as it exists between himself and others—"That eternal loneliness" (p. 37)—and between himself and life. If these experiences, inex-

pressible at their limit, do nevertheless attain internal language, it is because they have encountered a verbal complicity in the reading of Aeschylus, Dante, and Shakespeare, a reading that has transmitted to Septimus only a message of universal meaninglessness. At least these books are on his side, protesting against monumental time and all the oppressive and repressive powers of medical science. Precisely because they are on his side, these books create an additional screen between himself, others, and life. One passage in *Mrs. Dalloway* says it all. This is when Rezia, the little milliner from Milan, lost in London where she has followed her husband, utters, "It is time." "The word 'time' split its husk; poured its riches over him; and from his lips fell like shells, like shavings from a plane, without his making them, hard, white, imperishable words, and flew to attach themselves to their places in an ode to Time; an immortal ode to Time" (p. 105). Time has recovered its mythical grandeur, its somber reputation of destroying rather than generating. The horror of time, bringing back from the dead the ghost of his war comrade, Evans, rising up from the depths of monumental history—the Great War—at the heart of the imperial city. Note the narrator's grating humor: "'I will tell you the time,' said Septimus, very slowly, very drowsily, smiling mysteriously.¹⁴ As he sat smiling at the dead man in the grey suit the quarter struck—the quarter to twelve. And that is being young, Peter Walsh thought as he passed them" (p. 106).

The two extremes of temporal experience confront each other in the scene of Septimus's suicide. Dr. Bradshaw—Sir William!—has decided that Rezia and Septimus must be separated for the good of the patient. "Holmes and Bradshaw were on him!" (p. 223). What is worse, "human nature" has pronounced a guilty verdict on him, a death sentence. In the papers that Septimus asks be burned and that Rezia tries to save are his "Odes to Time" (p. 224). His time, henceforth, has no common measure with that of the holders of medical knowledge, their sense of proportion, their verdicts, their power to inflict suffering. Septimus throws himself out the window.

The question arises whether, beyond the horror of history that it expresses, Septimus's death is not charged by the narrator with another meaning that would make time the negative side of eternity. In his madness, Septimus is the bearer of a revelation that grasps in time the obstacle to a vision of cosmic unity and in death the way of reaching this salvific meaning. In any event, the narrator did not want to make this revelation the "message" of the narrative. By connecting revelation and madness, the narrator leaves the reader uncertain with respect to the very sense of Septimus's death.¹⁵ Moreover, it is to Clarissa, as I shall state below, that the narrator gives the task of legitimizing, although only up to a certain point, this redemptive sense of Septimus's death. We must therefore never lose sight of the fact that what makes sense is the juxtaposition of Septimus's and Clarissa's experience of time.¹⁶ Considered separately, Septimus's worldview expresses the agony of a soul for whom

monumental time is unbearable. The relation that death can have with eternity, in addition to this, intensifies this agony (in accordance with the interpretation of the relation of eternity to time that I proposed in my reading of Augustine's *Confessions*).¹⁷ It is therefore in relation to this insurmountable fissure [*faille*] opened up between the monumental time of the world and the mortal time of the soul that the temporal experiences of each of the other characters are ordered and, with this, their way of handling the relation between the two sides of this opening. I shall limit myself to Peter Walsh and Clarissa, although there is much that could be said about other imaginative variations carried out by the narrator.

Peter, his former love lost forever—"it was over!"—his present life in ruins, is made to mutter: "the death of the soul" (p. 88). If he does not have Clarissa's lively self-confidence to help him spring back, he does possess, to help him survive, a certain levity. "It was awful, he cried, awful, awful! Still, the sun was hot. Still, one got over things. Still, life had a way of adding day to day. Still. . . still. . . Peter Walsh laughed out" (pp. 97–98). For if age does not weaken passions, "one has gained—at last!—the power which adds the supreme flavour to existence,—the power of taking hold of experience, of turning it round, slowly, in the light" (p. 119).

Clarissa is, quite clearly, the heroine of the novel. It is the narrative of her actions and internal discourses that sets the boundaries for the narrated time, but, even more, it is her temporal experience contrasted with that of Septimus, of Peter, and of the figures of authority that constitutes what is at stake in the game with time, as it is set out by the narrative techniques characteristic of *Mrs. Dalloway*.

