



Tamar Barbakadze

**Catherine Colomb's VISION OF TIME:  
in Dialogue with Marcel Proust  
and Virginia Woolf**



PETER LANG

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## **Catherine Colomb's VISION OF TIME: in Dialogue with Marcel Proust and Virginia Woolf**

This monograph is the first substantial contribution to the study of the Swiss novelist Catherine Colomb's *dialogue* with Marcel Proust and Virginia Woolf as well as to time and memory studies. The framework and approach devised to examine Colomb's *œuvre* contribute to unravelling some of its complexities, not only in its curving style, ephemeral, and sequence-defying narrative, but also in its literary engagement with the science and philosophy that shaped modernity and proposed new ways of thinking time, knowledge, and the human experience. This thesis ultimately allows us to gain insight into the originality of Colombian time experience, memory, and point-of-view representations, transcending the alleged influence of her iconic predecessors.

Tamar Barbakadze has obtained her PhD in Arts at the University of Lausanne. She has published on the writings of Catherine Colomb, Virginia Woolf, and Marcel Proust. Her scholarly credentials in French and English draw on a range of questions including novelistic time, memory and perception, cultural transfer, postcolonial space and writing back to the misconceptions about global wars.

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## Abbreviations

- AROO *A Room of One's Own* (1929) by Virginia Woolf. (London: Penguin Books, 2004.)
- CE *Châteaux en enfance* (1945) by Catherine Colomb, in *TCC* (2019: 723–909.)
- Diary The Diary of Virginia Woolf (1915–1941), (ed.) Anne Olivier Bell. 5 vols. (London: The Hogarth Press, 1977–1984.) Vol. 1, 2 & 3.
- ET *Les Esprits de la Terre* (1953) by Catherine Colomb, in *TCC* (2019: 949–1108.)
- I. Suzanne Pérusset's interview with Catherine Colomb for the radio program 'Semaine littéraire' (1962), 'Catherine Colomb, Personnages comme sortis du brouillard'. Broadcasted on RTS (3 April 2018).
- L. *The Letters of Marion Reymond Colomb to Lady Ottoline Morrell*. A manuscript from Ottoline Morrell Collection 1882–1946. Colomb, Marion Reymond, (in French) 1913–1927. Held by Harry Ransom Center, the University of Texas at Austin.
- La Recherche References to *À la recherche du temps perdu* are to the Pléiade edition in four volumes, edited by Jean-Yves Tadié (Paris: Gallimard, 1987–1989). In the text, a roman numeral indicates the volume.
- MD *Mrs Dalloway* (1925) by Virginia Woolf. (London, Paris: Albatros, 1947.)
- Remembrance English translations are taken from: I. *Remembrance of Things Past*, tr. C. K. Scott Moncrieff and Terence Kilmartin. Vol. 1. (New York: Vintage books – Random House, 1982.); II. *The Guermites Way*. Translated by C. K. Scott Moncrieff. New York: The Modern Library, 1925; III. *Sodom and Gomorrah*. Translated by C. K. Scott Moncrieff and Terence Kilmartin. Revised by D. J. Enright. New York: The Modern Library, 1993; IV. *Time Regained*, tr. Stephen Hudson. London: Chatto & Windus, 1931.

- The Spirits*      *Les Esprits de la Terre* | *The Spirits of the Earth*, tr. John Taylor. (London, New York, Calcutta: Seagull Books, 2016.)
- TCC              The complete works by Catherine Colomb: *Tout Catherine Colomb*, (ed.) Daniel Maggetti. (Genève: Zoé, 2019.)
- TA                *Le Temps des Anges* (1962). By Catherine Colomb, in TCC (2019: 1137–1317.)
- TL                *To the Lighthouse* (1927) by Virginia Woolf. (New York: A. A. Knopf, 1992).

# Introduction

In her 1962 radio interview for the ‘*Semaine littéraire*’, the Swiss-French writer Catherine Colomb (1892–1965) highlighted her fascination with the question of time which influenced her thought and aesthetic choices throughout her writing career: ‘It’s very important to me, time, the problem of time, which I have never been able to solve, of course, but it haunts me, it’s kind of a mystery to me.’<sup>1</sup> [‘*C’est très important chez moi, le temps, le problème du temps, sans que je n’arrive jamais à le résoudre, bien entendu, mais il me hante, c’est pour moi une sorte de mystère.*’] (I.) She believed that space was the ‘abode of the living’ and ‘time—the kingdom of the dead.’<sup>2</sup> [‘*L’espace, séjour des vivants, le temps, empire des morts.*’] (Colomb (2019 (1962): 1380)) The concern with the cosmic issue is explicit in her *œuvre*. Time is one of the dominant themes of her novels, at its best mirrored as an obstacle to understanding life and the world as well as non-linear and fugitive that no order can approximate. Only by diving into the rich world of memory may the problem of time be addressed. This ontological vertigo coinciding with the renewed perception of time by science and philosophy at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century commands Colomb’s aesthetics. Her novels of memory take us to the heights and depths of what the human mind can conceive and represent time as a deep and complex reality. With their fragmented narratives unfolding on a vertical axis as in a poem, they open in the vertical world of imagination and metaphor and encourage self-reflection.

Colomb is best known for three novels, namely *Châteaux en Enfance* [Eng. Castles in Childhood] (1945), *Les Esprits de la Terre* [Eng. The Spirits of the Earth] (1953), and *Le Temps des Anges* [Eng. The Time of Angels] (1962). The manuscript of *CE* was submitted to a writing competition of *Guilde du Livre*. Colomb was awarded the ‘Prix du livre vaudois’ for her 1953 novel in 1956, and the ‘Prix Rambert’ for her 1962 novel which was originally published by

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1 The translation of all passages from Catherine Colomb’s work (except her novel *ET*) and letters quoted in this thesis are mine. The original passages in French of Colomb’s and Proust’s *œuvres* are inserted in the main text using square brackets so as not to break the unity of sentences in English. For text uniformity, critical comments in French are given in footnotes.

2 All the extracts from Catherine Colomb’s *Châteaux en Enfance*, *Les Esprits de la Terre*, *Le Temps des Anges*, *Réponse de Madame Catherine Colomb*, and *Chemins de mémoire* are excerpted from *TCC*.

Gallimard. She also wrote *Des Noix sur un bâton* in the 1930s (first published in *TCC* in 2019). Her first published novel *Pile ou Face* [Eng. Heads or Tails], originally entitled *Trop de Mémoire* [Eng. Too much Memory], appeared under the pen name Catherine Tissot at the Editions Victor Attinger in 1934. (*TCC*: 15) Her most recent novels *Les Royaumes Combattants* [Eng. The Fighting Realms] (entitled *Les Malfilâtre* in *TCC*) and *La Valise* [Eng. The Suitcase] were not quite finished when Colomb died in 1965.

Born in 1882, in Saint-Prex on the shore of Lake Geneva, Marie-Louise Colomb (her real name) spent most of her life in the canton of Vaud. In her youth, she stayed in Weimar, Potsdam, Paris, and England. Colomb studied literature at the University of Lausanne. Between 1911 and 1920 she published several articles, reviews, and fairy-tales in local journals including *La Tribune de Lausanne* and *La Revue Romande*. In 1918–1920, she worked on an unfinished doctoral thesis entitled ‘*Béat-Louis de Muralt. Voyageur et fanatique*’ at the University of Lausanne.

Colomb has never been a widely reviewed and studied author; however, there has been a growing interest in her life and work recently. Many have read her as ‘avant-gardist’ in the collection ‘Catherine Colomb: une avant-garde inaperçue’ (2017) or located her *œuvre* in the ‘real world’ by relating Colomb’s three major novels to the pre-war, the war, and the post-war experiences. (Geinoz 2019) Contemporary criticism has further focused on the elements of the ‘English novel’ in the novelistic prose of Colomb and few other Swiss Francophone female writers. (Schlöpfer 2019) But none of these works compare Colomb’s vision of time to other authors.’ Nor do they study her representations of memory—what early critics (such as Gustave Roud (1945, 1953, 1956), Philippe Jaccottet (1953), Georges Anex (1962), André Corboz (1962), Jean-Luc Seylaz (1972, 1973), and Pierre-André Rieben (1973)) tended to emphasize in Colomb’s writing. A more recent substantial study of Colomb’s 1945 novel *CE* by Lise Favre (1993) focuses on the mechanisms of memory. Yet, Favre pays little attention to the question of time and does not compare Colomb to other authors. How then might we grasp the significance of Colomb’s thought and style otherwise than by placing them in the literary context? Does not Colomb’s representation of time gain more meaning when discovered along with other novelists’ conception of time? The recent edition of her *Complete Works* (*TCC*) suggests that it does. This volume includes many of Colomb’s unpublished texts which hold the evidence of her literary engagement with the culture of her time.<sup>3</sup>

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3 Some of Colomb’s articles reproduced in *TCC* are used as evidence of her dialogue with the culture of the age in Chapter 4.



A few critics point out affinities between the works of Colomb and Proust, Colomb and Woolf. Gustave Roud makes an interesting observation about the differences between Proust's and Colomb's views of time, suggesting that time is 'the only winner' in *La Recherche* and 'entirely contained' in *ET*. (1997 (1956): 59) Thereby, he holds that 'a victory over time' is achieved in Colomb. In their recent articles, Beryl Schlossman (2002) and Christophe Pradeau (2020) also relate Colomb's and Proust's uses of the lamp (or lantern) to the novelist's art and the recollection of reading, respectively. Colomb and Woolf are brought close in the frameworks of gender (Cossy 2008) and formal innovations. (Tappy 1979; Kuratli 2007) José-Flore Tappy thinks the absence of a 'linear and properly temporal perspective' is the common point of Colomb's and Woolf's fiction, whereas the main difference lies in the representation of the characters' thoughts. (1979: 66) Theres Kuratli suggests that the readers can tell who speaks or thinks in Woolf's novels, but they cannot in Colomb's. (2007: 39) These comparisons have been made only in passing. Yet, they are useful for this study and lead us to suggest that Colomb dialogues with both Proust and Woolf by her vision of time.

In this thesis, we want to study time by reading Catherine Colomb's novels in dialogue with the writings of Marcel Proust and Virginia Woolf, as the title suggests. This study incidentally aims, on the one hand, to point out the significance of Colomb's *œuvre* in 20<sup>th</sup>-century literature next to Proust's and Woolf's fiction; on the other hand, to add to our knowledge of the questions of time, memory, and perception in the novelistic prose. Catherine Colomb read *La Recherche* many years before writing her novels, as we learn from the letters (now held by the University of Texas at Austin) that she wrote in 1913–1938 to her friend Lady Ottoline Morrell—a patron of the arts and an associate of the Bloomsbury Group. She expressed her admiration towards Proust's talent in 1925. By that time, Colomb had read the first two volumes of *La Recherche*. She applauded Proust's skills to describe the most unusual images and objects with high precision and could not think of any other writer with such lexical breadth and depth of thought:

Cette semaine, enfin, j'ai pu lire les deux premiers Proust que jusqu'ici je n'avais eu que furtivement entre les mains. Je savais que je l'aimerais tant que je ne voulais le lire que lorsqu'il serait à moi. Il est encore plus admirable que mon rêve ! Quelle profondeur, et surtout quelle précision dans les termes pour décrire les choses les plus obscures ! Quelles images, non pas lyriques ou colorées seulement, mais exactement adaptées à l'objet qu'il leur compare ! Tous les autres écrivains, —par exemple et surtout Anatole France— sont superficiels à côté de lui, de pauvres mares à moitié desséchées à côté de l'océan.<sup>4</sup> (*L.*, 12 December 1925)

4 Eng. 'This week I was finally able to read Proust's first two [volumes] that I could not have caught more than a fleeting glimpse of so far. I knew I would love it so much

Colomb's letters mention Proust again two years later. She seems to have been deeply touched by the way Proust described the Narrator's reaction to his grandmother's death and pays tribute to his analysis of the nature of love and jealousy. But she shows less interest towards 'these unnatural loves':

(Chaque fois que je pense à ma grand-mère, je pense à la façon dont Proust a parlé de la sienne). J'ai vécu avec Albertine pour me consoler de votre départ. Comme vous, je préfère le 2e volume ; décidément, j'ai un peu de peine à m'intéresser à ces amours contre nature. Mais quelle étude de la jalousie, de l'amour qui se rallume quand l'objet échappe, et s'éteint dès qu'il est sûr de le tenir !<sup>5</sup> (L., 3 October 1927)

Colomb also mentions Proust in her diary. In 1959, she praised Proust's transformation of life into fiction by using the power of poetry.

