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Critiques of Normative Temporality by Twentieth-Century Women Writers

Simen Stenersen

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Department of Literature, Area Studies and
European Languages, Faculty of Humanities

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Abstract

This thesis explores the progression of critical literary discourse on women's temporalities in the twentieth century by women writers. It does so through analysis of three novels, namely Edith Wharton's *The House of Mirth* (1905), Virginia Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway* (1925) and Penelope Lively's *Moon Tiger* (1987). These authors critiqued the oppressive demands placed on women under the dominant model of "normative time" as well as the inevitability of its dominance. They did this by exposing falsehoods and injustices in its logics, and later by suggesting alternative models. I propose that the novels collectively exemplify a century-long process of emancipation from normative time and suggest a dialogical relationship between the three texts, wherein later writers respond to and learn from their predecessors. The primary critical theories used in the thesis are Jack Halberstam and Elizabeth Freeman's respective conceptions of queer time, and feminist theory by Julia Kristeva. The thesis' framework for understanding and analyzing literary time is based on the works of Gérard Genette and Joseph Hillis Miller.

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1. Introduction

Thesis purpose and structure

In this introductory chapter I will establish the purpose and structure of the thesis, introduce the chosen primary texts, and finally present the thesis' theoretical foundations. To start, the purpose of the thesis is to examine how women writers in the twentieth century responded to the limited futures available to them by critiquing existing models of temporality and by developing alternatives. I analyze three novels that make different but connected critiques of conventional temporality as it entailed to Anglo-American upper-class women throughout the 1900s. I have chosen three novels that I see as building on each other, and that in concert exemplify the development of writing on women's temporalities over the chosen period of time. I chose this particular scope because it covers exciting developments in both feminist history and in literary experimentation. The structure for the main part of the thesis follows from the theme of progression, as each text is analyzed in turn in chronological order, before a brief conclusion follows. First, however, I will now introduce the primary texts and then present key theory.

Primary texts

We start at the dawn of the twentieth century, which Elaine Showalter identifies as a transitional period into modernism in both women's history and women's literature. Here, authors "struggled with the problem of going beyond the allowable limits and breaking through the available histories and stories for women" (Showalter 135). This characterization certainly holds true for the first object of analysis, Edith Wharton's 1905 novel *The House of Mirth*, which examines the devastating consequences of women's socially-imposed temporal limitations. Main character Lily Bart's steady descent into destitution and death is mirrored by the novel's uncompromising linear time sense. I read *The House of Mirth* partly as a response to the temporality imposed on women by the literary tradition of the "marriage plot," which dominated popular literature by and for women in the 19th century. Wharton delivers a scathing critique of New York high society's cruelty and frivolity and of dominant, harmful myths regarding women's experience of time. Though she offers no alternative temporalities, Wharton exposes flaws and injustice in the dominant temporal regime, setting the stage for later rebellions and suggesting more sustainable ways for women to live in linearity.

Published twenty years later, the next novel is Virginia Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway*, which through its alternative time sense comes much closer to "going beyond" the limits of women's temporal destinies. Here, we follow rich housewife Clarissa Dalloway as she prepares for and hosts a party. The plot is minimal, as the novel above all is a character study that seeks to capture the wholeness of its protagonist beyond reductive and limiting assumptions and labels. The heroine ultimately remains subject to normative time, but fields a quiet sort of resistance to its influence. Where *The House of Mirth* ends in Lily's tragic death, Clarissa's connections to her freer past and an adolescent queer romance lets her find respite from oppressive normativity and live a contented, partly liberated life.

In the last novel examined, Penelope Lively's *Moon Tiger*, we see the earlier writers' struggles with temporality resolved. Main character Claudia Hampson's autobiographical narrative captures the multilateral and nonlinear nature of her own experience of time. A famous historian on her deathbed, Claudia actively engages with the epistemology of time and explicitly creates her very own model of temporality. She orders and shapes the temporality of her life's story according to personal experiences and values, rather than social mores and conventions. Its radical temporal model antiquates previous barriers and allows any number of stories to be told.

Time in Literature

Writing about time

Writing about time can be difficult. As literary critic J. Hillis Miller says in *Time In Literature*, the sort of time we are concerned with in literature is typically the subjective experience of time, for which there is no precise measuring nor describing**.** Yet few if any authors wish to "fix" this problem by constructing a decisive framework. Where scientists and philosophers who work with time may seek to determine a singular and universal blueprint, each literary work has a different *time sense* (Miller 87), building a unique literary model that approximates the real experience of lived time. Literary time can be bent, broken, and represented according to the desires of the author. This propensity for subjectivity and flexibility makes literary time particularly suitable for creative expression for authors and analysis for readers. Yet, both conceptualizing and discussing time presents a linguistic problem. Often, time is communicated indirectly and vaguely through metaphors like spatial travel or changing weather, or quantitatively in terms like hours and days. In fact, according to Miller, no literal words as such exist for subjective time (87-88).

To discuss the particulars and significance of a given model of literary time, a prerequisite is that its form and structure is properly understood. It is for this reason that I have elected to employ the theory and terms found in Gérard Genette's *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method* when analyzing the three novels' formal temporal structures. Since literary time is complex and abstract, a specialized terminology is necessary to discuss it in a comprehensive and meaningful fashion. In *Narrative Discourse,* Genette presents just the right tools for the job. Firstly, he makes a simple but crucial distinction between story-time and narrative-time, where the former refers to the story being told ("narrative content") and the latter to the text itself (27). Often, events in the story and the narrative have different orderings. By this we mean that an event that takes place later in the chronology of the story's time may appear earlier in the physical text, or vice-versa. Genette labels such discordance between the two orders of time "anachronies," of which there are two types: analepses wherein the narrative moves backwards in time relative to the current time in the story, and prolepses, where the narrative details an event that takes place later in the time of the story (36-37).

Anachronies are defined as such based on their position relative to each text's "first level," meaning the point in story time from which the narrative time makes its first divergence and to which it ultimately returns. In *Mrs Dalloway,* this is the day of the party and in *Moon Tiger* it is the span of time in which dying Claudia lies in bed at the hospital, as it is from these temporal moments all departures emanate. Notably, both of these first levels take place at the terminus of each texts' story-time, meaning that the majority of anachronies discussed in this thesis are analepses. However, anachronies can and do relate to each other in a multitude of ways, forming complicated networks as we shall later see in *Moon Tiger*.

Normative time and alternatives

Though they do it in very different ways, the authors discussed in this essay each critique the same overarching temporal regime. Elizabeth Freeman in "Time Binds, or, Erotohistoriography" explains how the prevailing understanding of time, at levels small and large, is in fact not as inevitable as it often appears, but instead a result of social engineering by capitalist and patriarchal forces (57). Understanding time as linear and unilateral, and scheduling it according to markers like calendars, clocks, births and deaths may appear natural, but in truth these markers are just so deeply ingrained in peoples' lives that they are mistakenly believed to be inherent to human nature**.** The imperialist-capitalist-patriarchal model of time that dominates modern society has been named and modeled in many different ways, but is in this thesis referred to as "normative time" to emphasize the temporal regime's normative-prescriptive aspect.

Jack Halberstam's "Queer Temporalities and Postmodern Geographies" is also important to this thesis. This text is useful not only for its formulation of alternative temporalities, but because it also gives us practical terms with which to describe the dominant system. Halberstam provides particularly elucidating insight in his three-pronged analysis of the significant temporal structures of normative time. First, Halberstam names the pressures of heterosexual family-making "the time of reproduction." And on the day-do-day micro-level, Halberstam describes "family time" as "the normative scheduling of daily life that accompanies the practice of child rearing" (367). The third and final element in his model is "the time of inheritance," which refers to both how "values, wealth, goods and morals" pass through generations as well as how the family unit connects to the nation's past and future (367). Though there are of course significant social differences from *The House of Mirth*'s publication in 1905 to Halberstam's writing in 2005, the predominant logic described in the article is largely the same then and now, only arguably more severe in its reach and power as we go further back in time. We will later see how all three structures feature in the three novels, though they take different forms. Finally, note that Halberstam writes from a branch of queer study that sees sexual identity as non-essential to queerness. However, other theories on queer temporalities in which sexuality *is* significant will be employed in the discussion of *Mrs Dalloway*, wherein the intersection of sexuality and temporality plays a larger role.

Having described the prevailing model, then, what is the alternative? For Halberstam, alternative temporalities are defined by their ability to "[allow] their participants to believe that their futures can be imagined according to logics that lie outside of those paradigmatic markers of life experience - namely, birth, marriage, reproduction, and death" (365). This is a broad definition in line with his views on queerness, wherein nonnormativity in whatever form is a marker of resistance to the dominant, and thus of queerness. While *The House of Mirth* simply critiques normative time, the other two novels' time senses run counter to the logics of normative time, thus formulating alternative (queer) temporalities according to such a definition.

Elizabeth Freeman presents a specific model of alternative temporarily called erotohistoriography, wherein time is located in the body rather than the mind and travels according to logics other than that of the dominant temporal regime. Freeman argues that “pleasurable relations between bodies … exceed the present” and produce a distinct, nonnormative time consciousness (58-59). This model will be applied to both novels that suggest alternative temporalities, that is *Mrs Dalloway* and *Moon Tiger*. The supposed binary opposition of “mind” and “body,” and its connection to time, is a consistent motif throughout the thesis that figures heavily into my analysis.