Her social life, her acquaintance with authority-figures make part of her being to the side of monumental time. Will she not, this very evening, take her place at the top of her staircase, like the queen welcoming her guests to Buckingham Palace? Is she not a figure of authority in other people's eyes, by the way she holds herself straight and erect? Seen by Peter, is she not a fragment of the British empire (p. 116)? Does not Peter's tender and cruel expression define her through and through, "The perfect hostess"?¹⁸ And yet the narrator wants to communicate to the reader the sense of a deep kinship between Clarissa and Septimus, whom she has never seen, whose name she does not even know. The same horror dwells in her, but unlike Septimus she will confront it, sustained by an indestructible love for life. The same terror: just evoking the draining of life from Mrs. Bruton's face—the woman who did not invite her to lunch with her husband!—is enough to remind her how much "she feared the time itself" (p. 44). What maintains her fragile equilibrium between mortal time and the time of resolution in the face of death—if we may dare to apply to her this major existential category of *Being and Time*—is her love of life, of perishable beauty, of changing light, her passion for "the falling drop"

(p. 54). Whence her astonishing power to rebound from memory, to plunge "into the very heart of the moment" (*ibid.*).

The way in which Clarissa receives the news of the suicide of this unknown young man is the occasion for the narrator to situate Clarissa on a crest between the two extremes spanned by the narrative's range of imaginative variations on temporal experience. This we guessed long ago: Septimus is Clarissa's "double"; in a certain way, he dies in her place.¹⁹ As for Clarissa, she redeems his death by continuing to live.²⁰ The news of the suicide, thrown out for conversation right in the middle of the evening, first provokes in Clarissa this thought, at once frivolous and in complicity: "Oh! thought Clarissa, in the middle of my party, here's death," (p. 279). But deeper within herself is the unsurpassable certainty that by losing life this young man saved the highest sense of death. "Death was defiance. Death was an attempt to communicate; people feeling the impossibility of reaching the centre which, mystically, evaded them; closeness drew apart, rapture faded, one was alone. There was an embrace in death" (p. 281). Here the narrator joins together in a single narrative voice, the narrator's own, Septimus's voice, and Clarissa's. It is clearly Septimus's voice that says, as an echo through Clarissa's, "Life is made intolerable; they make life intolerable, men like that" (*ibid.*). It is through the eyes of Septimus that she sees Dr. Bradshaw as "obscurely evil, without sex or lust, extremely polite to women, but capable of some indescribable outrage—forcing your soul, that was it" (*ibid.*). But Clarissa's time is not Septimus's time. Her party will not end in disaster. A "sign" placed once again by the narrator will help Clarissa to link terror and love of life in the pride of facing up. This sign is the gesture of the old woman across the way, opening her curtains, moving away from the window, and going to bed "quite quietly"—a figure of serenity, suddenly associated with the refrain of *Cymbeline*, "Fear no more the heat o' the sun." Earlier that same morning, we recall, Clarissa, stopping at a shop window, had seen the volume of Shakespeare open to these verses. She had asked herself, "What was she trying to recover? What image of white dawn in the open country" (p. 12)? Later in the day, in a moment of peaceful return to the reality of time, Septimus was to find some words of consolation in these same verses: "Fear no more, says the heart in the body; fear no more. He was not afraid. At every moment Nature signified some laughing hint like that gold spot which went round the wall—there, there, there—her determination to show, by . . . standing close up to breathe through her hollowed hands Shakespeare's words, her meaning" (pp. 211–12). When Clarissa repeats the verse, toward the end of the book, she repeats it as Septimus did, "with a sense of peace and reassurance."²¹

Thus the book ends. Septimus's death, understood and in some way shared, gives to the instinctive love that Clarissa holds for life a tone of defiance and of resolution. "He made her feel the beauty; made her feel the fun. But she

must go back. She must assemble" (p. 284). Vanity? Arrogance? The perfect hostess? Perhaps. At this point, the voice of the narrator merges with that of Peter, who, at this final moment of the narrative, becomes for the reader the most trustworthy voice; "What is this terror? What is this ecstasy? he thought to himself. What is it that fills me with extraordinary excitement? It is Clarissa, he said. For there she was" (p. 296).