J'ai réfléchi au sujet de Proust : il décrit bien en effet le vide et l'ennui d'avant 1914, mais quant à propos de la soirée à l'opéra, il dépeint les grottes marines, et le vieux beau à monocle comme un poisson qui porte encore sur l'œil un morceau de son aquarium... c'est quand même la réalité transformée par les pouvoirs de la poésie.<sup>6</sup> (Colomb (1973 (1959): 18))

There is no evidence to claim that Colomb ever read Woolf's novels. However, her letters record that she read *The Common Reader* and *AROO* (1929) in the 1930s. In 1927, Colomb shows her appreciation and gratitude for receiving Virginia Woolf's first volume of *The Common Reader* from Lady Ottoline Morrell. She further pays tribute to Woolf's thought and shows how much pleasure she found in reading Woolf's essays on Montaigne, Jane Austen, and the Brontë sisters Charlotte and Emily. Colomb also states that Woolf's book gives her a desire to develop herself:

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that I only wanted to read it when it would have been mine. It is even more admirable than my dream! How deep, and above all, how precise a language to describe the most obscure things! What images, not lyric or colored only, but on equal terms with the object compared! All the other writers—especially like Anatole France—are superficial next to him, the poor half-dried ponds beside the ocean.

- 5 Eng. '(Every time I think of my grand-mother, I think of the way Proust spoke of his one). I lived with Albertine to console me at your departure. Like you, I prefer the second volume; indeed, I can hardly take an interest in these unnatural loves. But what a study of jealousy, of love that rekindles when the object escapes and goes out as soon as it is sure to hold it!'
- 6 Eng. 'I have reflected upon Proust: he does indeed describe the emptiness and the boredom of before 1914, but as for the evening at the opera, he portrays the sea caves and the old, handsome man with a monocle like a fish which still wears a piece of its aquarium on its eye. It is all the same reality transformed by the powers of poetry.'

Merci infiniment pour le beau livre que j'ai reçu il y a quelques jours ; il est remarquablement vivant. Montaigne, que j'adore et que je croyais bien connaître, est peint à un autre point de vue ; et quel plaisir de lire ses essais sur Jane Austen ou sur les sœurs Brontë, que vous m'avez fait connaître et que j'aime tant. Vraiment ce livre donne [...] envie de travailler et [...] de toujours lire, lire.<sup>7</sup> (*L.*, 3 October 1927)

Colomb refers to her reading of *A Writer's Diary* (by Virginia Woolf, published by her husband Leonard Woolf in 1953) after the publication of her novels *CE* and *ET*:

Je lis avec passion le livre de Virginia Woolf, son journal avec « le nouveau livre qui s'agite en elle », puis qui prend corps, puis qui trouve un titre, puis qui change, et ensuite l'intérêt pour le nombre d'exemplaires vendus !<sup>8</sup> (Colomb (1973 (1960): 18))

Colomb's dialogue with Woolf is indirect since she has not read her novels. While considering her in-depth reading of *La Recherche*, as her letters testify, Colomb's dialogue with Proust is genuine. But there are better reasons for including Proust and Woolf in the study of Colomb's vision of time. The reasons determining the choice of these authors are that there is much to be found in the matter of time-problem, the poetics of memory and perception in their works. Colomb's representations of time, memory, and perception gain more weight and meaning when compared to Proust's *À la recherche du temps perdu* (1913–1927) and Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway* (1925) and *To the Lighthouse* (1927), which are best known for their dealings with the subjects of time and memory, time and consciousness, respectively. Earlier theorists, namely Erich Auerbach (1946), Paul Ricœur (1984), and contemporary critics such as Martin Hägglund (2012), Liliana Rampello (2021), Giuliana Giulietti (2021), among many, have highlighted parallels between Proustian and Woolfian conceptions of time. Colomb's and Proust's/Colomb's and Woolf's *œuvres* have even more things in common. It is impossible to ignore the relevant similarities between Colomb's and Proust's practices of exploring time in memory and the subjective content of Colomb's and Woolf's novels mirroring the ephemeral, transient

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7 Eng. 'Thank you very much for the beautiful book I received a few days ago. It is remarkably alive. Montaigne, whom I adore and whom I thought I knew well, is seen from another perspective. And, how pleasant it is to read her essays on Jane Austen and on the Brontë sisters, which you introduced to me and I love so much. This book truly motivates you to work and [...] to read and read and read, always.'

8 Eng. 'I am passionate about reading Virginia Woolf's book, her diary with 'the new book in progress', which begins to take shape, finds a title, then changes it, and then the interest in the number of copies sold!'

qualities of temporal reality. Concentrating on these commonalities allows me to cast light on both the similarities linking Colomb to Proust and Woolf; and the divergences between their narrative solutions and metaphysical vision. A comparative analysis of the specificities of their practices in handling time, and multiple and varied ways of mirroring temporal experiences by these three authors further adds to our definition of novelistic time. We will study the question of time in the form of memory within Proust's and Colomb's art, and in the form of mental activity within Woolf's and Colomb's fiction. For memory can be understood as a process leading to artistic creation in a comparative study of Colomb and Proust. As a theme or as a structural element, it is attached to the question of time and thereby represents the central element for a study of the question of time. Likewise, the analysis of Colomb's and Woolf's conveying the reality of time in a novel undoubtedly calls attention to their representations of consciousness.<sup>9</sup>

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- 9 We do not overlook the fact that many have written on consciousness and unconsciousness in Proust's *oeuvre*. Proust himself claims, in referring to his volumes to have composed a set of novels about the unconscious: '*mon livre serait peut-être comme un essai d'une suite de "Romans de l'inconscient"*' [my book might look like an essay of a series of "novels of the unconscious"]; see Proust (1971 (1913): 558). He explicitly compares *La Recherche* to a 'dogmatic work' intended to illustrate 'the search for Truth' in a famous letter to Jacques Rivière on 6 February 1914: '*mon livre est un ouvrage dogmatique et une construction! J'ai trouvé plus probe et plus délicat comme artiste de ne pas laisser voir, de ne pas annoncer que c'était justement à la recherche de la Vérité que je parlais*'. [My book is a dogmatic work and a construction. I found it more upright and more delicate as an artist not to announce that it was actually in search of Truth that I was setting out.] See Proust (*Correspondance*, vol. XIII: 98–99). In a letter to Camille Vettard Proust compares *À la Recherche* to '(...) *un télescope qui serait braqué sur le Temps car le télescope fait apparaître à la conscience des phénomènes inconscients qui, complètement oubliés, sont quelquefois situés très loin dans le passé*' [(...) a telescope which would be pointed on Time because the telescope brings to consciousness unconscious phenomena which, completely forgotten, are sometimes located very far in the past']. See Proust (*Correspondance*, vol. XXI: 77). 'The telescope' or involuntary memory serves then as a way back to consciousness. The episodes based on sensations, impressions and involuntary memory in *La Recherche* reflect, for Edward Bizub, Proust's contemporary theories concerning the unconscious before the Freudian revolution; see Bizub (2014: 111–124). A search of 'lost time' may well be a search of unconscious ('*Se pourrait-il que le "temps perdu" ne soit que la désignation voilée de la recherche de l'inconscient?*') [Could it be that "lost time" is just the veiled designation of the search for the unconscious?] (Bizub, 2006: 16) and Proust's act of writing involuntary memory aims to bring back to consciousness the memories of suffering 'repressed' into the unconscious; see Henrot (1991: 75).

If we should read Colomb and Proust side by side regarding their engagements with the meanings of time and memory, so should we read Colomb and Woolf in light of the intersections between the themes of time and consciousness.

It is the first comparative study of Colomb, Proust, and Woolf. This thesis also proposes a systematic book-length study of Colomb's fiction, examining the originality of her aesthetics and thought against the backdrop of literature of her time. Hopefully it offers new readings of Colomb's 1945 and 1953 novels in comparison with *La Recherche* and with Woolf's two major novels *TL* and *MD*. *MD* is used as a more linear and understandable model to elucidate what Colomb is doing in *CE*. While reading *ET* in light of *TL* unravels the complexity of Colomb's enunciative and temporal operations, a comparative study of Colomb and Proust also allows us to discover various thematic and formal commonalities between their literary works. These commonalities include experimentations in temporality, a narrative veiled by memory, rather fragments of memory, a multiplicity of characters that break the chronology and objects which signal death or survival. In Colomb's two novels (*CE* and *ET*) and in Proust's *La Recherche* we will also discover a focus on the childhood memories which stimulate an artistic creation, and memory as a mental experience feeding associations in Colomb and reminiscences in Proust. All these elements create the meaning of time in Colomb's and Proust's works. We choose to compare *CE* and *ET* to *La Recherche* also because unlike Colomb's other novels these ones are mostly, if not entirely, produced by memories. Besides, for a comparative study of the aesthetics of time in Colomb and Proust, *CE* and *ET* are more relevant than *Le Temps des Anges*, which was published half a century later than *La Recherche*.

Critics have focused massively on Proust's and Woolf's compelling representations of time in their novels from the outset. If Proust's vision of time and memory was at first regarded as Bergsonian, from the 1940s until the 1970s, several critics have made a distinction between the experiences of time and memory in *La Recherche* and in Bergson's philosophy. Contemporary critics have added value to Proust's outlook about time and memory by reading it through Einstein, Freud, Schelling, Schopenhauer, the Decadent movement, and Avant-gardism. (See 4.1 Introduction: modernist time.) There have also been changes in the reception of Woolf's novels. Early critics tended to read *TL* and *MD* through Henri Bergson's conception of time. Contemporary criticism has focused on Woolf's representations of time in the 'impersonal' universe as well as in conjunction with her explorations of multiple points of view.<sup>10</sup> Currently,

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10 See 3.2 Current state of research and 4.1 Introduction: modernist time.

some think that the Cambridge philosophy and Fry's visual aesthetics informed Woolf's vision of time; others relate it to the popular scientific theories in that period. (*Ibid.*) Like *La Recherche*, the lesser-known *CE* and *ET* deal with time by using the notion of memory, and the intersections between time and memory in Proust and Colomb are what we will deal with at considerable length in the thesis. But their nonlinear narrative, freedom of association, and shifts in point of view also mirror Colomb's modernist mind, allowing us to see that she writes a bit more like Woolf than Proust.

The framework and approach which I have devised to examine Colomb's oeuvre contribute to unravelling some of its complexities, subtleties, and intricacies, not the least the all-pervasive blurring of temporalities, characters, and objects, as well as the sense of loss from which it stems. The thesis shows that Catherine Colomb's work is of impressive complexity, not only in its curving style, ephemeral and sequence-defying narrative, but also in its literary engagement with the science and philosophy that shaped modernity and proposed new ways of thinking time, knowledge, and the human experience. This thesis comprises four chapters. *Chapter 1* is devoted to the individuation of the experience of time in Colomb's novels. It revolves around the analysis of the tense system, sentence structure, Colomb's use of point of view and character to create the sense of time, and the relation between time and narrative. *Chapter 2* explores the poetics of memory while reading time both as a theme and structural element in Proust's and Colomb's works. *Chapter 3* focuses on how the representation of consciousness adds to the meaning of time in Colomb and Woolf. The last chapter represents my attempt to widen my analysis further by reflecting on Colomb's, Proust's, and Woolf's negotiations with the *air du temps*. By examining her metaphysical thought inseparable from her aesthetics, we gain insight into the originality of Colombian time experience. In highlighting the complexity of Colomb's enunciative and temporal experiments in comparison to Woolf's, with a focus on the workings of consciousness and perception, this study posits, on the one hand, that Colomb has more in common with Woolf than with Proust in her dealing with time as a structuring device. On the other hand, the thesis studies Colomb's tracing time into memory to show how similar her project is to Proust's and how it differs from Woolf's.