Freeman and Halberstam are considered queer writers, but feminist theory also plays a substantial role in this thesis. Since normative time is defined by men and heavily patriarchal (Freeman), critique of normative time naturally constitutes critique of the patriarchy as well. In fact, what I call normative time is often labelled “patriarchal” or even “male” time. My thesis concerns the intersection of temporality and feminism but will necessarily oscillate between the two rather than stay perfectly in the middle. Formulations of “women’s time” have existed for centuries, based either on a belief that genders inherently experience time differently, or that culturally-determined gender roles impact temporal possibilities. For discourse on women and time as well as feminisms in general, I rely primarily on Julia Kristeva’s “Women’s Time,” which in essence is a history of twentieth-century feminism with an emphasis on time. According to Kristeva, feminists in the first half of the century fought to gain a place in masculine linear time and focused heavily on sociopolitics. A second phase of feminism in the latter half instead seeks to dismantle linearity and focuses more on for instance language and epistemology rather than politics (19-20). This is a development we will see reflected in my selected novels. Kristeva also presents her own bipartite epistemological account of women’s temporalities, wherein she sees women’s time as marked one the one hand by repeating “cyclical time,” and on the other by a non-linear and infinite “monumental time” (16-17).

2. *The House of Mirth* (1905)

2.0 Chapter Introduction

In an oft-quoted phrase from her autobiography *A Backward Glance*, Wharton writes regarding her inspirations for the 1905 novel *The House of Mirth* that “a frivolous society can acquire dramatic significance only through what its frivolity destroys” (130). In this chapter I will show how *The House of Mirth* can be read as a critique of not only this particular high-society’s lethal frivolity, but of normative time’s oppressive effects on women. In *The House of Mirth*, we follow turn of the twentieth-century New York pseudo-aristocrat Lily Bart as she gradually loses social standing, material wealth and ultimately her life to the unrelenting pressures of a cynical and demanding society. The model of temporality used in the novel is strictly linear, as both story time and narrative time follow Lily aged 29 until her death in her thirties without major anachrony, and the temporal model can be conceptualized as a straight line. Thus, we can say that Wharton critiques normative time from within; she proposes no radical new temporality but exposes contradictions in the dominant regimes suggests ways

The linear influence of the past on the present is a recurring motif in the novel and its discourse on temporality, inspired by popular science of the time and Darwinism in particular. Wharton marries biological concepts like competition and specialization with social issues of gender and class to critique the deadly limitations imposed on Lily and women like her by a cruel and arbitrary yet undeniable temporal regime. Wharton’s approach in this critique is more radical than it may first seem. Through questioning patriarchal notions of women’s value and women’s labor, Wharton rejects essentialist notions of inherent womanness, insisting instead that the source of popular conceptions of women’s temporalities are the patriarchy and capitalism. A recurring theme is the dismantling of strongly held but ultimately false beliefs about time, class, and gender.

Lily is raised to believe that the future her mother chose for her is the only one there is. She detests this future but is unable to perceive alternatives. This changes when she is thrown out of her strictly patriarchal social circle and learns to embrace women of lower classes. Wharton shows us that perceptions of time, especially women’s time, are defined and enforced by culture. Through bonding with women living outside of her limited sphere, Lily realizes that there are more options than her surroundings would have her believe. I identify three distinct but connected areas of critique of normative time in *The House of Mirth*. The first is a condemnation of upper-class women's role in Wharton's society as exemplified in the literary tradition of "women as flowers," wherein young women's lives culminate in marriage and familial time. Secondly, Wharton discredits notions of essentially male and female modes of time, arguing that such conceptions are in fact a product of the willed devaluation of women's labor. Finally, Wharton suggests that the way to combat these false conceptions of women's temporalities, and to find a more privileged position in normative time, is for women to work together across social strata. I will now analyze each of these dimensions in turn.

2.1 Time and woman

The central temporal model in The House of Mirth is that of main character Lily straining against a traditional literary narrative that Fleissner calls "woman as flower" (528). Closely related to the Jane Austen-esque "marriage plots" ubiquitous in the 19th century, such romance narratives follow beautiful young women at their moment of blossoming into adulthood claiming their ultimate prize in the form of marriage. Such stories are typically temporally constrained to the precise moment of blossoming, and it is in taking the flower-woman mythos beyond the traditional marriage plot that Wharton delivers her most immediately prominent critique of the demands placed on women's futures under normative time.

The woman as flower-narrative can be seen as a literary manifestation of normative time, since such stories reinforce the importance of its primary temporal institutions of reproductive time, familial time and time of inheritance. According to Showalter, the generally accepted threshold for marriage in the early twentieth century was 30 years of age (133), and Lily is 29 years old at the start of the novel. Because she relies on her youth and beauty to marry a wealthy man, time is running out for her to fulfill the gendered narrative destiny she has internalized. Like flowers, the women of this society are seen to have a singular moment of blossoming after which only decay awaits. Beauty, and thus value, are intrinsically and strongly tied to age. For most of the story, Wharton intentionally plays with the expectations of readers familiar with 19th century romance plots, more or less pretending that the novel's true dilemma lies in whom Lily shall inevitably marry. Only later do we realize that there will be no joyous marriage. Lily herself describes courtship as an ''intricate dance, where one misstep would throw me hopelessly out of time'' (Wharton 42). This being “out of time” can be understood as Lily recognizing that failure to marry would force her out of the prescriptive progression demanded by normative time. Without a husband, Lily is unable to keep up with the demanding temporal institutions of reproductive, familial, and inherited time. Lily and her peers have been taught from birth that marriage and child-rearing is the one and only inevitable future for all women – so what happens to Lily when she falls off the destined path? As she only too late finds ways to live independently in linearity, her rejection of normative time proves fatal.

By turning the woman as flower-narrative into a tragedy in a highly modern setting, Wharton suggests that this naively romantic narrative is now hopelessly outdated. Maureen Howard illustrates the importance of this setting by comparing *The House of Mirth* (pub. 1905) to Jane Austen’s *Emma* (pub. 1815). In Austen’s novel, marriage is a stable institution in a stable world. Though the motivation for and object of marriage is of great concern, the value and desirability of marriage itself is never called into question. Nearly a century later and across the pond, marriage is according to Howard “at best a flimsy institution in which to house one’s ambitions in an unstable world” (143). The most prominent married couples of *The House of Mirth* (the Barts, the Dorsets and the Trenors) all use, betray, and despise one another and appear to only be married for convenience or societal pressure. Whereas the titular Emma finally decides that she wishes to wed for love, Lily Bart is unable to find such love yet feels immense pressure to marry. Her great distaste for what she views as her inevitable temporal destiny is made clear in her meeting with an early potential mate, Percy Gryce: "[she] must submit to more boredom … on the bare chance that [he] might ultimately decide to do her the honour of boring her for life" (Wharton 23). Lily despises the temporal institutions of reproduction and family time but the pressure to conform is overwhelming.

And the pressure is undoubtedly gendered, as evidenced by Lily’s two most important candidates for marriage, Lawrence Selden and Percy Gryce. They are both young bachelors that seemingly do whatever they want to and are able to come and go as they please. Percy is viewed as the most eligible bachelor in their social circle despite being socially awkward and remarkably uninteresting. To remain marriageable, Lily must constantly work hard at maintaining her social currency. “There’s the difference–a girl must, a man may if he chooses" says Lily (Wharton 11), acknowledging the terribly skewed balance.

Wharton’s criticism of the woman as flower narrative is not only based on gender but also on class, with the novel’s upper-class women portrayed as more strictly subjugated to normative time due to their extreme reliance on wealthy husbands. Lily and her peers are raised to be passive and dependent, like flowers to be purchased and owned by men. Unable to make her own money due to social constraints as well as her specialized upbringing, Lily must secure a husband not only due to social pressure but for survival. Judith Fetterley highlights what she calls "double bind" that prevents Lily from surviving without marriage: It is expensive to be beautiful, but anything that could get her money would reduce her beauty. She explains: "The ornamental can not exist without a solid economic base; yet all Lily's attempts to acquire such a base are blocked precisely because of her nature as beautiful object" (202). The men that could help her expect companionship in return, which harms her reputation and thus precludes her from receiving help. Lily cannot count on other women for assistance either because they are all in competition, since their worth as "beautiful objects" is judged in relation to other women.

All in all, Lily paints a grim picture of her cold and cynical social circle: "my best friends – well, they use me or abuse me; but they don't care a straw what happens to me" (Wharton 10). Thus, this oppressively patriarchal society conspires to uphold itself and make marriage Lily's sole option; the beautiful object must be bought (Fetterley 204). The pressure to marry increases day by day, since the value of upper-class women in Lily's society is inversely linked to linear time. The ageing of Lily's body is a recurring motif in the novel that serves as a reminder of the passing of time, and with it, Lily's decreasing value in the eyes of her society. For while Lily possesses a great many skills it is ultimately her beauty that is prized above all else. The men of *The House of Mirth* are prized for other factors like capital (Trenor), intelligence (Selden) or shrewdness (Rosedale) which can increase over time and even fluctuate. Yet even Selden, with his high-minded ideals and self-proclaimed freedom from social conventions, appreciates Lily first and foremost for her beauty, as demonstrated on the very first page of the novel wherein he quietly appraises her form from afar (Wharton 3). The women of this upper-class society have a temporally limited period of peak value after which only depreciation awaits, whereas time is much kinder to the men.