The voice says simply, "For there she was." The force of this presence is the gift of the dead man to Clarissa.²²

Overall, may we speak of a single experience of time in *Mrs. Dalloway*? No, insofar as the destinies of the characters and their worldviews remain juxtaposed; yes, insofar as the proximity between the "caves" visited constitutes a sort of underground network that is the experience of time in *Mrs. Dalloway*. This experience of time is neither that of Clarissa nor that of Septimus; it is neither that of Peter nor that of any other character. Instead, it is suggested to the reader by the reverberation—an expression Bachelard liked to borrow from E. Minkowski—of one solitary experience in another solitary experience. It is this network, taken as a whole, that is the experience of time in *Mrs. Dalloway*. This experience, in turn, confronts, in a complex and unstable relationship, monumental time, itself resulting from all the complicities between clock time and the figures of authority.²³

DER ZAUBERBERG

That *The Magic Mountain* is a novel about time is too obvious for me to have to insist upon the fact.²⁴ It is much more difficult to say in what sense it is one. To begin, let us limit ourselves to the most evident features that give *The Magic Mountain* the overall definition of *Zeitroman*.

First of all, abolishing the sense of measurement of time is the major feature of the way the guests at the Berghof, the Davos sanatorium, exist and live. From the beginning to the end of the novel, this effacing of chronological time is clearly underscored by the contrast between "those up here," acclimatized to this beyond-time, and "those down below"—those of the flat-land—whose occupations follow the rhythm of the calendar and of clocks. The spatial opposition reduplicates and reinforces the temporal opposition.

Next, the story-line, which is relatively simple, is punctuated by several comings and goings between those down below and those up above, and this dramatizes the bewitchment of the place. Hans Castorp's arrival constitutes the first event of this sort. This young engineer in his early thirties from Hamburg—a flat-land if ever there was one—comes to visit his cousin, Joachim, who has been in treatment for more than six months at the Berghof. His initial intention is to stay only three weeks in this strange place. Found to be ill by Dr. Behrens, the sinister and clownish director of the institution, Hans Castorp becomes, in his turn, one of the guests at the Berghof. The departure of

Joachim, who returns to military life, his subsequent return to the sanatorium to die there, in his turn, the abrupt departure of Madame Chauchat—the central character in the amorous adventure that is interwoven with the tale about time—after the decisive episode of "Walpurgis-night," her sudden return in the company of Mynheer Peeperkorn—all these arrivals and departures constitute so many points of rupture, trials, and questioning in an adventure that, for the most part, takes place in the spatial and temporal seclusion of the Berghof. Hans Castorp himself will stay there seven years, until the "thunderbolt" of the declaration of war in 1914 tears him away from the bewitchment of the magic mountain. But the irruption of great history will return him to the time of those down below only to hand him over to the "feast of death" that is war. The unfolding of the narrative in its episodic aspect, therefore, makes us tend to see in Hans Castorp's confrontation with abolished time the main thread of the narrative in *The Magic Mountain*.

The narrative technique employed in the work confirms, in turn, the characterization of the novel as a *Zeitroman*. The most visible procedure concerns the accent placed on the relation between the time of narration and the narrated time.²⁵

The division into seven chapters covers a chronological span of seven years. But the relation between the length of time narrated by each chapter, and the time taken to narrate it, measured by the number of pages, is not proportional. Chapter 1 devotes 15 pages to "the arrival." Chapter 2 constitutes a return through past time up to the moment when the decision is made to undertake the fatal journey; I shall discuss its meaning below. Chapter 3 devotes 54 pages to the first complete day there (the day following Hans's arrival). After this, the 89 pages of Chapter 4 suffice to cover the first three weeks, the exact interval of time that Hans Castorp intended to stay at the Berghof. The first seven months require the 160 pages of Chapter 5. The 196 pages of Chapter 6 cover one year and nine months. The remaining four and a half years take up the 175 pages of Chapter 7. These numerical relations are more complex than they appear. On the one hand, the *Erzählzeit* continually diminishes in relation to the *erzählte Zeit*. On the other hand, the stretching out of the chapters, combined with this abbreviation of the narrative, creates a perspectival effect, essential to the communication of the major experience, the hero's internal debate over his loss of the sense of time. To be perceived, this perspectival effect requires a cumulative reading that allows the totality of the work to remain present in each of its developments. In fact, due to the length of the work, only by rereading can we reconstitute this perspective.

These considerations on the length of the narrative lead us to a final argument in favor of interpreting *The Magic Mountain* as a *Zeitroman*. This argument is in a sense the most decisive. But, at the same time, it throws us into the very heart of the confusion that the reader experiences when he or she wonders in what sense and at what price this novel is indeed a *Zeitroman*. We