# I. Time and Narrative in *Châteaux En Enfance*

## 1.1 Introduction

Readers of *Castles in Childhood* (*CE*) will remember two main scenes, namely the christening banquet and the reception for the Shah expanding through many pages, on almost half of the novel. These scenes are purposefully so constructed as to occupy more narrative time than they would in real life to inform the reader about all the interconnections of the stories. The narrative imbricates long epithets and biographical details in the Homeric style. A series of descriptions of characters' brief biographies, gestures, verbal oddities, physical awkwardness, and a detailed account of their ancestries constantly interrupt the major scenes. Paradoxically, a single phrase compresses many years in the cases where the writer offers a long list of numerous biographical stories of different characters; whereas the christening banquet and the reception for the Shah can last no more than a day in real life, they take more time and space in the narrative than the rest of the events. The scenes of the dinner and the reception interweave with other stories. Telling the past episodes from the characters' lives diverts the reader's attention from the christening banquet and the reception settings. Hence, the reader is kept breathless by tracking all the connecting elements of the story; sudden shifts in time keep him hooked and curious to understand how all these numerous, newly introduced characters arrived there, as he hears them speak or think.

In other cases, current experiences are revealed only by describing preceding events and stories somehow related to them. The readers discover Marguerite's experience of going close to a 'grand mur' ['big wall'] through other previous events that took place near the 'big wall'. (*CE*: 839) In detail, they learn that one of the dead characters called Alphonse had fallen from that wall. Sometime later, 'the three mothers, as they were sweeping away the dead leaves from their crimson silk skirts or laces-brushes' [*Les trois mères balayant les feuilles mortes de leurs jupes de soie puce ou de leurs lacets-brosses*] informed the others: 'Do not climb on the big wall, that's where Uncle Alphonse fell. [*« Ne grimpe pas sur le grand mur, c'est de là que l'oncle Alphonse est tombé ! »*'] (*Ibid.*) The entire novel is composed of similar types of passages that expose multiple temporal layers at once.

These instances reveal that the representation of time in *CE* is retrospectively related to the narrative. This chapter seeks to understand the extent to which the novel departs from a chronological ordering of events. Tracing the relationship

between the handling of time and narrative development allows us to see that a peculiar way of narrative composition succeeds in multiplying perspectives on time in *CE*.

This chapter aims to interpret time as an aesthetic element in Catherine Colomb's novel *CE*. It provides insight into Colomb's experimentations which contribute to developing the idea of time. Of all Colomb's novels, *CE* displays the most obvious aesthetic autonomy, representing the best example to observe on the variety of perspectives about time.<sup>11</sup> Focus on *CE* in this chapter will help highlight the distinctive qualities of Colomb's experiments in the narrative development and representation of time. Presentation of the relatively less known Colomb's dealing with fictional time and narrative will be followed by a comparative study of Colomb's and Proust's and Colomb's and Woolf's novels.

This chapter explores the progression of Colomb's narrative and its effects on the representation of time. It is divided into two parts. The first highlights the limits beyond which the experimentations with narrative and temporal modes are not done in *CE*. The second focuses on the old and new narrative formulas in *CE* and *ET*. With its focus on both borrowings and innovations, this chapter aims to place Colomb's novels in their times.

## 1.2 Review of studies on narrative and time in Colomb

Catherine Colomb has never attempted to interpret her work. She gave the readers complete liberty to read her novels in their particular fashion. Yet, Colomb has expressed her perspectives and curiosity about the mechanisms of time elsewhere than in her fictional work. In one of her letters to Lady Ottoline Morrell, she notes: 'I believe that the laws of space and time are upset.' [*Je crois que les lois de l'espace et du temps sont bouleversées?*] (L.: 20 June 1928) But sometimes she feels as if the problem of time is solvable when stating: 'I come back to myself, and the laws of the universe, suspended for a moment, resume their monotonous effects.' [*Je crois que les lois de l'espace et du temps sont bouleversées. [...] je reviens à moi-même, et les lois de l'univers, un instant suspendues, reprennent leurs effets monotones?*] (*Ibid.*)

Colomb best reveals her fascination with the paradoxes of time in *CE*. The novel was published under several titles and pseudonyms. In 1943, under the title of *Les Chemins de mémoire* and using the pen name Catherine Charrière, it

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11 For a study of the aesthetics of time, Colomb's 1953 novel *ET* will be discussed in the last section of this chapter and the following chapters.



was presented to the literary contest of the *Guilde du Livre* committee composed of Gustave Roud, Paul Budry, C.F. Ramuz, H.-L. Mermod, Edmond Jaloux, and Albert Mermoud. (*Œuvres complètes* (1993, III: 118)) A year later, an extract from the novel signed by Catherine Salvagnin was introduced in the *Formes et Couleurs* journal. (*TCC*: 15) Only in 1945 was *CE* published under Catherine Colomb's name by the *Guilde du Livre*. The committee members of the *Guilde du Livre* prize observed that *CE* surpassed the limits of a chronological narration. As the manuscript was not divided into chapters, they first dismissed it. However, the well-known Swiss poet and committee member Gustave Roud recognized Colomb's talent and the exceptional value of her experiments with time and a fictional form. In his 1956 article 'Catherine Colomb, romancière vaudoise', he explained that the novel deployed audacious 'incantatory technique(s)' to represent 'the world of absolute remembrance, the omnipotence of our memory'. The use of the techniques resulted in the temporal complexity:

The only permitted halts, such as full stops at the end of sentences, the suspense, were well below that needed to regain one's footing, with the most striking aspect being an extraordinary temporal confusion. In such a way that the dizzy pace furthered the quick disturbing of temporal order. Thus, after a few pages, one would think to be losing ground all at once. It meant the premature (and final) termination of the book by the reader. We live our lives with our internal clock. How many of us do not see the chronological, irreversible, irrevocable time? Are there many who have gone beyond this vision, making a moment, the mysterious experience of the eternal, from a flash and sensing that time can be battled? Catherine Colomb is one of them. She discovered the world of absolute remembrance, the omnipotence of our memory. It is a continuing quest, always unusual too, because the characters we go back to are in a timeless light; we reach them in both profound unity and multiple successive aspects. Why has she sought and discovered such a bold form of writing for her *Castles in Childhood*? Only such incantatory technique could have satisfied her. If we use the images of musical order, *Castles in Childhood* is a series of arpeggiated chords, each corresponding to a vertical dive into the realm of memory. Yet, this is one of the major secrets of the enchantment exercised by the book: to this static structure, a subtly concerted counterpoint is superimposed, which ensures the continuity of the story till the last sentence. Incantation, bewitchment.<sup>12</sup> (Roud (1997 (1956): 64–5))

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12 Translations and paraphrases of critical comments from French into English are mine. Fr. '[L]es seules haltes permises : des points à la ligne, suspens bien insuffisant pour reprendre pied, [...] dont le caractère le plus frappant était une extraordinaire confusion temporelle. Si bien qu'au vertige de l'allure s'ajoutait, en profondeur, le vertige des temps bouleversés et qu'au bout de quelques pages à peine, on croyait perdre pied une fois pour toutes. Ce qui eût signifié la rupture prématurée (et définitive) entre cette œuvre et son lecteur. [...] nous jouons notre vie sur une certaine image

A 'bold form of writing', for Roud, must be a product of conscious thought, of 'a continuing quest', rather than one developed only based on instinct. In his interpretation, this new fictional form offers a plethora of 'images of musical order', which 'correspond to a vertical dive into the realm of memory'. Roud refers to the type of structure in which the narrative unfolds on the vertical axis. Vertical narrative paths are generally used in cinema and poetry. They lead to a 'spiral trajectory' (Le Grice 2001: 318) in a film and a 'plunging down' in poetry. (Sitney 1970: 183) By employing a vertical narrative path, *CE* addresses the realm of memory. The vertical path in which the narrative unfolds entails an 'extraordinary temporal confusion', which Roud thinks is one of the most relevant qualities of Catherine Colomb's novel. Due to the frequent change in the temporal order of events, the narrative is made of multiple single fragments, requiring the reader to study the text very attentively. Furthermore, according to Gustave Roud, a major 'surprise' within the book is the uniqueness of the 'narrative tension', which, in a linear development of the plot, is produced by 'suspense'—one of the components of narrativity.<sup>13</sup> However, Colomb achieves this effect otherwise: through features of discourse.<sup>14</sup> She captures the reader's attention without having to create dramatic situations. Instead, when delivering 'narrative tension', the lack of suspense is compensated through prolepsis and analepsis.

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intérieure du temporel. Combien d'entre nous ne « voient-ils » pas encore le temps linéaire, irréversible, irrévocable ? Et combien sont-ils, ceux qui ont dépassé cette vue et pressenti, pour avoir fait, l'instant d'un éclair, la mystérieuse expérience de l'éternel, que le temps peut être vaincu ? Catherine Colomb est de ceux-ci. Elle a découvert le monde du souvenir absolu, la toute-puissance de notre mémoire. [...] Une quête incessante, toujours étrange aussi, car les personnages vers qui nous redescendons en nous sous l'éclairage intemporel, nous les atteignons à la fois dans leur profonde unité retrouvée et dans la multiplicité de leurs aspects successifs. [...] pourquoi la romancière [...] a cherché et découvert pour *Les Châteaux*, une forme d'écriture si hardie. Seule cette technique comme incantatoire pouvait la satisfaire. *Les Châteaux* sont, pour recourir à une image d'ordre musical, une suite d'accords arpégés dont chacun correspond à une plongée verticale au royaume de la mémoire. Mais, et c'est là un des secrets majeurs de l'envoûtement exercé par cette œuvre, à cette structure statique se superpose un contrepoint subtilement concerté qui assure la progression du récit jusqu'à la phrase finale. Incantation, envoûtement'.

- 13 According to Meir Sternberg 'suspense', 'curiosity', and 'surprise' are the basic components of narrativity; see Sternberg (2003: 297–395).
- 14 Chapter 4 entitled 'From form to function' explains that 'narrative tension' can be created not only through thematic material, but also through discursive elements; see Baroni (2017).

Prolepsis describes a type of narration 'by which a future event is presumed to have happened' (Cuddon 1991: 747–748), while analepsis, in contrast, refers to the narration of an event that precedes the point in the story where the reader is currently placed. The frequent recurrence of these literary devices contributes to a replacement of a linear narrative sequence by an almost simultaneous vision of multiple temporal experiences.<sup>15</sup> Gustave Roud attributes these literary devices to the 'vertical plunging' for the 'continuity of the story till the last sentence' and does not believe that the structure plays any role in the process. He thinks paradoxical the gap between the 'immutable' and 'irreversible' structure and the dynamic and 'progressive' narrative movement. The concept of time has increasingly become the focus in the studies of *CE*, *ET*, and *TA*, following the commentaries of Gustave Roud<sup>16</sup> in Switzerland and Jean Paulhan in France.<sup>17</sup> Roud was the first to underline the significance of the idea of time within Colomb's fictional prose. Since then, the critical essays and reviews of Colomb's books have focused on the innovative aspects and significant trends in her fictional writings. In the 1950s, a few articles explained how Colomb's novels enrich our perceptions of time and narrative. Philippe Jaccottet in 1953, and Georges Anex and André Corboz in 1962 suggested that since Colomb imposed no limits in her narrative experiments, her concepts of time remarkably differed from the one measured by the clock. 'The author [of *CE*] knows very well what ideas she is going to give birth to, to construct, to roll up, to unfold, to make more precise as the narrative moves; the narrative, which, according to Anex 'is so open and unforeseeable, so divergent it seems as if its thread will escape her at any

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15 Genette calls 'anachrony' the change of linear thinking by a mental vision, often represented through 'prolepses' (i.e., flash-forwards) and 'analepses' within the novel. (1980: 72–40).