Lily must commit to the woman as flower-narrative because she has been raised in a way that obscures any other option. In her introduction to the 1997 Wordsworth edition of the novel, Wharton specialist Janet Beer highlights the influence of popular science on the novel, which is apparent in all aspects of the novel, including narrative, themes, and language. Especially important are the works of Charles Darwin (Beer ix-x). Maureen Howard identifies the foundational ideology of the text not as Social Darwinism, but a Darwinian view of individual adaptation, and highlights that the discourse presented is more nuanced than just "survival of the fittest." She emphasizes the motif of chance in the novel, highlighting how Lily loses significant sums of money both at cards and on the stock market as examples of the importance of chance to Lily’s downfall and explains that “Wharton freed herself from the rigidities of Social Darwinism by throwing her heroine into a world of chance, a chance which implies choice” (Howard 153). Even Lily’s death is arguably the result of chance as Wharton obscures whether her overdose was deliberate or accidental.

Placing the story in a world marked by both fate and chance allows for nuanced and complex commentary on temporality, though in Lily’s case the external pressure and internal specialization ultimately triumph over any individual and free will. Lily has been indoctrinated by her housewife mother to believe that a young lady’s only chance of leading a happy and successful life lies in marrying rich. Lily’s breadwinning father was always at work until he died and thus both implicitly and explicitly the operations of patriarchy take root from the very beginning of Lily’s upbringing, and they appear fully internalized in her adult life. These destructive ideals are not a result of chance but instead fully intentioned by her environment. Beer explains that Lily has been so thoroughly specialized, in the Darwinian sense of the word, for a very specific niche of upper class married life that precludes most other ways of living (ix).

Her heritage and upbringing determine not just Lily’s beginning but also her end. Howard points out that Lily meets her demise in the form of a “slow and difficult dying” due to financial ruin, just like her father had done (Wharton 19; Howard). Furthermore, Mrs Bart despises non-rich people who “live like a pig” (Wharton 19) and tossed aside her husband as soon as he lost his money, and with it, his usefulness. With such values imprinted at an early age, Lily cannot accept a social decline; her only options are to achieve riches or die (Erlich 56). Lily finds her future prospects unsatisfying, but to act upon her desire to break away from her inherited temporal destiny she must combat the combined forces of her own indoctrination and external patriarchal forces. Different elements of society conspire to constrain Lily within the limiting institutions of normative time and in accordance with the woman as flower-narrative, and in the end, Lily finds no future without them.

2.2 Time, woman, and labor

Wharton in The House of Mirth questions the then-prevailing distinction between “male” and “female” time by showing that these conceptions are culturally determined byproducts of a highly capitalistic society. She does this by charting her heroine’s life unequivocally in accordance with masculine linear time, and by showing the folly of men who make false assumptions about her due to her gender.

The idea of a shared women's conception of time has taken many different forms in different contexts over several hundred years. Wharton's critique is aimed at conceptualizations of women's time as they were in turn-of-the-century industrialized society where women's experience of time was often understood as a premodern remnant from a less civilized time. Roughly synonymous with terms like "domestic time" or "private time," the supposed female time was said to be defined by natural cycles and fleetingness as opposed to masculine time's linearity and precise man-made intervals (Fleissner 523-25). In modern times, opinions on such a view are split. Julia Kristeva, for example, acquiesces that cyclical repetition is indeed part of women's shared temporality, calling it stereotyping but true (Kristeva 16). Others like Elizabeth Freeman wholly reject the idea, situating it as just one part of an imperialist desire of Western males to see their own proposed evolution "as a move away from a slower premodernity associated with brown skin, femininity and perversion" (57).

Arguments for such a conception point to essential biological differences between genders, but these gender-essentialist models do not apply to the women and men of *The House of Mirth* and certainly not to its main character. Lily's hardworking nature is emphasized throughout the novel and Carrie Fisher comments that Lily "works like a slave preparing the ground and sowing her seed" (Wharton 164). Lily's pursuit of marriage and tight-rope balancing of social currency is portrayed as a delicate and skillful art which she performs with concerted effort, and Wharton explicitly calls into question the difference between Lily's quest for marriage and a man's "vocation" (Wharton 8). With people to see and places to be, Lily's daily life is marked by tight time-keeping and hard work. Glances at the clock interrupt Lily and Selden's meeting (Wharton 11), and when we first meet Lily in Grand Central Station, she consults her pocket watch after narrowly missing her train (Fleissner 523). These scenes are meant to illustrate that the heroine is just as beholden to modern "clock time" as any man. Furthermore, Lily's schedule and living situations change dramatically throughout the novel, altogether making it impossible to map Lily's life to fleetingness and natural cycles.

Yet, the men of the novel insist on viewing women's lives through such a lens. Wharton makes the ignorance of these male characters apparent from the very beginning, when Selden remarks that "there is nothing new about Lily Bart" (Wharton 3). As readers, we learn that Lily has had a rich and storied life since the two last met, but Selden, who frequently makes self-sure but flawed judgments of Lily, immediately assumes she lives a simple and static life. Rather than intrinsic gendered modes of time, Wharton argues that male conceptions of female time are in fact a result of their failure to recognize women's unpaid work under patriarchal capitalism. Lori Harrison-Kahan emphasizes just how much work Lily puts into maintaining her social value. She points out that other characters in *The House of Mirth* want to interpret and at times explicitly describe Lily as "made," a sort of constructed beautiful object that is passive and without agency in her own life. The *tableaux vivant* scene is a prime example, wherein Selden believes he sees simply "the real Lily Bart" (Wharton 119; Harrison-Kahan). But this supposed effortlessness is in truth a carefully constructed projection. Lily's primary functions in social circles are to be beautiful and entertaining. Both functions require skill, effort, and money. Her talents are very much sought after and appreciated by her associates, just not financially.

There is a significant disparity between what Lily's culture claims to value and what it is in fact willing to support, which adds a further dimension to Lily's "double bind" (Fetterley 202). She must work tirelessly but can never be rewarded. Selden, Lily herself and the rest of society fails to recognize the work that women like Lily do as work and consequently assign it little to no value, yet enjoy the fruits of their labor and demand they keep laboring. If Lily's labor was valued like that of her male counterparts, she could easily live independently, but sadly hers is a job one cannot live off. If we consider Rosedale a male parallel to Lily (both characterized as shrewd, hardworking and with extraordinarily good morals) we see that Wharton has given them opposite trajectories. He climbs ever higher as she falls from grace, despite two fielding similar goals and efforts. This willed devaluing of women's labor upholds institutions of normative time and provides impetus towards what this strictly patriarchal society wishes to be the one temporal destiny for women: marriage, reproduction, family (Halberstam). Conceptions of public and private time, then, are in fact not about biological gender, but about men and women's relations to the labor market and men's power to define what is and is not respectable work.

The relationship between gender, time and labor is explored at length over several expository conversations between Lily and Selden. In an early conversation Selden asks: "Isn't marriage your vocation? Isn't it what you're brought up for?" and Lily answers: "I suppose so. What else is there?" (Wharton 8). Thus, both Lily and Selden acknowledge marriage as the only suitable future for Lily, yet he admonishes her for seeking it. Selden also explains to Lily that "society" should be taken as "an escape from work" and never "the thing worked for" (Wharton 62). Yet it is precisely due to the work of women like Lily that his society is what it is. Men with explicit time on and off work can imagine two clearly distinct spheres, but for upper-class women like Lily who can only work in, with and for society the distinction makes no sense. Selden is entirely unwilling to consider the effects of gender in his lofty prescriptive ideals, illustrating men's lack of interest in and sympathy for women's causes. Wharton shows that the men and women of this society live under the same temporal regime, but men choose to differentiate between genders based on supposed biological differences to disregard and belittle women as static, simple, and lesser. Markers of normative time and gendered conceptualizations of time are man-made and specifically constructed to oppress women.

2.3 Time, woman, labor, and class

While The House of Mirth is first and foremost the story of Lily's fatal failure to escape linearity, we also see women characters who manage much more successful insertions into linearity in the margins of the text. According to Beer, Wharton gives us examples of women who instead of struggling with the outmoded woman as flower-narrative, either seize the new opportunities of a professional life or "realize that marriage can also be conducted like a [modern] profession or trade" (viii). We find the latter in Judy Trenor and Bertha Dorset, women of status and lifestyle comparable to Lily's who have embraced married life and with it claimed relative independence and power. Mrs. Trenor and Mrs. Dorset have both accepted the limited possibilities of women in normative time and in a most positive interpretation show that a shrewd woman can find some level of play within her constraints. Lily also wants the comfort and material advantages of marriage, but not enough to betray her own dreams and morals (Howard), thus precluding the sort of strategic marriage effectuated by her peers. In the cruel social rules of *The House of Mirth*, Lily's good morals work to her detriment, decreasing her already pitifully small spectrum of available futures. Again, returning to the theme of biology and inheritance, Gloria C. Erlich claims that Lily is failing to merge the "mercantile objectives" instilled in her from her mother with the more "poetic sensibilities" she got from her father (55-56). Dorset and Trenor show that committing to mercantilism is the safer bet in a mercantile society, although it for women ultimately only leads to a slightly shinier cage and in no way furthers women's position in linear time.