16 See Roud (1997 (1945): 49–52); (1997 (1956): 58–62); (1997 (1956): 63–38)

17 In July 1947, Jean Paulhan advised Gaston Gallimard to publish *CE*. In his letter, Paulhan wrote: 'Il a paru, il y a un an ; à la Guilde, un livre assez étonnant dont personne n'a parlé : *Châteaux en enfance*, de Catherine Colomb. Je crois que je vous proposerai de le prendre à la NRF'. See Paulhan (26 July 1947 (2011): 369) | 'A year ago, a rather surprising book appeared at the Guilde du Livre. It went unnoticed: Catherine Colomb's *Châteaux en enfance*. I think that I will suggest that you accept it for the NRF'. Gallimard did not hear Jean Paulhan's advice that time. Later, in August 1951, Paulhan wrote to him again: 'Je crois que j'ai trouvé une romancière de génie.' | 'I think I have found a novelist who is a genius.' Paulhan (2 August 1951 (2011): 449). Gallimard only published Colomb's later novel *TA* in 1962.

moment'.<sup>18</sup> (Anex (1962: 10)) Anex further relates the elaboration of an imaginary world and the humorous imagery in *CE* with Colomb's uses of memory and time. Likewise, Philippe Jaccottet (1953) claims that the narrator takes us on a memory journey and pushes temporal and spatial boundaries. Tracing time into memory, for André Corboz (1962), leads to the nonlinear structure and temporal 'anachrony', and plunging into 'the fluid succession of spaces'. Therefore, the novel's narrative structure reminds him of Fallingwater designed by Frank Lloyd Wright, and Cubist sculpture and painting. (Corboz 1962: 153) The narrative of *CE*, according to him, is variable, evolving through auto-production. As for time itself, its mechanism is understandable outside the terrestrial world. (*Ibid.*, 157)

In the 1970s, Pierre-André Rieben and Jean-Luc Seylaz continued to focus on the relevance of memory in Colomb's fiction but from a slightly different angle. Rieben sought to understand what effects memory narrative has on the representation of time. He highlighted its tendency to abolish temporal and spatial distances, enabling a meeting between the dead and the living. (Rieben 1973: 46) Seylaz dismissed Georges Anex's and Gustave Roud's hypothesis that memory governs the narrative in *CE* and *ET*. Instead, Colomb's texts derive from a sort of '*scriptum-continuum*' (Seylaz 1973: 86), a way of writing with no spaces between words and sentences, mainly in Roman and Brahmic scripts. (Scriptio continua – Wikipedia.) Accordingly, with the principles of '*liaison*' and association discerned, the basis of the narrative composition can also become intelligible.

Thus, from the 1950s until the 1970s, Gustave Roud, Georges Anex, André Corboz, Pierre-André Rieben, and Jean-Luc Seylaz made notable observations about the unfamiliar development of narrative and the conceptualization of time in Colomb's novels. Yet, they addressed these questions separately. Besides, Gustave Roud (1968), Jean-Luc Seylaz (1972, 1973), André Corboz (1962), Pierre-André Rieben (1973), Philippe Jaccottet (1997 (1953)), and Georges Anex (1962, 1968) only qualified the exceptional qualities of Colomb's novels. For instance, Seylaz notes that Colomb did not share anything with her contemporary and previous writers, and she could 'put forward a novelistic form which seems to owe everything to the author's instinct, imagination, to the needs of her heart [...], in short to her vision and nothing with the literature of her

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18 Fr. 'L'auteur sait fort bien ce qui naît au fur et à mesure, ce qui se construit, s'enroule, se déploie, se précise au cours d'un récit si ouvert et si imprévoyant, si divergent, dont il semble que le fil à tout instant va lui échapper.'

own time.<sup>19</sup> (1972: 176) In 1993, Lise Favre offered a more substantial study of Colomb's narrative but again with a focus on innovative markers in her formal experimentations and less attention paid to the mechanisms of time. The narrative of *CE*, for Favre, develops at the expense of 'associations of thought' and 'earlier speech'. It moves by way of associations when it derives from the juxtaposition of spontaneously generated connotations. In such cases, Colomb's narrative is conditioned by temporal freedom and organized with no evident relations between lines. The narrative may also develop using 'earlier speech', i.e., the stories transmitted generation after generation. As a result, two levels of memories: lived and transmitted ones, are recorded with their temporal markers. (Favre 1993: 17–18) Despite Favre's sharp observations, it remains to be seen how the 'progression of the narrative' relates to the 'extraordinary temporal confusion.' (Roud 1997 (1956): 64)

Theres Kuratli (2007) used Ricoeur's theories, published in *Time and Narrative* (1983–5), in studying time and space in Colomb's novels. Her work is composed of three parts. The first focuses on the mechanisms of time. It also seeks to understand how time influences the structure of *CE*, *ET*, and *TA*. The second part deals with the narrative and textual spaces, while the third studies the characters within these novels. In the initial part, entitled the 'Time' [Fr. '*Le temps*'], her principal argument is that the narrative of these novels surpasses the boundaries of a linear sequence because the temporal processes develop independently of the understanding of time. While stating that Colomb's novels retain complete temporal autonomy, Kuratli concludes that *CE* has a memorial structure. We subsequently learn from Kuratli's analyses that not only does memory represent a leading theme, but it also defines the form of the novel. Kuratli further suggests that *CE* and *ET* belong to the category of a 'stream of consciousness novel.' (Kuratli 2007: 18) However, she makes no connection between time and memory in Colomb's prose.

Colomb's narrative was further studied by Noémie Christen (2010), who suggests that it escapes any form of 'closure'. Like Colomb's earlier critics, Theres Kuratli and Noémie Christen hold that Colomb rejects the common features of narrative composition and radically changes its temporal organization. However, they do not go so deep in their analysis as to explain what Colomb's limitations in rejecting the conventional rules of composition are and what alternative forms

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19 Fr. '(...) proposer une forme romanesque qui semble devoir tout à l'instinct de l'auteur, à son type d'imagination, aux besoins de son cœur (ce sont eux qui conduisent la plume), bref à sa vision, et rien à l'époque ou à la littérature de son temps.'

she offers in substitution. Neither do they study Colomb's novels from historical and stylistic perspectives.

By contrast, Gilles Philippe's article 'Catherine Colomb's subjectivist novel' [*Catherine Colomb et le roman subjectiviste*] reads her experimentation with narrative form in historical and stylistic contexts. He classifies Colomb's texts as 'subjectivist', 'impersonal' novels. It is again the point of view, only with more complex choices, that creates the 'aesthetics of enunciative complexification' in Colomb's 1945 novel. (2017: 54) *CE*, for Philippe, is 'strongly *polyphonic* as much as voices and points of view are somehow on an equal level', because 'they mingle in complex ways.' (*Ibid.*, 53) Colomb's novels share elements of both traditional novel and experimental prose:

One must observe this enunciative marquetry as a whole, which ensures the evident success of the paradoxical aesthetic project. This evolution is in line both with the pros and contras of the evolutionary tendencies of the novelistic prose of her time. (*Ibid.*, 59)<sup>20</sup>

What makes Colomb's work original, for Philippe, is the duality of characters and values, as well as the duality of facts. Somewhat the story does not seem to be told from an omniscient perspective (e.g., in such sentences as: '*Le vieux serviteur vint répondre, où était-ce un jeune valet qui secrètement le dimanche soir s'en allait au bal des voleurs ?*' ['The old servant came to answer, where was this young valet who was secretly going to the thieves' ball in the evening?']). (*CE*: 861) '*Jenny – ou Sophie ?*' ['Was it Jenny – or Sophie?']. (*CE*: 908) Yet, the authorial speech is still quite tangible in *CE*. For instance: '*la femme du docteur (...) allait faire un petit tour dans la tourelle; on y accede par quelques marches, on pousse une porte à ferrures percée d'une lucarne ovale*' ['the doctor's wife (...) was taking a little walk in the turret; we take few steps to reach it, we push a door with fittings pierced by an oval skylight']. (*CE*: 753) These lines seem to derive from 'an enunciative scene, not constructed but sensitive, where the speaker and the reader share a common universe of reference.'<sup>21</sup> (Philippe 2017: 55) The anticipation of future events by someone who seems to know the rest of the story is another sign of a narrator's presence. (*Ibid.*) Gilles Philippe further suggests that

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20 Fr. '[I]l faut prendre acte de cette marqueterie énonciative comme d'un tout, assurant l'évidente réussite d'un projet esthétique paradoxal, dont l'évolution s'inscrit à la fois dans le courant et à contre-courant des tendances évolutives de la prose romanesque de son temps.'

21 Fr. '(...) une scène énonciative, non construite mais sensible, où le locuteur et le lecteur partageraient un même univers de référence.'

the uncertainty and the story told from different characters' perspectives are also found in the Modernist experimental prose.

Despite many compelling observations, several fundamental aspects of Colomb's work are still neglected. There is no major study of Colomb that explains the mechanism of narrative development in her novels and traces time into the narrative. If *CE* invents its formula for measuring time, it is crucial to define both the narrative principles it follows and the outlines of Colomb's formal experimentations. The prevailing assumption that *CE* rises above all limits of a conventional narrative seems invalid given Paul Ricœur's theories about the narrative composition in modern and contemporary novels. 'The author, far from abolishing every law of composition, has to introduce new conventions that are more complex, subtler, more concealed, and more cunning than those of the traditional novel,' as Ricœur points out in the chapter 'Metamorphoses of plot' in the second volume of his book. (1985 (1984): 25) He maintains that 'a leap beyond every paradigmatic expectation is impossible' and '[t]his impossibility is particularly striking as regards the treatment of time'. (*Ibid.*) In short, Ricœur concludes that '[i]t is not conceivable that the narrative should have moved beyond all configuration'. (*Idem.*) Ricœur's suggestion allows us to explain the narrative organization in *CE* by studying the relationship between time and narrative. Many of Colomb's critics have tried to explain the aspect of time without narrative understanding. By contrast, this study focuses on the experiments with narrative in its study of time. We cannot omit the question of narrative composition from the account of the paradoxes of time in Colomb. Instead, we need to study them together before comparing the aesthetics of time in Colomb and Woolf, and Colomb and Proust.

In this first chapter of the dissertation, references to Ricœur's theory of interpretation which suggests that time is configured as a narrative are fruitful in so far as they allow us to assess the relationship between *experienced* and *narrated* time in Colomb's novels. Ricœur's analysis of the novelistic time helps us widen our close textual analysis of Colomb's temporal redesigning of narrative forms. It leads us to detect the multi-leveled temporalities characterizing the poetics of memory. However, Ricœur's theories appear less compatible in exploring textual movements. Harald Weinrich's observation about the uses of *passé simple* and *imparfait* makes more sense in our analysis of verbal tenses for recognizing a twofold perspective within Colomb's text.

However, in this thesis, we do not think of time only as a textual dimension but also as a reader's mental experience that Colomb's narrative affords. Rather than limiting the interpretation of Colomb's aesthetics to Ricœur's and Weinrich's theories, we use their conceptions of the creation of the meaning time

at the textual level only at the start of our analysis (in *Chapter 1*). The vision of time in *CE* and *ET* that we discover in parallel to the Proustian and the Woolfian time in *Chapter 2*, *Chapter 3*, and *Chapter 4* is regarded beyond their theories.

### 1.3 Colomb's experimentations with the temporal and narrative modes

#### The use of verbal tense

The section explores the limitations of Colomb's experimentations with the novel temporal composition while referring to *CE*. One of the limits consists of the development of the whole novel in the past. The articles included in the review of literature also read it as a novel that expresses a will to 'return to the past'. However, it is unclear whether they refer to the fictive past or the nature of the temporal system, i.e., the narrative that contributes to creating the effects of the past. For the study of the aesthetics of time, the concept of 'past' should be defined before explaining the limit beyond which there are no experimentations with the narrative and temporal modes in *CE*. The 'past' is understood as a tense form in this study.

In *CE*, the dominant tenses are the *imparfait*<sup>22</sup> and the 'anterior past' [Fr. *passé antérieur*] that impose order in Colomb's treatment of time. From a linguistic viewpoint, the *imparfait* applies to *the narrated world*, according to Harald Weinrich's typology of 'axes of communication'. (Ricoeur 1985: 67) In Weinrich's classification, both narrating and commenting represent the 'speech situation' (*Sprechsituation*) and are characterized by 'relaxation, easing of tension, or detachment'. No matter how dramatic some events might be, the 'interlocutor' does never, in fact, 'com[e] on stage' in *CE*, leaving the reader to engage with the 'narrated world'. These 'speech attitudes' come as 'narrative by relaxation' in Catherine Colomb's writing, that critics see as an expression of 'past events' and conclude that the writer develops a nostalgic attitude towards the past.<sup>23</sup>

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22 Colomb's French texts use the grammatical tense *imparfait*, which contains different meanings from the English *imperfect*. However, in the 1985 translation of Paul Ricoeur's *Time and Narrative: Volume 2*, the French *imparfait* is translated into English as 'imperfect'. Therefore, some English quotations of Ricoeur will have the mentions of 'imperfect' rather than of '*imparfait*'.

23 In interpreting the link between the organization of grammatical tenses and the implications of time in fiction, a detailed review by Ricoeur of Émile Benveniste's and Harald Weinrich's typologies of grammatical tenses was used. Their works are interpreted in the chapter *Games with Time*; see Ricoeur (1985: 67).



By contrast, Ricœur states that:

What grammars call the past and the imperfect [...] are narrative tenses, not because a narrative basically expresses past events, real or fictive, but because these tenses are oriented toward an attitude of relaxation, of uninvolvedness. What is essential is that the narrated world is foreign to the immediate and directly preoccupying surroundings of the speaker and the listener. The model in this regard is still the fairy tale. [...] The expressions 'once upon a time', 'il était une fois', 'vor Zeiten', and 'Érase que se era' – literally, 'it was that it was' – serve to mark the entry into narrative. In other words, it is not the past as such that is expressed by the past tense but the attitude of relaxation, of uninvolvedness. (Ricœur (1985: 68–9))

It appears that the use of the past tense does not necessarily imply that the events took place in a historical or individual past. Instead, it may help start a story and express an 'attitude of uninvolvedness'. *CE* does not always narrate past events. Colomb, we will see below, has recourse to the past tense to create the effects of a fairytale-like and magic atmosphere, ultimately establishing a distance between the fictional and the real world. The *imparfait* does not highlight 'a distance back in time' (*Ibid.*, 69) but 'the zero degree of gap between 'Aktzeit' and 'Textzeit'. (*Ibid.*, 70) 'Textzeit' is the time of the 'information already given and that anticipated'. 'Aktzeit' refers to the temporal 'orientation of the speaker in relation to the "'Textzeit"'. (*Idem.*) Thus, Colomb's use of the French *imparfait* does not show that the events of *CE* occurred in the past.

*CE* has less to do with a typical 'discourse' or a 'historical narrative'. Émile Benveniste makes a clear distinction between the two. She suggests that each of them has its own system of tenses. (*Ibid.*, 61–99) While a historical narrative develops in the past and omits the present and future tenses, a discourse, by contrast, employs perfect tenses, the present, and the future so that the statement is valid at the 'time of utterance'. (Benveniste, quoted in *Ibid.*) Contrary to a typical 'discourse', the present and the future tenses are not used in *CE*. Interestingly, the novel does not use the *passé simple* very often either, which is commonly used in historical narratives:

Elle *passait* entre les couches et le carreau d'artichauts entremêlés de pavots vert pâle ; il *était* cinq heures, il ferait beau désormais jusqu'à la nuit ; seuls quelques nuages d'été, les premiers de l'année, *haussaient* par-dessus le Jura leurs têtes de neige éclatante ; la France *devait* être bourrée de ces nuages comme un duvet. Elle traversa le champ du château Mennet où le bâtard traçait des sillons, franchit la vieille route, entra au cimetière, pierres et pervenches. *C'était* là, près du mur, qu'elle *se figurait* la tombe de sa fille, couchée dans la terre étrangère ; elle pensait au baptême, à la femme du pasteur qui ne mangeait qu'une morille à cause de son estomac de cochon d'Inde, elle *entendait* le chant embrumé des pigeons, base des bruits de sa vie, que *relayaient*, dès la nuit tombée, les

grenouilles de l'étang. Adolphe *photographiait* ; le téléphone, le télégraphe, le chemin de fer, les timbres-poste *apportaient* une paix définitive ; chacun *trouvait* si important son visage fixé depuis peu par la photographie dans une ridicule éternité.<sup>24</sup> (*CE*: 860)

The principal verbal tense used in the original passage is the *imparfait*. We notice that the meaning of time in *CE* is not enriched by a rich pool of French verbal tenses. The 'economy' in the use of tenses can be explained by a lack of such characters whose internal experiences are represented. 'The entire weight of fiction rests on the invention of characters,' Ricoeur explains, 'characters who think, feel, and act, and who are the fictive I-Origines of the thoughts, feelings, and actions of the narrated story' and that 'the criterion of fiction consists of the use of verbs designating internal processes, that is, psychic or mental processes.' (1985: 65) There is no lack of characters in *CE*. However, their state of mind is hardly ever explained. In this regard, the connection that Ricoeur makes between characters' inner experiences and the use of verbal tenses explains why there is no variety of tenses in Colomb.

The passage below contains one of those rare uses of the present tense in *CE*:

La mère ôta ses vêtements de nuit, ses chaussons, son mantelet, son bonnet, passa quelques jupons, un caraco noir, un mantelet de jour, fixa de ses mains tremblantes à son corsage une broche en cheveux. Bembet le domestique bâillait sur sa voiture jaune, appliquait sur sa bouche le manche de son fouet et rencontrait un instant, la tête renversée, le regard des étoiles. Le lac ardoise brassait ses vagues le long de leur route ; le meunier du Vernay qui dormait toujours mal se pencha à la fenêtre, coiffé de son casque à mèche, protégeant de la main son bougeoir. Mais lorsqu'ils arrivèrent, qu'ils frappèrent, qu'ils tirèrent la sonnette du couvent, Jenny était déjà morte. *Plus tard*, une autre débarquera du train de nuit, venant d'Allemagne où elle a appris la mauvaise nouvelle. Elle *frappe* longtemps en vain à la porte des voituriers. Le long de la route, le lac

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24 Eng. 'She was passing between the layers and artichoke tiles that were intermingled with pale green poppies; it was five o'clock, from now on, the weather would be fine until dark; few summer clouds, the first of the year, were raising their bright snowy heads from the Jura; France, packed with these clouds, must look like a duvet cover. She crossed the field of Chateau Mennet, the one where the bastard was ploughing a furrow, she crossed the old road, entered the cemetery with stones and periwinkles. It was there, near the wall, that she noticed the tomb of her daughter lying in a foreign land; she thought of the christening, of the pastor's wife who was not eating more than one morel because of her guinea pig like stomach; she was hearing a foggy song of pigeons, the first sound in her life which replaced the ones of the pond frogs by nightfall. Adolphe was taking photos; the telephone, the telegraph, the railway, the post stamps were making a lasting peace; everyone gave much importance to having their faces fixed by photography in a ridiculous eternity.' (The italics are mine.)

tiède *brasse* ses vagues. Arrivée près de la maison obscure, elle *descend* du char, *sent* qu'elle *marche* sur des fleurs : le perron *est jonché* de roses blanches tombées la veille du jeune cerceuil. Les mères, les sœurs, arrivaient trop tard au chevet d'êtres aimés.<sup>25</sup> (CE: 747–8.)

In this episode, some verbs are exceptionally used in the present form, such as: '*elle frappe*', '*le lac tiède brasse*', '*elle descend du char, sent qu'elle marche sur des fleurs : le perron est jonché*'. The other verbs are mainly given either in *passé simple* or in *imparfait*. The change of verbal tense should be indicating temporal distance between two moments—an earlier moment, i.e., the far past and a later moment, i.e., the more recent past. The distance between the two temporal layers is also highlighted by the adverb 'later on' [*plus tard*']. An earlier moment may be regarded as Jenny's sudden illness; also, a delay in telling her parents about the illness. The other events, namely: a certain lady is taking a night train in Germany to attend Jenny's funeral, her walking on the white roses fallen from the coffin of the young dead, should be happening at a later moment. It is remarkable that the landscape—the lake waves moving into the shore—is captured in two verbal tenses, in the *imparfait* and the present tense. The moving of the waves of '*le lac ardoise*' is at first described in the past. Later it becomes '*le lac tiède*', given in the present tense. We note that the same action is repeated twice, but in different verbal tenses: '*le lac ardoise brassait ses vagues le long de leur route*' ['The slate-coloured lake waves washed their path:'] and '*le lac tiède brasse ses vagues*'. ['The warm lake waves wash up the road:'] The use of two verbal tenses for describing one and the same action illustrates the passage of time; but it also highlights that some things never change. We are told that in the far past, i.e., before Jenny died, the waves of the 'slate-coloured lake' [*le lac ardoise*] were moving into the shore.

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25 Eng. 'The mother took off her nightclothes, her slippers, her mantle, her bonnet, put on some petticoat, a black camisole, a day mantle, with her trembling hands fixed a hair brooch to her blouse. The servant Bembet yawned in his yellow car, brought the whip handle to his mouth, and met, for a moment, the gaze of the stars with his head thrown back. The slate-coloured lake waves washed their path; the miller from Vernay, who could never sleep well, leaned out of the window, wearing his wicking helmet, protecting a candlestick with his hand. But by the time they got there, knocked, rang the convent doorbell, Jenny had already died. *Later*, someone else will get off the night train, coming from Germany, where she heard the bad news. She *knocks* for a long time in vain at the valets' door. The warm lake waves *wash up* the road. Near the dark house, she gets out of the chariot, feels that she *is walking* on flowers: the path *is strewn* with white roses that fell from the coffin of the young dead the day before. Mothers and sisters arrived too late at the bedside of their loved ones.' (The italics are mine.)

It appears that the waves continued moving into the shore in the more recent past, which is referred to as 'later on' in the text. The use of the present tense thus may indicate that the act continued to be relevant at the time of a certain lady's late arrival.

The other acts, such as the knocking on the door, the stepping on the white roses, are also narrated in the present tense. The use of the present tense aims to underline the temporal distance between earlier and later events. It shows that the temporal focus is no more on the far past when Jenny died, but on more recent consequences. The writer opts for the present tense to mark the temporal gap between different times in the past. In the sentence: '*Les mères, les sœurs, arrivaient trop tard au chevet d'êtres aimés*', the verbal tense *imparfait* expresses the idea that we are no longer reading the story of Jenny's funeral only, because mothers and sisters could have been late at other funerals as well. Hence, the use of *imparfait* enables not only to bring together different experiences (in the given case, funerals), but also to introduce them as one incident.

The change of verbal tense also highlights 'foregrounding' and 'backgrounding' of textual elements. (Weinrich 1973 (1964): 115)) Weinrich explains that the use of the *imparfait* helps relegate the textual material of lesser importance to the backstage or 'background' [*Hintergrund*] while the *passé simple* calls the reader's attention by bringing important textual material to the fore, in the 'foreground' [*Vordergrund*]. In the above-given episode, the verbs in the *passé simple* (such as '*ôta*', '*passa*' '*fixa*' '*pencha*') express the mother's taking off her clothes and the miller's leaning out of the window. They mirror the changes, the meaningful moments; while those in the *imparfait* ('*bâillait*', '*appliquait*', '*rencontrait*', '*brassait*', '*dormait*', '*arrivaient*') account for more general, unspectacular events or in Proust's words, '*éternel imparfait*'. ('À propos du « style » de Flaubert': 590) The switches between *imparfait* and *passé simple* change the speed and introduce breaks in the chronology.