Continuing her class critique, Wharton places two much more successful cases of insertion into linearity outside of Lily's social circle. The first is the safe and loving (if slightly unsubstantiated) depiction of working-class life with Nettie Struther. In stark contrast to Lily's own upbringing, the Struthers are a poor but loving and tight-knit family. Lily has been raised to think that she must follow the timeline and script planned for her from birth to thrive, but sees that Nettie, who lives diametrically opposed to the ideals instilled in herself, has “reached the central truth of existence” (Wharton 280). Lily discovers that her assumed temporal destiny is merely a contrived and hollow social construct, and that true happiness lies outside of it. Wai-Chee Dimock writes that Wharton intentionally associates Nettie with nature, for instance through describing her house as a “bird’s nest built on the edge of a cliff” (Wharton 280; Dimock). This more primitive and organic nature, she argues, is antithetical to the market capitalism and unnatural moralizing Wharton is critiquing in *The House of Mirth* (Dimock 790-91). In associating Lily with society on the one hand, and Nettie with nature on the other, Wharton is one again focused on exposing assumed natural truths as mere social constructs. While Nettie’s own relation to time is largely traditional, it is much more natural, free, and joyful, and their friendship helps Lily see the deceit and destruction of her inherited temporal destiny to be a beautiful object.

A more sustainable female relation to linear time is exemplified by Selden’s unmarried cousin, Gertrude Farish, characterized by Beer as “representative of the new breed of middle-class women who … abjures the dependency of the middle-class wife and throws herself into various forms of social work” (viii). Unattractive, unmarried, with a middling income and of low social standing, Gertrude or “Gerty” nonetheless leads a joyful and independent life within linearity. She is only interested in marriage if it is for love, lives safely and independently and possesses relative material wealth – all things Lily expressly wants but cannot get due to her internalized misogyny and snobbery. When Selden identifies Gerty as an example of an independent woman for Lily to emulate, Lily dismissively states that Gerty is too far beneath her to serve as an example (Wharton 6). Frances L. Restuccia quotes Judith Fetterley saying that "one might wish Lily to follow Gerty's example … but she could do so only at the cost of being a lily" (237). If Lily were to find middle-income work, she would not make enough money nor have enough time to maintain her exceptional beauty. Restuccia and others see this as a loss. However, I argue that Wharton is sincerely positing that beauty is secondary to emancipation. I am more inclined to agree with Showalter’s view of Lily as the old-fashioned lady who “must die to make way for the modern woman who will work, love, and give birth,” (Showalter 136) exemplified by Nettie and Gerty.

Just as other characters judge Lily unfairly, she herself judges Gerty for being “dingy” and “unmarriageable” (Wharton 6). However, Wharton presents Gerty very favorably as one of the only characters in the novel whose actions and relationships are not driven by bartering and self-interest. She even extends her love to those who have wronged her: shortly after learning that Lily had selfishly used Gerty to get closer to their mutual love interest Selden, she immediately forgives and comforts Lily when she comes crying in the middle of the night after a traumatic encounter with Mr. Trenor (144). And crucially, Lily later in the novel reconsiders her harsh views: “Who are one’s friends at such a time? Who, but you, you poor trustful darling” says Lily to Gerty, her only remaining friend when she is no longer useful to her former peers (196). The hard-working middle-class woman is representative of what Kristeva sees as the first phase of twentieth-century feminism, living and working independently like the men. Although she is judged harshly by her close-minded peers, Gerty is later redeemed and remains representative of a much healthier temporal destiny for women within masculine linear time.

In the relationship between these three women we see the fullness of Wharton’s discourse on women’s temporalities. Lily is not satisfied by the future she is raised for, but her inherited ideas concerning class and gender leaves her unable to consider alternatives. The women living in slightly less patriarchal strata of society disprove her assumptions, and when Lily finally opens her heart, her classist and misogynist illusions start to fade. Lily’s obsession with wealth and beauty is at first presented as noble and artistic pursuits, but through admirable “dingy” women we see her aspirations for what they are: patriarchal burdens that serve to keep her subjugated to men and prevent women of different classes from working together to enact systemic change. Lily states that "she hates dinginess … and to her last breath she meant to fight against it" (Wharton 34) yet it is precisely in dingy environments and from dingy women she finds the potential for love, independence and “true meaning.”

The House of Mirth ends with a vision of a new world of female solidarity (Showalter 145). Wharton ultimately proposes an inter-class and inter-type feminism as the trio love and learn from each other. But Lily must go away for now. Gerty, Nettie, and Wharton all love Lily for her more radical literary feminism, but she is simultaneously a representative of the ultra-patriarchal woman as flower-narrative. With the death of the old dominant female literary mythos, women who find a healthier place in linearity can rise to the surface of literature and of society.

3. *Mrs Dalloway* (1925)

3.0. Chapter Introduction

The temporality of Virginia Woolf's writing, and of her 1925 novel *Mrs Dalloway* in particular, has been the subject of much analysis even among contemporary critics. With her refusal of literary convention and sharp feminist rhetoric, Woolf's writings captivate feminist scholars and literary critics alike. Equally fascinating are her literary temporalities, and *Mrs Dalloway*'s experimental time sense has attracted much critical attention, receiving a wide range of analyses over nearly a century. Though precise interpretations differ greatly, much of the literature sees the novel as concerning women's fates in normative time. Rather than falling prey to its influence like Wharton's Lily, Woolf's Clarissa Dalloway uses alternative temporalities to find respite and strength. Narrative time and story time are very much disconnected in the novel, as Clarissa's narrative oscillates between two separate spatial-temporal locations: the day of her party in June of 1923, which constitutes the novel's first level, and the summer Clarissa spent at Bourton at the age of eighteen (Haffey 138). According to Miller, literary time is often conveyed through spatial allegories and in *Mrs Dalloway*, when the narrative moves between Bourton and London it also moves between the two temporal levels.

In addition to these larger anachronies, Woolf frequently plays with time on the scale of moments, like for instance when Septimus watches the car backfire and both motion and time freeze as his consciousness unfolds (Pawlowski xv). With its double protagonists, *Mrs Dalloway* consists of two parallel plot lines that intersect only briefly and tangentially. My thesis is primarily (though not exclusively) concerned with Clarissa's story, as it is here we find Woolf's most interesting discourse on temporality and gender.

Fittingly, the novel's critique of normative time, and thus this chapter, is bipartite. In my analysis, I see a central motif of the work as friction against limiting binaries, as Clarissa carves out play in a world of strict rules and categorization. Binaries and dualities are at the forefront of the work with dual main characters and dual temporal locations, the narrative repeatedly oscillating between one of two states. Yet on closer inspection, Woolf appears interested not so much in binaries as in the rejection of them, in a manner reminiscent of poststructuralist decentering. This deconstruction constitutes one half of the novel's critical discourse on temporality, as it exposes flaws in the logics of normative time, even questioning the fundamental barrier between *now* and *then*.

The second pillar of the novel's time sense is Woolf's understanding of bodily sensory input as a connection to the past that foregoes linearity. Where the dominant temporal model is situated in the mind and strictly linear, *Mrs Dalloway* emphasizes a parallel alternative temporality accessed through the body that is entirely unbeholden to normative logics. I analyze this temporality using Elizabeth Freeman's model of erotohistoriography on Clarissa's relationship to her adolescent love, Sally Seton. In this chapter, I will discuss both models in turn. The two aspects combined make up the whole of *Mrs Dalloway*'s nonnormative model of temporality**.** Although Clarissa's temporality is not entirely dislodged from normative time, her queer relation to time significantly reduces its authority and influence.

3.1 Now/Then

The theme of binaries and deconstruction is aptly seen in the ending of the novel. Woolf writes beyond the traditional endings of marriage or death, instead finishing on a rather ambiguous note whose meaning and significance critics yet debate to this day. Christina Moriconi sees Clarissa's obsession with her memories of Bourton as a desire to return to a time when she was "unattached to her social identity as wife, mother and social hostess" (Moriconi 35). This exemplifies a traditional reading of *Mrs Dalloway* in which the central conflict is understood as the subjugation and loss of identity resulting from Clarissa's marriage to Richard Dalloway. Throughout the novel we learn about deep emotional connections to her past flames and friends, particularly with Peter Walsh and Sally Seton, while her adult social interactions appear as superficial pleasantries. The purpose of focusing so much on the past, then, is both to mirror how much space it takes in her psyche and to illustrate the differences between her more authentic living in the past, contrasted with her going through the motions now. In middle age, Clarissa struggles with having sacrificed her own identity and happiness to stay with the demands of normative time. While out getting flowers, Clarissa thinks to herself that she feels like "nothing" and "invisible," and that there was now nothing more in her life than "this being Mrs Dalloway; not even Clarissa any more; this being Mrs Richard Dalloway" (Woolf 8). We can imagine this inner turmoil as a binary opposition where on one hand Clarissa the "person" and on the other hand Mrs Dalloway the “wife” are in conflict. In such a reading, the conclusion of the novel can be understood as acceptance, with Clarissa letting go of the past and embracing the present (Haffey).