The *imparfait* is a widely used verbal tense both in Colomb and Proust because it is '*le temps privilégié de la mémoire*' ['the privileged time of memory'] (Borel (1971: 13)) and '*le temps [...] du retour*' ['the time of return']. (*Ibid.*, 3) Memories are recaptured using the *imparfait*. Genette considered the *imparfait* useful for Proust's purposes because of its expression of habituality and indistinctness in the flow of time. (1972: 149) Contrary to the *passé simple*, the *imparfait* expresses data that do not produce a chronological sequence. Proust considered the use of *imparfait* as one of Flaubert's greatest innovations. The *imparfait*, for Proust, can '*change entièrement l'aspect des choses et des êtres, comme font une lampe qu'on a déplacée, l'arrivée dans une maison nouvelle, l'ancienne si elle est presque vide et qu'on est en plein déménagement*' ['completely changes the aspect of things and

beings, like a lamp that has been moved, the arrival in a new house, or the old one if it is almost empty and you are in the process of moving']. (*À propos du style de Flaubert*: 590) It captures 'toute la vie des gens' ['the whole lives of people']. (*Ibid.*) Proust wrote that Flaubert's use of *imparfait* provokes a 'genre de tristesse, fait de la rupture des habitudes et de l'irréalité du décor' ['a kind of sadness resulting from breaking the habit and the unreality of the decor']. (*Idem.*)

The lack of the present verbal tense in *CE* indicates that Colomb's novel still preserves the conventional features of the novel's temporal composition. Gilles Philippe holds that book-length present-tense narratives only appeared at the very end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The emergence of the present was preceded by the development of *imparfait*--in Balzac's and Flaubert's novels, for example.<sup>26</sup> At that time, the novel could not yet abandon the already worn-out form of the *passé simple*. (Philippe 2019: 125) *Imparfait* was the most privileged tense form in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century because it allowed the authors to adopt new forms of writing, for instance, free indirect speech. The latter appeared in Flaubert at first and was fully developed by Zola. (Philippe, Zufferey 2018: 11) The present tense has developed at the expense of the *passé simple* and the *passé simple/imparfait* tense pair. (Philippe 2019: 126) Thus, the present tense could emerge after replacing the *passé simple*.

Concerning the use of verbal tenses, *CE* comes closer to 19<sup>th</sup>-century French novel rather than to the *Nouveau Roman*. From the early 20<sup>th</sup>-century (as early as in 1900), French novels have had more and more recourse to the present tense. The French novel reduced the use of the *passé simple* and *imparfait* not merely because they produced stronger fictional effects than the present tense; but also, because they were considered too 'novelistic'. (*Idem.*, 127) The novelistic form of writing started to be less and less popular during that time: it was estimated as worn-out next to, for instance, the works of *témoignage*, which, with their documentary accuracy, responded better to the demands of historical time. The novels written in the present were more and more highly valued because they were thought of as providers of facts. The present tense thus could make its way into the French novel little by little, to finally make the biggest break in the 1950s *Nouveau Roman*, namely, in the texts of Nathalie Sarraute (*Portrait d'un inconnu*, 1956), Robert Pinget, Alain Robbe-Grillet (*Les Gommages* (1953), *La Jalousie* (1957), *Dans le labyrinthe* (1959)), Marguerite Duras, Claude Simon, etc., Gilles

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26 In this and following paragraphs I summarize the assertions of Gilles Philippe introduced in his study of the 'emergence' of the present in the French novel; see Philippe (2019: 121–137).

Philippe suggests. When focusing on the evolution of the French verbal tense system in a novel, Philippe further notes that the present tense did not function only as the grammatical tense form; it also acquired an ‘anti-novelistic’ [fr. ‘*antiromanesque*’] status even before the *Nouveau Roman*. (2019: 131)

If at the dawn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the French novel reduced the use of the *passé simple* in favour of the present, and the mid-20<sup>th</sup>-century novel also made a more urgent call for the present tense, *CE* and *ET* avoided it. Colomb’s texts break free from the 1950s French novel more and more written in the present. Contrary to a typical ‘discourse’, the present and the future are not used in *CE*. Her subjectivist novels could have employed the most ‘plastic’ verbal tense. (*Idem.*, 126) However, the *passé simple* is more appropriate for producing the ‘impersonal narrative’ effects, as Gilles Philippe explains. Besides, the ‘subjectivist novel’ [‘*roman subjectiviste*’] did not use the present tense.

By avoiding the present tense *CE* comes closer to the 1920s Modernist novels. While the present tense was available in the documentary, childhood narratives [‘*roman d’enfance*’] and in the works of *témoignage*, it had limited space in the Modernist novels in the 1920s. (*Idem.*, 128) The lack of the present tense in the Modernist writings must have been due to the general opinion which attributed a functional meaning—that of a provider of facts—to the tense. Modernists escaped reporting facts with documentary accuracy as did, in particular, the works of *témoignage* at the time and avoided recourse to the present tense deliberately.

Catherine Colomb’s writing style was thought to be similar to one of the *Nouveau Roman* writers in Noémie Christen’s Master paper: ‘Nouveau roman(d)!?’. Even if Colomb tried to avoid using conventional features of novel composition and insisted that she ‘did not think of her books as novels’,<sup>27</sup> her texts should not be considered as ‘*Nouveaux romans*’. A fragmented narrative and breaks in the chronology, the absence of an omniscient narrator and a focus on thought processes characterizing Colomb’s novels are also found in the *nouveau roman*. But unlike Colomb’s novels, the *nouveau roman* (apart from Claude Simon’s works) does not retain a sense of narrative and character. Her aesthetic concerns are different from ‘new novelists’: we discover the elements common to the French ‘*roman poétique*’ [‘poetic novel’]—well-developed in the literature in French of the 1930s. More importantly, unlike the *nouveau roman*, there is a focus

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27 ‘Je ne conçois pas mes livres comme des romans, ils émergent du fond de moi-même.’ (Colomb (1950), quoted in Favre (1993: 35)) | ‘I don’t think of my books as novels. They emerge in the depth of my spirit.’

on the past, continuity and tradition, memory and family life, and self-conscious movement of thought and change of perspective in Colomb's *oeuvre*. In the following chapters, I maintain that they are between the novels of consciousness (in a similar vein as Virginia Woolf's fiction) and the novels of memory (such as *La Recherche*). The lack of present tense in *CE* shows that Colomb was one step late in using the narrative formulas which had been adopted before her. Hence, Colomb's experimentations in narrative structure lie elsewhere than in the use of verbal tense.

### The 'crisis' of Colomb's novel

Before proceeding with the study of Colomb's experimentations with time and narrative, we need to recall the processes in which the French novel developed from the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> until the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

From the late 19<sup>th</sup> until the first quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, French writers and critics noticed a turning point in the history of the French novel in the era of cinema and the printed press. The year 1891 is thought to be the beginning of the 'crisis of the French novel'.<sup>28</sup> (Raimond 1966: 9) From this moment on, French literature started to be reshaped after the flooding of Russian and Anglo-Saxon novel translations in France. Other factors had an impact on the renewal of the novelistic genre. Raimond divides the 'crisis' of the novelistic genre into three steps: the 1890s, 1914, and the post-war French novel crisis. From the 1910s, the novel developed in parallel with the emergence of cinema. It integrated some cinematic techniques, such as the 'montage effect', in the narrative.<sup>29</sup> At the dawn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, some writers expressed their preoccupation with the future of the novel. They thought that the novelistic genre had reached an impasse. Charles Morgan, François Mauriac, Paul Valéry and Albert Thibaudet were

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28 The notion of 'la crise du roman' ['the crisis of the novel'] in Raimond (1966), is borrowed from Bordeaux. (1902: 742–766)

29 In filmmaking, a montage is 'the process or technique of selecting, editing, and piecing together separate sections of film to form a continuous whole.' (*OED*) One of such techniques, montage, is also used in novel writing to present different events simultaneously; see Humphrey (1954). Despite Woolf's and Proust's distaste for using 'cinematic' mediums in a novel, their works were described as 'cinematic' by Arnold Hauser. Hauser draws an analogy between the 'scenic development, the sudden emersion of the thoughts and moods, the relativity and the inconsistency of the time-standards' in Proust's, Woolf's, Joyce's fiction and the 'cuttings, dissolves and interpolations' in a film; see Hauser (1951, II: 944). Hauser interprets the act of bringing two temporally detached incidents close to each other in *La Recherche* as 'film magic'. (*Ibid.*)

among those who alluded to the ‘crisis’ of the French novel. This ‘crisis’ Valéry described as the ‘transition from one operating regime to another that signs or symptoms reveal.’<sup>30</sup> (1925: 618) In *La Crise du Roman*, Raimond estimates that the ‘crisis’ resided in the abandonment of the will to grab the reader’s attention. Before the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, ‘the novel could grab the reader’s attention by telling a story.’<sup>31</sup> (Raimond 1966: 13) Unlike 19<sup>th</sup>-century French novels, 20<sup>th</sup>-century novels were no more telling a story.

The ‘crisis of the French novel’ also involved abandoning an objective narrative in favour of ‘interior monologue’, or giving preference to the reality lived through the minds of characters over the omniscience of an author-narrator, or slowing down the pace of the passage of time: recording the experienced day and the moment on many pages, or the contrary, accelerating the pace: summarizing the months and the years in few lines. The ‘crisis’ also resulted in curiosity towards what was commonly understood as uncertain and ambiguous facets of reality. Early 20<sup>th</sup>-century French novels also directed attention from bodily experiences and credible adventures of realistic characters towards consciousness, memory, identity, or perception. (*Ibid.*, 76)

A set of experiments in the representation of time, replacing objective with subjective narrative, favouring personal perceptions of reality, dream, and memory also come to the fore in Colomb’s novels. These defining features of 20<sup>th</sup>-century novels changed the vectors of 19<sup>th</sup>-century literary culture. The resistance against telling a story and the narrative following a mental path in Colomb’s novels are comparable to what came with the ‘crisis of the French novel’. Those features are also associated with literary modernism. The willingness to fragment our unified view of character and plot, to do linguistic experiments in search of new forms and rhythms in language,<sup>32</sup> a mythopoetic projection of history, daring representation of spacetime and ‘point-of-view’ which we will discover in Colomb’s *oeuvre*, are also central to *modernism* as a literary movement. The modernists (like Lawrence, Fitzgerald, and Woolf) sought to explore a ‘collapsing genre’ or a novel ‘in crisis’ at the time of a ‘collapsing civilization’ especially in the aftermath

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30 Fr. ‘passage d’un certain régime de fonctionnement à quelqu’autre, —passage que des signes ou des symptômes rendent sensible.’

31 Fr. ‘qu’il retraçait la courbe d’un sentiment ou l’enchevêtrement d’aventures complexes, qu’il prétendait distraire ou instruire, qu’il fût soucieux de faire vivre un héros ou de susciter un univers, le roman était ce piège où se prend la curiosité du lecteur : racontant une histoire.’

32 For Wittgenstein ‘The limits of my language mean the limits of my world.’ (1933 (1921): 115).



of the First World War. (Trotter 1999: 77) There is not one definition of Literary Modernism. Our perception of its range and purpose enlarges as time passes. But many consider it as 'creative violence' (Levenson 1999: 2) against dominant narrative, a 'construction within a void' or recreating 'an ancient tale of homecoming' as Joyce's *Ulysses* is often described. (Bell 1999: 14) Some have chosen 'on or about December 1910' as the beginning of what we now call Modernism (Woolf 1966 (1924): 320); for others like Wyndham Lewis, turbulent physical and metaphysical, social, cultural and historical *modernization* challenged the 'men of 1914'. (Levenson 1999: 2–4) Freud's investigation of the inner realm of the psyche, Marx's analysis of social and economic cataclysms, and Nietzsche's search for the origins of Western philosophy are often considered in relation to Modernist literature. (Bell 1999: 9–10) Major modernist works were produced in the 1920s and 1930s by James Joyce, Virginia Woolf, Dorothy Richardson, William Faulkner and after the 1930s by Samuel Beckett, T.S. Eliot, Thomas Mann, etc.<sup>33</sup>

Therefore, the idea (according to which Colomb is among those writers whose novels underwent the 'crisis') leads us to doubt, in the following pages, the veracity of arguments suggested by Colomb's contemporary critics. The statement that she did not borrow old narrative formulas and shared nothing with her predecessors is not convincing. Therefore, when interpreting the aesthetics of time in her work, we account for what Colomb takes from the conventions to distinguish her productions.

### 1.3.1 *The mechanism of 'liaison'*

The dilemma in explaining the principles of composition and representation of time in *CE* is how the sentences are connected. Colomb's earlier critics found it difficult to explain the principle of '*liaison*'. It enabled, according to Jean-Luc Seylaz, often completely different ideas or stories to relate to one other. He defines '*liaison*' as the transitional sentences with an endless stream of words, phrases, and paragraphs—a '*scriptum continuum*'—a writing method for oral reading, commonly used in the ancient Greco-Roman world. (1973: 71–90) In her more recent study, Lise Favre believes that the '*liaison*' is not based on any particular principle but is a spontaneous act. She proposes that the associations of thought originate from 'abrupt reminiscences', which, in turn, are formed by 'discourse itself'. Since the narrative advances at the expense of a 'complex network of associations of ideas', according to her, 'the countless crowds of characters and the

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33 For more information about French modernist novels, see Sermier (2022).

abundance of events originate from the spontaneity of the associations created by the mind that wanders in the universe of memory.<sup>34</sup> (Favre 1993: 38) Although Lise Favre's study reflects on how '*liaison*' contributes to the production of a circular structure, it does not sufficiently explain the principle of '*liaison*'.

This section will show how the principle of '*liaison*' exposes an experience of time in *CE*. Whether it is an object, a person, a place, an age, or a habit—a common trait bridging a gap between two completely different ideas—a '*liaison*' connects at least two temporal layers. It prevents the story from completing itself. The story is in the process of constant renewal and of uninterruptedly changing its current state. Thus, the focus is on the process that leads towards nowhere, producing effects of temporal immobility rather than of temporal succession.

Here are some cases where the technique of '*liaison*' is used in the narrative of *CE*:

1. Sa maladie [de la vieille Angenaisaz] commença par des vomissements, un jour que le père de l'Arnest apporta des morilles qu'il avait trouvées dans le Bois-de-Chênes ; elle aurait bien voulu dire que sa fille les avait mal accommodées, mais elle n'en avait point mangé, parce qu'elle avait goûté copieusement *chez la femme du pasteur*, celle qui remplaçait « ma fiancée, Mlle de Thienne » et qui offrait avec l'obstination d'un haricot à rames *comme autrefois dans sa petite ville mecklembourgeoise*, pleine de clair de lune et de la fumée des longues pipes en porcelaine, un repas copieux à quatre heures. (*CE*: 852)
2. Non, elle ne voulait pas les vendre, à cause de l'oncle Alphonse et de *cette image* où on le voyait immobile avec F. de Lesseps devant sa tante, des mouchoirs sur les nuques et des filets à papillons sur les genoux, si immobiles que peu à peu *on devinait toutes leurs pensées, leur nostalgie* du grand mur de pierres et de mousse brune au-dessus du figuier et du *jardin potager d'où l'on voyait par-dessus le cimetière le Jura bleu*. (*CE*: 827)
3. Alors son visage [Jâmes Laroche] semblable à un bouton d'os s'éclaira vaguement *d'un sourire, pour la première fois depuis ce jour où* le Temps avait figé son expression inquiète, chagrine et dure, *ce jour d'hiver où* Carmen Sylva le regardait si froidement à travers son face-à-main suspendu à la longue chaîne de lapis-lazuli. (*Ibid.*)

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34 Fr. 'brusques reminiscences', 'le discours lui-même', 'réseau complexe d'associations d'idées', 'la foule innombrable des personnages, le foisonnement des événements proviennent de la spontanéité de ces associations d'un esprit en vagabondage dans l'univers de la mémoire'.

4. Ce fut ce visage inquiet, dur comme un bouton d'os, qui apparut à Galeswinthe quand elle entra *dans le grand bureau où un Gaudence de Seewis faisait pendant à une immense photographie du père Laroche dans ses vieux et derniers jours.* (CE: 826)
5. Le Roi des Rois, revenant à sa place, voulut absolument récompenser deux *des jolies servantes* ; un serviteur tira d'une cassette deux colliers étincelants. L'une emprunta sur le collier pour s'établir à son compte ; elle tient *le petit café d'Aran, sur la Corniche*, celui où Galeswinthe vint avec Elisabeth un jour d'avril, vêtue de sa blouse noire à tulipes ton sur ton, manger du pain et du fromage.<sup>35</sup> (CE: 798)

For Colomb's readers, it is a bit of a puzzle to follow all these details. These elements, at first insignificant, express different temporal experiences in parallel with the development of the narrative. The first passage connects three different time layers through two places: 'at the place of the pastor's wife' and 'in her little Mecklenburgian town.' These places become a point of departure for the reader to discover three stories and, respectively, three temporal experiences. For

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35 Eng. (1). 'Her sickness [of the 'old Angenaisaz'] started with vomiting one day when Arnest's father brought morels, which he had found in the Bois-de-Chênes. She wished to say that her daughter had not prepared them well, but she had not eaten them, because she had tasted them generously *at the place of the pastor's wife*—the one, who used to say 'my fiancée, Miss de Thienne', and who served, so obstinately as raw beans, a hearty meal at four o'clock just as she used to *in her little Mecklenburgian town*, full of moonlight and the smoke of long porcelain pipes'. (2). 'No, she did not want to sell them, because of uncle Alphonse and this picture where he was seen motionless with F. de Lesseps in front of his aunt with handkerchiefs on the nape of her neck and the butterfly nets on her knees, so motionless that little by little *one could guess their thoughts, their nostalgia* for the great wall made of stones, and for the brown moss above the fig tree, and for a *vegetable garden* from where one could see the blue Jura above the graveyard'. (3). 'Then [Jâmes Laroche's] bony face was lit up vaguely with *a smile, for the first time since that day when* the time had frozen his worried and rigid look, full of grief, that winter day when Carmen Sylva looked at him so coldly through her handpiece hanging from the long chain of lapis lazuli'. (4). 'It was that worried face, rigid as a bone button, that was seen by Galeswinthe when *she entered the big office where* a Gaudence of Seewis had hung up a large *photograph* of Father Laroche in his old and last days'. (5). 'As the King of Kings was coming back to his place, he wished absolutely to reward two of his *pretty servants*. One servant took from a box two glittering necklaces. The other took out a loan against the necklace to set up her business. She is holding Aran's little cafeteria *at the Corniche, where* Galeswinthe came with Elisabeth one day in April, dressed in her tulip-coloured black blouse, eating bread and cheese.' (The italics are mine.)

instance, we learn why Madame Angenaisaz cannot blame her daughter for poisoning her with mushrooms: she had previously eaten them ‘at the place of the pastor’s wife.’ Two other facts are also reminded to the reader: that the pastor’s wife always misnames someone and serves a ‘hearty meal at four o’clock’ with an unreasonable determination. Hence, Madame Angenaisaz’s current state of being (her sickness due to eating the poisonous mushrooms) brings forth all these details. From a stylistic perspective, the experiences dispersed in time are brought close by an explicit comparative ‘*comme*’, which Ilaria Vidotto (2020) remarkably showed that it represents, in Proust’s *oeuvre*, the analogical perception of the world, bringing together identity and difference. A comparative preposition ‘*comme*’ which, in the said passage, is followed by an adverb of time ‘*autrefois*’ sets similar experiences of different times side by side under the sign of identity. The assimilation of different moments, which opens the way to the vertical development of Colomb’s narrative, occurs within a long sentence to show the continuity and timelessness of experience.

In the second passage, photography connects the most recent events—Galewinthe’s visit to her cousin, the banker Jâmes Laroche—with the remembered past: their ancestors’ lifestyle. Here, a ‘*liaison*’ opposes a progressive view of history and knits together the experiences separated by a time-lapse. An office room becomes the space for connecting two temporal layers. It intermingles with the recent past, with Jâmes Laroche’s motifs for selling Galeswinthe’s ancestral values, and the distant past, the ancestors’ agricultural lifestyle. The ‘*liaison*’ thus contributes to the exposure of the current and the previous generations’ contrasting worldviews. The first, Jâmes Laroche’s worldview, is socially progressive, however, at the expense of abandoning the ancestral values, while the ancestors appearing in the photo represent a traditional society. We learn that they had led a pastoral life and stayed nostalgic about ‘the big wall made of stones and, the brown moss above the fig tree, and the vegetable garden’ [*grand mur de pierres et de mousse brune au-dessus du figuier et du jardin potager*]. Bringing two different temporal layers together, in this case, demonstrates a divorce between the worldviews of agricultural and industrialized societies. With respect to grammatical construction of ‘*liaison*’, Colomb’s ‘subjectivist’ novel makes good use of the impersonal pronoun ‘*on*’ (Philippe 2021, vol. 1: 138) to show time’s passing without an observer. Colomb applies the poetics of photographic vision to her art as expressed through the inclusion of the visual, photographic images and the absence of the viewer (expressed through the pronoun ‘*on*’). There is a lack of verbal interaction; the passage concentrates on silence, an underlying mode of photographic language. Colomb’s vocabulary (‘*cette image*’, ‘*immobiles*’,

'*le cimetière*') further reflects a visual representation of reality and time as a destructive force.

In the third and fourth passages, both the most recent event and an earlier moment are presented within a single phrase. In the third passage, a facial expression (a smiling face) is used as a transitional word for linking the present of Jāmes Laroche with a moment from his past. Colomb uses time adverbials ('*pour la première fois depuis ce jour où*') to juxtapose similar experiences. Her vocabulary ('*jour*', '*Temps*', '*avait figé*' '*hiver*') also draws on the subject of time. In the fourth passage, both an object ('a huge photograph') and a place ('the big office') are used to obtain similar effects. Colomb's sentence is long and complex, blurring the division between the main clause and the subordinate clauses: '*Ce fut ce visage inquiet, dur comme un bouton d'os, qui apparut à Galeswinthe quand elle entra dans le grand bureau où un Gaudence de Seewis faisait pendant à une immense photographie du père Laroche dans ses vieux et derniers jours*', because none of these clauses can stand independently.

In the last fragment, an adverbial of place ('*le petit café d'Aran, sur la Corniche*') brings together Galeswinthe and a female servant, who probably have never met. The syntactic structure of the last sentence ('*Elle tient le petit café d'Aran, sur la Corniche, celui où Galeswinthe vint avec Elisabeth un jour d'avril, vêtue de sa blouse noire à tulipes ton sur ton, manger du pain et du fromage*.') is similar to the one in the fourth passage.

As seen above, when a '*liaison*' occurs, an object, an event, a place, or a person triggers the memory of some other moment in the past. In such cases, the most recent occurrences are never introduced independently from the remembered past. Thus, instead of enhancing the sense of a temporal distance between disparate moments, these fragments bind together different time layers. As a result, through a technique of '*liaison*', they expose time not only in certain, concrete moments but now and then, even in its entirety. The reader thereby deals with what Auerbach defines as 'the symbolic omnitemporality of an event fixed in a remembering consciousness'. (1974 (1946): 544) It seems as if all these different moments are held together and perceived at once.

Thus, in Colomb, a change in time is made visible by informing the difference between current and previous states of various stories, incidents, events, objects, places, or characters. Similarly, in his final volume, *Time Regained*, Proust reminds his readers that memory, by introducing the past into the present without modification, as though it were the present, eliminates precisely the great time-dimension in accordance with which life is realized'. [*la mémoire, en introduisant le passé dans le présent sans le modifier, tel qu'il était au moment où il était le présent supprime précisément cette grande dimension du Temps suivant*

laquelle la vie se réalise.’] (*Remembrance* IV: 266;<sup>36</sup> *La Recherche* IV: 829<sup>37</sup>) Hence, memory cannot make a flow of time perceptible: on the contrary, it abolishes the distance between two timespans. In *CE*, a connection with the past is interrupted from the moment the book begins. As in Proust, the novel stages a quest for some order, for time. Mechanisms of ‘*liaison*’ highlight a change between current and previous experiences or states of being. They help create the effects of temporal immobility by abolishing temporal distance between different moments. Thus, time is not defeated here. The past is imitated and not resurrected. As a result, the novel seems to be made of a ‘storehouse of images’ separated in time and space. Moreover, ‘interludes’ between different episodes and transitions from one story to another are rare, and in most cases, absent. The absence of such ‘interludes’ in *CE* prevents the reader from perceiving a natural flow of time between two separate incidents. It holds time in suspense. As a result, the novel leaves the impression that temporal distance is abolished. Time manifests itself through the images recalled and invented by memory; though it is not a time that can be lived. The multiple images invented or borrowed from the past create the effects of an immobile time. Therefore, the description of characters is reduced to physical appearances or gestures—just as in memories.