However, certain modern critics suggest that *Mrs Dalloway* is not defined by binaries, but by breaking them down. Jesse Wolfe claims that the novel combines “antifoundational forebodings” with “pragmatic-conservative solutions,” and sees it as folly to suggest that the novel exclusively condemns or favors the Dalloways’ marriage (35). There is of course clear evidence of Clarissa’s dissatisfaction, like how she feels “desperately unhappy” inviting Ellie Henderson to her party at her husband's request, but “she would do it of course, as he wished it” (Woolf 88). Yet, comparing their union to others like the clearly dysfunctional Bradshaws, it becomes apparent that though Clarissa’s marriage has limitations, there is good in it as well. The heroine values the privacy, (relative) independence and material wealth afforded to her through her marriage. Going back to *The House of Mirth,* this is precisely what Wharton’s heroine hoped to gain from a potential marriage, and Kathy Fedorko in fact sees Woolf’s Clarissa as a direct response to Wharton’s Lily. She makes this connection by pointing to the very similar setting, similar themes, mirrored character relationships (e.g. Lily-Selden and Clarissa-Peter) and in particular the motif of hats. Though hardly definitive proof of a direct connection, Septimus describing Rezia making hats “like a lily, drowned, under water” (66) or Ellie Henderson thinking that she “must tell Edith” about high society’s changing customs (123) are at the very least interesting coincidences. Fedorko’s argument is that, while the two protagonists face similar issues, Clarissa “finds a way to live a joyful life despite the system” (12). Through her marriage to Richard, she finds the desired stable upper-class living, and although it requires her to compromise, she is not completely subservient nor entirely unhappy.

There are a great many similarities between the two books’ discourse on women’s temporalities, but key differences as well. Like Wharton, Woolf sees gender not as natural and principal, but as a culturally determined and largely secondary aspect of a person. There is much discourse on domestic time in the novel, as the skill and effort with which Clarissa maintains her relations and hosts her parties calls into question the distinction between domestic life and work life. Wharton and Woolf appear to be in agreement on much, making largely similar points regarding the connections between labor, gender and time. This is particularly well demonstrated in the climactic party scene, wherein just about everyone seems to know and greatly appreciate Clarissa for a multitude of reasons, and we are shown the fruits of her skill and labor.

Just like Selden unfairly judges Lily, Peter Walsh's ignorance and sexist assumptions about women's temporalities preclude him from seeing the dynamism in the life of Clarissa Dalloway. Compare Selden's "there was nothing new about Lily Bart" (Wharton 3) to Walsh's "here she's been sitting all the time I've been in India" (Woolf 30). Ironically, his acquaintances at Lady Bruton's lunch agree that it is Peter Walsh who "hadn't changed in the slightest" (87). In their youth, Peter Walsh insults Clarissa by saying that she will grow up to be "the perfect hostess" (6). While this ironic prophecy arguably comes true, a major theme of the novel is that no one can be defined so singularly, and Walsh is often shown to be wrong. For instance, Walsh also sees Septimus and Rezia as romantically "being young" and in love (53), when in fact Septimus is disassociating and Rezia is nearing a breakdown. Woolf's project with Clarissa is capturing the unique fullness of an individual in a rigid society of labels and categorization, thus countering patriarchal high society's destructive need to place limiting labels on women. This is why she repeatedly shows Walsh make overly simplistic, objectively untrue assumptions.

In keeping with the notion of highlighting depth inside a superficial and reductive society, Wolfe suggests that an essential "principle of uncertainty" applies to both Septimus and Clarissa's marriages in that the novel intentionally avoids fully ascertaining if they would perhaps be happier alone or with another partner (43-4). Trying to find a definitive answer, then, is not only fruitless but also missing the point, as fluidity and nuance are essential to the philosophy of *Mrs Dalloway*. With this in mind, the conclusion can be read thusly: Clarissa does not choose one or the other supposed opposites in the binary, but rather resolves the inner conflict by finding peace with a fluid combination of both her temporalities and identities. Clarissa is not either "wife" or "woman" – she is Clarissa. And it is precisely with an affirmation of Clarissa's irreducibility the novel ends: "It is Clarissa, he said. For there she was" (Woolf 141). Woolf's humanism is not fixated on simple categories or labels but on wholeness, nuance, paradox, and fluidity. The novel's project can be understood as attempting to capture a fuller picture of Clarissa, at different times and from different perspectives, often conflicting, and far too complex for static categorization. Clarissa is "wholly herself, extant beyond category" (Wolfe 50). This epistemological foundation is naturally reflected in the temporality as well.

Indeed, although time first appears split in two in *Mrs Dalloway*, it is in fact often a fluid and composite combination of both times. On the very first page of the novel, Clarissa experiences both times at once as she opens her window and is transported to Bourton: "What a lark! What a plunge! For so it had always seemed to her, when, with a little squeak of the hinges, which she could hear now, she had burst open the French windows and plunged at Bourton into the open air" (Woolf 3). Here, Clarissa in the first level of London 1923 hears sounds and feels air from Bourton, miles away and decades in the past. According to Kate Haffey, Woolf in this paragraph "invokes time present and time past" thus immediately rendering "past and present simultaneously in a single moment" (140-41). While the story largely takes place in two separate spatial-temporal locations, this is ultimately "not a text about moving from the past into the future, but rather one about the preservation of the past in the present" (149). Indeed, Clarissa's own thoughts about the morning that the novel begins help establish this point: "the moment of this June morning on which was the pressure of all other mornings" (Woolf 27).

Not only does Clarissa's own internal experience of time reject the normative model**,** Woolf also suggests that connections between people serve as another counterforce. As Clarissa ponders death in her room, she expresses a belief that she will live on in others, suggesting an understanding of time as composite and shared among people, existing both within, outside of and between people. An example of this is when during their reunion Clarissa "looked at Peter Walsh; her look, passing through all that time and that emotion, reached him doubtfully" (32). Time, as it exists in connections between people, travels according to logics other than those of normative time, travelling both beyond one's own lifetime and unconcerned with linearity. In a sense, the party itself reflects the novel's temporal structure. Just as Clarissa brings past into present, people from different times of her life come together at her party. In a single spatial-temporal moment most of the cast is brought together to connect, reminisce and to carry their connections into their futures.

While there are no obvious allegories for time in the analepses set in Bourton, in the first level the passage of linear time is communicated consistently through the chimes of Big Ben and other clocks. Through twisting London streets, a multitude of focalizers and nearly a full day in chronological time, the ringing of various clocks and bells is reiterated time and again. From the novel's first page we are made aware of the regular presence of ringing clocks: "There! Out it boomed. First a warning, musical; then the hour, *irrevocable*" (Woolf 3-4; emphasis added)**.** The ringing clocks have no impact on the plot, but its conspicuous presence serves as a communication to the reader. As Rezia walks away crying after visiting Sir Bradshaw, the clocks of Harley Street "counselled submission" and "upheld authority" (75). Clocks are ever-present in London, and with them, normative time's subjugating authority. Yet in Bourton there is not a single mention of clocks, and hardly any of time at all. Woolf thus places Clarissa's time in Bourton outside of normative temporality. When

Clarissa then brings this spatial-temporal location into her present life, she recognizes that that of normativity is but one of many possible temporalities, rather than objective truth.

To compare Woolf's and Wharton's discourses on temporality, then, Lily lacked a Bourton – all her experiences were from the very beginning within the oppressive society she was raised in, by and for. Woolf, however, gives her Clarissa strategies for survival and success that Lily does not have (Fedorko 14). Central among these strategies, I argue, is the relationship to temporality she internalized during her time in Bourton in a less restrictive environment, and her ability to hold onto it in the present. Woolf is in essence showing that you can find temporalities not rooted in patriarchal society and use them to resist normative time's destructive influence. While on the one hand her life is ordered by and structured according to the normative temporal institutions of familial time, reproductive time and inherited time, Clarissa knows that there is more to life and to herself.

3.2 Mind/Body

Clarissa's nonnormative temporality springs out of the natural body, as opposed to society and the mind. Through a defining queer moment in her youth, Clarissa awakens to the disconnect between nature and society and her alternative time sense is born. Like Wharton, Woolf too writes "beyond the ending" for traditional women narratives, as we follow a woman in her fifties whose moment of "flowering" has long since passed. The decision to marry was certainly important to Clarissa's life, and she spends much time considering her marriage and potential marriage to Peter Walsh. Yet there is something much more important in her life: a queer love that even today shapes her identity and her sense of time.

Using Elizabeth Freeman's model of erotohistoriography, we can map anachronies in Clarissa's narrative to moments of pleasure. Freeman defines erotohistoriography as "deeply embodied pleasures that counters the logic of development" and that "can intervene upon the material damage done in the name of development" (59). Seeing "development" as synonymous to normative time, this model is not just an alternative to the dominant but a direct rebuttal. As discussed in the Freeman article and in my analysis of *The House of Mirth*, normative time and its institutions are not inherent to human nature but in fact man-made and upheld by the patriarchy. Its influence may feel rooted in the body, but in truth its realm is that of the mind. This means that natural, bodily sensory inputs are not beholden to the rules of normative time. In addition to offering an alternative model of temporality all on its own, focusing on bodily sensations also calls into question the validity of normative time all together in a moment of literary deconstruction. That is, through exposing contradictions in the supposed binary opposition, the system is shown to be false and its power is reduced.

In part due to her queer time senses, queer academics have been very interested in Woolf and *Mrs Dalloway*. Wolfe sees in this novel an approach to gender and sexuality that is rather more radical than it first may seem. On close inspection, the characters of Clarissa and Sally in particular resist definition on matters of both gender and sexuality. For instance, Clarissa is alternately described in feminine and masculine terms, and alternately experiences heat and cold. Sally is defined for example by her sexual bravado, as Clarissa recalls her running naked down the halls of Bourton, and she markedly brandishes a cigar, reminding us of Peter Walsh's childishly masculine symbolic act of repeatedly brandishing his knife**,** but here performed by a young woman (Wolfe 41-42). Central to Woolf's queerness is a sort of non-essentialism and de-emphasizing of gender and sexuality, again marked by fluidity and complexity.

Regarding sexuality, Clarissa appears radically fluid as she "in turn [loves] —or wonders whether she loves—three people: two men and Sally" (Wolfe 40). There has been much debate on precise nature of Clarissa's sexuality, but suffice to say that she is queer by most accounts and that the exact nature of her sexuality and feelings are ultimately not so important to this thesis. And in keeping with the general motif of fluidity and indefiniteness, it is perhaps best to leave it be. In any case, *Mrs Dalloway*'s alternative model of temporality can only be understood with this queer background in mind, as it is in the first place made possible by Clarissa's non-heterosexuality.

Freeman's model is most significantly fruitful when applied to the kiss shared by Clarissa and Sally in their youth, but the stage is set for such a reading already on the very first page of the novel. A connection between bodily stimuli and time is immediately established as the aforementioned "plunge" as she opens her window sends Clarissa into the past – or the past into Clarissa – through the pleasurable sensation of wind hitting her face during her youth at Bourton. The sensory stimuli from her youth are inscribed in her body even today, and though many years have passed immediately the same feelings return to her. The placement of this scene at the very opening of the novel is significant, as it serves to make the foundational connection between time and body from the outset.

Some twenty pages later we find the scene that constitutes the core of this analysis; a hotly debated and ever-important object of critical analysis of temporality in *Mrs Dalloway* is Clarissa vividly and bittersweetly recalling her romance and kiss with Sally Seton. In her article on the temporality of the kiss, Haffey emphasizes that this scene has little to no direct bearing on the story, as we at this point in the narrative already know that Clarissa has lost touch with Sally in her adult life. Additionally, after the analepsis in which it takes place the kiss disappears into the background not to be mentioned again. Yet, this queer moment is what immediately springs to mind when Clarissa returns to the privacy of her room, and she even describes it as "the most exquisite moment of her whole life" (Woolf 26). One explanation for the importance Clarissa assigns to the kiss comes from Moriconi: "With its semiotic sensations, the memory of the kiss produces cracks and sores in her social identity" (44). Focusing on her public identity and the wife/woman binary, such an interpretation sees the kiss and the feelings associated with it as a reminder of what must be repressed to live according to the expectations of normative time. Although the two interpretations do not need to be mutually exclusive, I argue that the kiss is in fact more related to another binary pair, namely mind/body, and that erotohistoriography provides a more fitting explanation for the kiss's significance.

In *Mrs Dalloway*, the body has a two-fold experience of time as both linear and nonlinear. Clarissa is unquestionably ageing and fears this progression, keenly aware of her entropic fate: "But she feared time itself … the dwindling of life; how year by year her share was sliced; how little the margin that remained was capable any longer of stretching" (Woolf 23). Yet the body also holds a second, erotohistoriographical temporality. When thinking about her feelings for Sally at age eighteen, middle-aged Clarissa alone in her room feels in her body the same "old feeling" marked by "a kind of ecstasy" from their time together (Woolf 26). The kiss should be understood as a moment of queer pleasure that transcends time to be with Clarissa always (Wolfe 141).

Through the lens of erotohistoriography, the ethereal connection between Clarissa and Septimus is understood as a mutual understanding due to the two of them both having experienced similar queer love. Like Clarissa with Sally, Septimus' thoughts frequently return to his deceased commanding officer Evans, and the two are by several accounts implied to be lovers. Just as Clarissa's heterosexual partner Peter Walsh interrupts her kiss with Sally (27), so too is Septimus frequently interrupted by his wife as he tries to reach Evans in his daydreams (19). Clarissa is glad Septimus has taken his life (Woolf 135) because she believes the young man jumped "holding his treasure" (134) rather than giving it up. This particular phrasing is significant because it brings to mind Clarissa's description of her kiss with Sally as being given "a present … and told just to keep it" (26). She commends the stranger for holding onto his treasure, even if it means death. A life without it is not worth living, as it is her treasure that connects Clarissa to life outside the patriarchy and lets her resist normative time. Without it, she would be wholly subjugated or destroyed, like Lily Bart. It is only the kiss can "disrupt linear narratives of development … it is a moment of queer temporality; it hangs between life and death, between youth and adulthood, and crashes through all the barriers meant to keep the past and the present separate" (Haffey 149). Since this moment of queer temporality is always with her, Clarissa knows that there is more to life than the limiting expectations forced on her by her society, and this gives her the strength to live on.

Virginia Woolf wrote a published review of *The House of Mirth* wherein she writes that the members of Lily's high society are held together by a common ability to eliminate everything outside their own limited view of acceptable behavior (Fedorko 11). This destructive close-mindedness of the patriarchal upper-class is certainly present in *Mrs Dalloway* as well, illustrated for example by the two doctors' self-assured denial of Septimus' trauma and by Lady Bruton's arrogance. However, where the force of negation proved fatal for Wharton's heroine, Clarissa quietly resists its influence and finds life. Thus, while she elects to live life largely according to normative time and its institutions, she does not succumb to its pressures.

Woolf shows a way for normative time's "others" to live in mainstream linear society. Where upholders of normative time expect everyone to live according to fixed norms, Woolf shows that human life is inherently marked by fluidity, complexity, and paradox. Where time is assumed to be linear with a clear distinction between past and present, Clarissa literally carries with her feelings from the past and symbolically brings people from the past into her present. In summary, Woolf critiques normative temporality by exposing it as a man-made mental construct rather than truth, and in suggesting that a more liberating, monumental and queer temporality naturally exists in the body.

4. *Moon Tiger* (1987)

4.0 Chapter Introduction

My third and final object analysis for analysis is Penelope Lively's *Moon Tiger*, which wholly rejects normative time in favor of an individualized and anarchic queer conceptualization. Penelope Lively is perhaps best known as a writer of children's literature and her more adult novels are often labelled middlebrow, typically subject to relatively little critical analysis (Thwaite vii). Yet Moon Tiger is something of an exception, having received a fair bit of attention for its discourse on time and on gender, particularly in the fields of feminist and queer theory (Moran 1; Glendening). The story of the novel is relayed by protagonist Claudia Hampson, an elderly historian on her deathbed, as she reviews her life through a complex polyphony of voices, perspectives and times, with little to no regard for chronology or objectivity. On the novel's first page, Lively presents Claudia's ambitious goal in the telling of her story: "The history of the world as selected by Claudia: fact and fiction, myth and evidence, images and documents" (1). Yet the story she tells is in effect that of her own life, and so the novel covers two separate-but-connected strains of time: the wholeness of one human's life and the wholeness of human history.

In its first level of temporality, *Moon Tiger* is largely devoid of plot. Most of the narrative takes place inside of the protagonist's own mind, wherein several vignettes from her life deemed important by Claudia are explored through seemingly disordered analepses. First, these scenarios are relayed through third-person narration limited to Claudia's point of view in present-tense dramatic scenarios, as if she (and we) are reliving the memories. However, complicating the narrative as well as the temporal model, each vignette is also explored a second time from the perspective of one of the other characters involved, often conflicting Claudia's own interpretation (Moran).

The sizable gap in time between the publication of this novel and the previous two makes *Moon Tiger* a natural continuation of the thesis. Several ideas that are in an early phase in Wharton and Woolf's novels emerge more fully realized in *Moon Tiger*, and the novel presents some wholly new discourse as well. By seeing the three novels jointly, we can chart a dialogic progression – perhaps imagined, perhaps real – between the three authors, capturing the essence of the century-long literary project of women's resistance to normative time, which I see as largely completed by the time of *Moon Tiger*'s release. Since it is somewhat less well known than the other two, here follows a summary of the novel's plot and characters central to my analysis. For practical purposes, I tell the plot in a chronological fashion, but note that Claudia's own storytelling is less straightforward and also frequently returns to the first level in-between vignettes.

The chronologically earliest scene is set in the 1920s and shows Claudia's affluent upbringing in the English countryside. We are introduced to her father who died young and to her older brother (and later lover) Gordon. The two temperamentally and intellectually similar siblings are narcissistically enraptured by each other as they grow up together through constant competition. Both are college students when World War 2 breaks out, but Gordon enlists and Claudia travels to Egypt as a war correspondent. In Cairo, she meets captain Tom Southern and over several weekends spent together, Claudia experiences the most passionate love of her life. Sadly, Tom falls in battle and later the pregnant Claudia miscarries their child. Returning to Britain after the war, Claudia starts a long-lasting on-and-off relationship with the wealthy and much younger Jasper, and the two have a child but do not marry. Their daughter Lisa is a disappointment to Claudia, being much more conservative and shyer than herself, and their relationship is strained and bitter. Now an older woman, Claudia returns to a very different Egypt but finds that her feelings for Tom are just the same after all these years. Soon thereafter, Claudia is diagnosed with terminal cancer. Now reunited with the first level of narration, the last section of narrative has Claudia reflecting on her past, telling the story of *Moon Tiger*, and ends with the protagonist's death. Also important is Laszlo, a young Hungarian refugee and artist whom Claudia takes care of for a number of years in her fifties and Sylvia, Gordon's traditional homemaker wife.

In my analysis of the work, I hope to show how Lively incorporates advances in feminist theory as well as lessons from the two previously discussed novels to overcome issues of women's temporality that plagued Wharton and Woolf. Like Woolf, Lively's temporal model contains two different time receptacles: one is the mind, the other is the body. Different from Woolf, though, is that while Clarissa's resistance to normativity is private and internal, Claudia's resistance affects her environment. Additionally, whereas Clarissa uses the natural time sense of the body to combat artificial and mental normative time**,** for Claudia both the mind and the body experience a queer sense of time, entirely detached from normativity. Though this is not a queer story in the conventional sense of non-heterosexuality, conceptions of queer time apply to the novel for two reasons. Firstly, Claudia's life is not lived according to Halberstam's previously discussed definition of heteronormative temporality, and secondly, the narrative structure of the novel itself rejects a chronological and ordered conception of time (Oró-Piqueras 149). I will now analyze how the novel's queer model of temporality finally enables a clean break from normative time.

4.1 The spiral...

Claudia's polyphonic and subjective understanding of temporality constitutes a transgressive queer model of time that rejects normativity and its temporal institutions in favor of individual and less definite temporalities. At the beginning of the text, Claudia briefly ponders how to present her life story before deciding on a "kaleidoscopic" ordering:

> Shall it or shall it not be linear history? I've always felt a kaleidoscopic view might be an interesting heresy. Shake the tube and see what comes out. There is no chronology inside my head. I am composed of a myriad Claudias who spin and mix and part like sparks of sunlight on water. The pack of cards I carry around is continually shuffled and reshuffled; there is no sequence, everything happens at once. (Lively 2)

With this brief initial reflection, Claudia immediately denies normativity in the simplest act of foregoing linearity and chronology. Also of note is the attitude with which she arrives at this untraditional model, as she seems to ascribe little significance to the decision. This carelessness is something of a rebellion in its own right, showing just how little power conventionality holds over the protagonist. A noted historian with great interest in the epistemological nature of historicism, such explicit engagements with the nature of time appear throughout the novel.

John Glendening expands on the descriptor "kaleidoscopic," describing *Moon Tiger*'s temporal model as one that "captures the disorderly aspects of a kaleidoscope but also recognizes that a kaleidoscope continually generates new patterns and expressions of order" (69). By this he means that, though Claudia initially insists her story is random by design, we later learn that, intentionally or not, her storytelling has been spiraling around a specific spatial-temporal location, which she calls her "core": "Not even the most maverick historian – myself, perhaps – would deny that the past rests upon certain central and indisputable facts, So does life; it has its core, its centre" (Lively 70). Time in *Moon Tiger* is simultaneously both chaotic and ordered, decentered by traditional standards yet with something of a fixed core. That core, to be examined more later, is her time with Tom in Cairo.

The novel's temporal model is directly tied to its discourse on feminism, which mirrors what Kristeva identifies as a third phase of feminism combining both "insertion into history" as well as "refusal of limitations of history" (Kristeva 20). Mary Hurley Moran sums up *Moon Tiger*'s feminism as based on Derrida and the French feminists, stating that "to create a truly feminist work a novelist must do more than merely alter traditional character types and plots; she must challenge and undermine patriarchal assumptions by departing from standard narrative patterns and/or syntax" (89). In Moon Tiger, Lively does both.

In Claudia's work as a historian, she focuses on people rather than statistics and feelings as much as facts and is for these reasons considered radical and controversial in her field (Lively 14; 59). History has conventionally been a linear story, driven by facts and aiming for closure and control (Raschke 124). In moving the spotlight from written accounts of leaders and armies to the individual experiences of normal people, Claudia's work counters patriarchal notions of history and of development. According to Debrah Raschke, in querying historiography *Moon Tiger* "decentres the definitive historical story, allowing repressed narratives that are no less definitive to surface" (116). In all matters of epistemology, the individual is in *Moon Tiger* of equal or even greater power and importance than society as a whole. Additionally, Lively puts the final nail in the coffin on previously discussed gendered conceptions of private and public time, as she through this emphasis on individuals "dissolves the usual line of demarcation historians draw between public and private by showing that an individual's life embodies the larger experience … of all humankind" (Moran 92). This connection between "history" and "individual" is reflected in Claudia's in-fiction work as a historian as well as in the narrative of the book. To name two examples, World War 2 is primarily relevant in how it affected Claudia and Tom, and the Soviet invasion of Hungary is only interesting insofar as it affects Laszlo.

Similarly, a key function of the multiplicity of viewpoints is that it challenges the authority of the narrator and removes an explicit dominant center of consciousness in the novel, which approaches the literary feminist ideal of resisting fixed definition (Moran 90). Raschke suggests that the resulting polymorphic images of the novel's characters, and of Claudia in particular "create the means for escaping fixed identities that have so frequently entrapped women" (Raschke 125). Decentering, fluidity and paradox are even more explicitly than in *Mrs Dalloway* used to resist limiting categorization and reduction. One concrete example of this is how the "myth of the ministering mother-woman" is entirely archaic in a worldview without public and private spheres (119).

Note that this all primarily concerns Claudia's character, but Lively appears approving of other women's temporalities as well. Prime examples are Claudia's sister-in-law Sylvia and her own daughter Lisa. With both these women Claudia initially has a strained relationship, and she appears disproving of their living what she sees as subjugated and boring lives. However, in Lisa's own words Claudia can "be wrong about simple basic things" and she "has always been wrong about Lisa" (Lively 60). Somewhat reminiscent of Clarissa's pragmatic solution in *Mrs Dalloway*, Raschke sees Lisa as someone who despite a difficult upbringing becomes "a survivor, … a competent mother, an adequate if not exemplary wife … who has 'found ways of making the best of the situation'" (Lively 60; Raschke 120). Redeeming Lisa has a double effect: for one it illustrates that Claudia's life is not a blueprint for all to follow, but instead suggests there are a multitude of valid women's temporalities, again echoing Kristeva's proposed third phase of feminism. Secondly, it shows that although Claudia's decision to forego the traditional role of mother in favor of her own aspirations has consequences for both mother and daughter (a tough upbringing, a strained relationship), both mother and daughter live contented lives. Thus, their story rejects the frequently portrayed terrible fates of children whose mothers have desires and ambitions beyond family and motherhood (Raschke 120). And so the novel's feminist and its temporal discourse are based on the same principle: the individual's own experiences and desires trump those of societal expectations.

Ultimately it is recollection that is the basis for time and for identity in *Moon Tiger*, but memories in the novel are often false, conflicting, and continually reinterpreted – by Claudia and by others. To this effect, Claudia allows various people from her life to provide their own viewpoints to her story (Thwaite V). "My story is tangled with the stories of others … their voices must be heard also" (Lively 5). So committed to this idea is Claudia that she allows even conflicting views of her own life story, as in the case of Claudia and Gordon on the fossil hill, where the two focalizers give incompatible and opposing accounts of the same event. Glendening explains: "Lively acknowledges that we are all bound by chronological time and yet are capable—despite the power of forgetting—of reconstructing and changing its significance through memory in concert with other mental faculties" (68). A clear example of this ability is Claudia apologizing to Lisa for being a bad mother: "now it will always be there, complicating things," thinks Lisa (Lively 182), acknowledging that new information and interpretation continually revises and transforms our memories. A single sentence uttered will affect two people's past, present and future (Lively 182; Glendening 79). Human experience of lived time is not fixed and objective, rather it is often false, paradoxical, and continually revised.

Like Woolf, Lively emphasizes connections between people as part of her model of queer time and of identity. This is illustrated in both *Moon Tiger* and in *Mrs Dalloway* by having other characters as focalizers give their thoughts and opinions on the heroines, thus forming a fuller composite picture than any single narrator could. “The voice of history, of course, is composite,” says Claudia introducing her story, (Lively 5) and upon her death, time still moves on. Her hospital room has “the stillness of a place in which there are only inanimate objects … Beyond the window a car starts up, an aeroplane passes overhead. The world moves on. And beside the bed the radio gives the time signal and a voice starts to read the six o’clock news” (208). The death of her body would be a natural ending point for the story as Claudia is both protagonist, narrator, and author. Yet the text continues, describing her surroundings from a third person perspective. Claudia’s story does not end with her death, for it continues through her relationships and the world at large.

While Claudia certainly has regrets and caused some pain, Lively ultimately portrays a successful escape from normative time. Not only does Claudia literally survive and sustain her sense of “self” long past the limitations of her literary precursors, she also lives on in a double sense. In Woolf-esque fashion we know that Claudia lives on through the lives she has touched, as she herself thinks to the long-dead Tom: “I preserve you; as others will preserve me” (206). Similarly, Claudia was a historian and a journalist, and her writings will remain after death. Thus, even if her insights and values do not directly survive through her biological offspring, her queerness lives on indirectly much in the way described in “Time Binds” by Elizabeth Freeman. While you cannot make a queer person through reproduction, Freeman suggests that queers instead connect to one another by creating “continuing queer lifeworlds while not being witness to this future able to guarantee its form in advance, on the wager that there will be more queers to inhabit such worlds” (60-61). Through her inspiring refusal of normative temporality, Claudia did this directly with people like Laszlo and Gordon, and indirectly with her writings as a historian. On a broader level, perhaps even her life story, the text that is *Moon Tiger*, constitutes a message to others like her.

4.2 ... and its center

The aforementioned “core” of Claudia’s life is a marker entirely of her own design, and this independent ordering of her own temporality is a key component in her queer conceptualization of time. Claudia altogether heeds little mind to the markers of linear time, for example those of ageing as categories of “young” and “old” are co-existing, blurred and ultimately of little importance in her mind. In fact, while the protagonist does go through the defining stages of adulthood, motherhood, and old age, she does so entirely outside of patriarchal standards (Oró-Piqueras 148; 153). The two previously examined authors attempted in different ways to write beyond the traditional ending of woman as flower-narratives but did not completely distance themselves from normativity. In foregoing marriage and sidelining motherhood, Claudia shows that this old literary mythos concerning women protagonists is dead.

Youth and beauty, "flowering" and marriage, family life and inheritance, once the ultimate prize for literary heroines, are in this novel either relatively minor moments in a long and rich life or entirely absent. For much of the narrative, Claudia is middle-aged or older, but she still leads an independent and eventful life. Lively counters the traditionally expected image of older women as someone existing entirely within a family structure and who "would understand her passive role until the end of her life" (Oró-Piqueras 152). Claudia is far removed from this image and has in fact built her life outside of the family structure altogether. While she does have a daughter (and arguably a surrogate son), her life cannot be charted according to familial time, with her daughter being largely raised by her grandparents (Lively 12) while Claudia travels, works and follows her dreams. Through a self-structured and long-stretching depiction of Claudia's life, Lively writes a woman entirely unbeholden to previously dominant conventions of womanhood. Instead, Claudia has decided for herself what is most important in life.

To Claudia, everything else is less important than her time with Tom. All other markers of time are relative to the time spent with him in terms of ordering and importance. The scenes describing Claudia and Tom's time together in his tent are marked by passionate and sexual language, with a strong emphasis on physicality and sensuality. Later in life, these same feelings are still part of her body, able to be recalled at any moment: "Her mind and body … aches and howls for Tom. It is not that she is ever forgotten, but mostly emotion is dormant; it lies quiet biding its time. And then every so often something brings it raging forth, and she is back ten years ago, back in that Cairo summer" (Lively 149-150). Again Freeman's erotohistoriography is very applicable: "My body records certain events" says Claudia herself (Lively 166), and the nights spent with Tom are the most significant events of them all.

Just like *Mrs Dalloway*'s great kiss, so is Claudia through her memory of Tom pulled into a specific point in time, removing the barriers between then and now. Claudia acknowledges the eternality of her erotohistoriographical pleasure, stating that "nothing is ever lost, that everything can be retrieved, that a lifetime is not linear but instant. That, inside the head, everything happens at once" (Lively 68). This brings to mind the second part of

Kristeva's bipartite conceptualization of "women's time," what she calls a monumental time so far removed from linearity as to be infinite and timeless (Kristeva 16-17). Lively's main character constructs a queer model of time with a monumental core.

Whereas Woolf sets pleasure as a source of an alternative temporality that runs parallel to normative time, Lively places it at the center of her heroine's life and temporality. For Claudia, the affair became the secret center of her entire life, a time she refers to as the "core" of her life story (Lively 70; Glendening 75). So important is this pleasure that it is central to not only her own life but in her telling of "the history of the world". This revelation is also reflected in the work's title, where "Moon Tiger" is the name of a brand of spiral-shaped bug repellent that Claudia associates with Tom's tent in Egypt. The choice of title reinforces the importance of senses: "more visceral than sight or hearing, the sense of smell cannot be severed from the body and the physical world, and by juxtaposition, neither can memory or history" (Raschke 119). Natural sensations like smell or touch are not beholden to normative time's logics and constitute a path to alternative temporalities.

In *Moon Tiger,* Penelope Lively captures a fuller lifetime, completely disregarding antiquated notions of women-as-flower or of gendered time. She combines time as it exists in the body and in the mind, both nonnormative, into a fully realized alternative to normative temporality, one that through emphasis on the individual rather than the cultural allows greater equality and independence than the dominant conceptualization.

5. Conclusion

The purpose of this thesis has been to examine the progression of resistance to normative time by twentieth-century women authors as exemplified by three novels, with an emphasis on the dialogical progression throughout. In *The House of Mirth*, we follow a heroine dominated and ultimately destroyed by normative time. However, her death beckons the approach of more sustainable futures for women in linearity. Crucially, Wharton reattributes the reasons for women's underprivileged position in society from nature to the labor market and to artificial gender roles, and she calls for women to discard destructive and outdated myths regarding women's temporalities. In *Mrs Dalloway,* Woolf largely concurs and adds to the discourse two significant contributions. One is an individual-focused humanism wherein each person's holistic uniqueness is highlighted in response to the limiting categorizations imposed on women by the patriarchy. The other is in suggesting the natural time sense of the body as an antidote to the mentally located normative time. Clarissa's experience of time consists of two separate modes: the normative and the queer, and the latter grants shelter from the former. In *Moon Tiger*, Lively incorporates ideas suggested by the previous two authors as well as advances in feminist theory into a fully queer model of temporality entirely dislodged from normative time. Like Woolf, Lively focuses on the individual rather than the social, but takes it one step further by showing that a strong-willed individual can take control of their own temporality.

I now wish to highlight three central developments whose progress we can track throughout the three novels. The first concerns writing beyond the traditional feminine literary ending of marriage and perpetual familial time. This constituted a reckoning with not only societal but also literary conventions, as the dominant woman as flower-narrative had to cease before alternative women's temporalities could flourish in literature, and later, society. Lily's story shows the consequences of a failed marriage plot and shows that there are better options for women within linearity. Clarissa incorporates an alternative temporality into her life, showing that normativity is not the only option though it remains a robust force. Finally, Lively's heroine has truly moved beyond the old conventions, living and ordering her life story of her own accord.

Second, normative time was reattributed from the natural realm to its rightful designation as man-made and culturally determined. This was done, in part, through questioning the imagined binary opposition of mind and body. To Wharton these were both vehicles of normative time and neither provided much respite. In Woolf's novel they are separate and in conflict, where the mental time sense is shaped by social pressure, but the body is free. Clarissa is able to see beyond patriarchal blinds due to her innate connection to her past, a connection that is situated in the body. And finally, in *Moon Tiger* both mind and body are free from linearity. The other evolution necessary to dislodge normative time from nature was deemphasizing innate womanness and biological gender, instead putting the spotlight on oppressive and reductive gender roles. Gendered time is in both Wharton and Woolf's novels framed as a result of society failing to recognize women's work as such, rather than anything inherent to women's nature. In *Moon Tiger*, the individual's memories and experiences shape time, and gender hardly appears a factor.

The third main takeaway concerns the power balance between individual and society. For Lily, societal pressure is entirely inescapable, and she is unable to assert her own individuality. Clarissa finds a compromise; her individuality is stifled by society, but not entirely erased, as she holds onto past elements of her identity that do not align with conventional expectations of women. Finally, in Lively's temporal model, the individual's time is superior to social conventions.

Finally, I have a few suggestions for future research on the topic. To start, I have largely left unexamined a recurring motif of mother-daughter relationships. I imagine this could be very relevant to themes of feminism and time. A further potential weakness of the thesis is a narrow scope of upper-class, Anglo-American white authors, and the findings are as such representative only for a subsection of women writers. Finally, it would be interesting to apply the same analysis to more recent novels to see how the discourse develops, or if the literary "problem" of women's temporalities was truly solved by the time of *Moon Tiger*'s release.

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