The uniqueness of the ‘*liaison*’ in Colomb’s book may well be defined by borrowing Virginia Woolf’s explanation of the structure of *TL*. In the original draft

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36 We quote the last section of Proust’s novel from Stephen Hudson’s translation of *Time Regained*. Hudson finished the translation of Proust’s volumes after Moncrieff’s death. Moncrieff’s translation of Proust’s work is regarded as one of the best English translations of a foreign work; see Kilmartin (1993 (1981): ix) Woolf is known to have read Moncrieff’s translation of *Swann’s Way* (1922) and *Within a Budding Grove* (1924) by 1925 as we learn from her letter to Margaret Llewelyn Davies, (*Letters*, III (February 9, 1925: 166)) We quote the first two volumes (Volume I: *Swann’s Way*, *Within a Budding Grove*; Volume II: *The Guermantes Way*)—published in Proust’s lifetime—from C. K. Moncrieff’s version of *La Recherche*. The extracts from *Sodom and Gomorrah* are quoted from the revised version of C. K. Scott Moncrieff and Terence Kilmartin’s translation of *La Recherche* by D. J. Enright (1992). The original French edition of *Sodom and Gomorrah* was published before Proust’s death; but the text was reestablished much later on the basis of Proust’s revisions and additions to the original manuscript. Moncrieff’s translation of *Sodom and Gomorrah* was revised according to Gallimard’s 1953 three-volume edition of Proust’s text; see Kilmartin (1993: ix-xii); Enright (1993: xiii-xiv).

37 All quotations of Proust’s text are taken from the edition of *La Recherche* by Jean-Yves Tadié, which was published by Gallimard in 1987–1989 in the ‘Bibliothèque de la Pléiade’. This edition affords a long list of explanatory notes and variants, providing an invaluable edition of reference to Proust’s scholars.

of *TL*, Woolf saw her work as 'Two blocks joined by a corridor'. (1982: 48) If this definition applies to the interlude, the shortest section of 'Time Passes', it also does to the arrangement of sentences in *CE*. The 'corridor' in *TL* and the '*liaison*' in *CE* are related to the management of time. They correspond to a passage from past to present. The 'corridor' connects two single days represented in the first and last parts of *TL*. It defines the overall structure of *TL*, whereas *liaison* works on a microlevel: on the lexical and sentence levels. Another difference lies in the fact that the temporality of Woolf's novel is much clearer than Colomb's. *TL* is composed of three sections: 'The Window', 'Time Passes', and 'The Lighthouse', each divided by gaps in time. Whereas it is up to the reader to see how *CE* is structured or how much time passes between separate incidents. Yet, the representations of time's passing by '*liaison*' and within the 'corridor' have similar effects. The '*liaison*' and the 'corridor' mark both continuity and break in time. In Colomb, two distant moments situated next to each other express how humans change, but the experience does not. But piecing together 'before' and 'after' by way of '*liaison*' also highlights that something is over. It marks Jämes Laroche's abandon of his ancestors' agricultural lifestyle in the second passage and reminds him of the last time he smiled in the third one. In Woolf, the 'corridor' brightly outlines the end of family gatherings and the collapse of the stability of the Ramsay family. Surprisingly, the reader learns about the deaths of Mrs Ramsay, Prue, and Andrew in the 'corridor' rather than in Part 1 or at the end of the novel. Multiple deaths are announced in square brackets in *TL*. The deaths occur both outside the familiar place (the Ramsays' family house) and the temporal dimension of events described in the middle section. Within the 'corridor', we learn that 'time passes', yet, we cannot have a clear-cut picture of how much time passes between the end of the first part, 'The Window', and the beginning of the third part, 'The Lighthouse'. Unlike Woolf's other novels, where the time-flowing process is observable through human consciousness, the section 'Time Passes' shows the passage of time without the 'human gaze' (see 3.7 Simultaneity of multiple time frames). Virginia Woolf herself envisaged the paradoxical effects of this experiment when stating, 'here is the most difficult abstract piece of writing – I have to give an empty house, no people's characters, the passage of time, all eyeless and featureless with nothing to cling to.' (*Diary* 3: 76) Colomb also establishes the connections between different moments beyond the individual mind.

Breaks in time and the deaths are identifiable as a kind of *liaison* in the 'corridor'. They work as a pathway between different temporal levels: the end of pre-war culture and life in a family house of Part 1 and the return of the surviving characters to the house in Part 3. Consequently, the form of Woolf's novel, just

as the mechanism of '*liaison*' in *CE*, contributes to the production of contrasting feelings of motion and discontinuity. They allow us to see that even though life is threatened by death, the former seeks to find new forms to continue.

### 1.3.2 Characters

Another approach that may contribute to our understanding of the narrative organization in *CE* is evaluating the roles of characters—despite the complexity produced by their large number and the relations established between them. The notion of 'role' is understood as the role that the characters assume in the narrative. In *CE*, numerous characters do not respect any norms of hierarchy in their presentation. Even if the narrative develops around some main events such as the christening banquet, the meeting of James Laroche and Walter Angenaisaz, the visit of the Shah, the characters constantly change. They disappear or reappear after being kept out of sight for a while, without following any particular logic. Due to their vast number, it becomes inefficient to explore in detail the role assumed by each one of them. In that regard, except for the protagonist Galeswinthe (who also appears under the name *Mme Louis*), not a particularly distinct role is attributed to any character in the development of a story; instead, they play subordinate roles and are used in the movement of narrative and in delivering the idea of time.<sup>38</sup>

In Chapter I, the narrative develops mainly at the expense of character presentation. The text provides only a fragment of information about the characters, focusing on specific distinctive features that could differentiate them from the others. They are referred to by a proper name and personal pronouns in the text, as well as by the distinctive traits that are mentioned upon their initial introduction. Thus, when reappearing, after being left quite a while out of sight, the characters are identified by precisely re-introducing those distinctive traits that were previously attributed to them:

*Les Angenaisaz avaient été alliés aux Laroche ; un Laroche, procureur juré, épousa vers 1840 une Sophie Angenaisaz de quinze ans plus âgée que lui, qui élevait des nichées de lapins dans sa chambre à coucher entre les brins de laine d'un de ces balais appelés en France tête-de-loup et chez nous plumeau. Son visage carré et pâle, ses mèches blanches, on les voyait immobiles derrière les vitres noires de leur appartement dans la Grand-Rue*

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38 Since the narrative does not advance toward the future, but constantly moves forward and backward, we cannot employ the term 'progression' regarding the narrative of *CE*. The term 'progression' applies to the narrative that moves forward and develops a story around the 'Introduction', the 'Complication', and the 'Resolution'.



du bourg ; son petit neveu Jâmes, après avoir épousé une *Gaudence de Seewis*, devait acheter Entremonts ; l'autre, Louis, les Grâces, quoiqu'il n'eût pas trouvé beaucoup d'argent dans le tablier de *la Genevoise* qu'il épousa ; elle avait le sein gauche nettement plus haut que l'autre et un lorgnon fixé dessus au moyen d'une broche en brillants qui lui venait de son oncle le banquier qui mécontent de ce mariage avec ce Louis légua presque toute sa fortune aux enfants, aux enfants du lac. *Sophie Laroche-Angenaisaz* ne sortait que la nuit.<sup>39</sup> (CE: 749–50)

What is striking about Chapter I is that the narrative moves mainly by highlighting the relationships between characters. None of them live outside close familial ties. Thus, a familial bond constitutes a source of narrative progression. Each new sentence is related to the previous one by presenting a new character, who is somehow related to the character who appears in a preceding sentence. For instance, a family tie—formed through a marriage between ‘the sworn attorney Laroche’ and a certain Sophie Angenaisaz—introduces the rest of the characters: the brothers Jâmes and Louis Laroche, their wives; Gaudence de Seewis and ‘the Genevan,’ and an uncle of ‘the Genevan.’ In the following fragment, Sophie Laroche also brings in Mme Angenaisaz, while the latter helps reintroduce Jâmes Laroche in the text.

From Chapter II to Chapter V, the story develops around the origins of these and other characters. It extends back to the past, to a time before they were born. Chapter II elaborates on how the Angenaisaz settled the town. For instance, it is said that ‘at the arrival of Madame Angenaisaz, this foreign family was born round her, adult like Adam and Eve, with big knees and varicose veins: the aunt with abscesses, the aunt with cactus.’ [‘À [l']arrivée [de Madame Angenaisaz] cette famille étrangère naquit autour d'elle, adulte comme Adam et Ève, avec leurs gros genoux et leurs varices : la tante aux abcès, la tante aux cactus’.] (CE: 761)

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39 Eng. ‘The Angenaisaz had allied themselves to the Laroche; Around 1840, the sworn attorney Laroche married a Sophie Angenaisaz, fifteen years older than him, who raised rabbit off-springs in her bedroom between wool bits of one of those brushes which the French call ‘tête-de-loup’ [ceiling brush] and we, ‘plumeau’ [feather duster]. Her pale, square-shaped face and white locks were seen motionless behind the black windows of their apartment in the Grand-Rue of the town; her little nephew Jâmes, after having married a Gaudence of Seewis, was to buy Entremonts; the other, Louis, the Grâces, even if he had not found much money in the Genevan’s pocket by then, had married her; the Genevan’s left breast was distinctly higher than the right one and her eyeglasses were fixed using a brilliant quaver which she had inherited from her uncle, a banker who, displeased by his marriage with this Louis, left almost his entire fortune to the children, to the children of the lake. Sophie Laroche-Angenaisaz only came out at night’. (The italics are mine.)

Chapter II also discusses some important events that took place in the family, such as death: 'Étienne died of a train accident in America' [*Étienne est mort d'un accident de train en Amérique*]; as for another family member Alphonse, 'he had fallen from the big wall, in slow motion, like the ancient falls of the dead.' [*[Il] était tombé du grand mur, au ralenti, comme se font les chutes anciennes des morts.*] (*Ibid.*) There is also an account given on the origin of 'Walter's wife' [*la femme de Walter*] who 'comes from Herzogenbuchsee'; [*vient de Herzogenbuchsee*] (*CE*: 762) of *Cousin Emile's* wife: 'Elise Farnois of Farnois de Fiez, who originated from the Farnese, they said'; [*Elise Farnois des Farnois de Fiez, qui descendaient, disaient-ils, des Farnèse*] (*CE*: 770.) and of the Laroche. We hear about the events that took place in the family of the Laroche within the last two millennia: 'Two thousand years ago, the ancestors of the Laroche family covered Europe; the marriage with a Dorlodot of Poitiers in the 18<sup>th</sup> century made the first known ancestor the watchmaker [who had] a pale face and sad eyes of anthracite.' [*Deux mille ans auparavant les ascendants de la famille Laroche couvraient l'Europe ; l'alliance avec un Dorlodot de Poitiers au XVIIIe siècle fit émerger de la masse le premier ancêtre connu, horloger, son visage pâle, ses tristes yeux d'anthracite.*] (*CE*: 763) Jâmes Laroche has also got a 'wrinkled forehead and anthracite eyes' [*son front plissé et de ses yeux d'anthracite*']. (*CE*: 750) He has inherited them from his remote ancestor. References to the same physical trait demonstrate the power of time to rebuild and renew human bodies. Similar fragments develop the sense of death and renewal, bounding and continuity.

Chapter II also develops around the visit that Jâmes Laroche pays to Walter. The visit is described in parallel to earlier events, such as Walter's disappointment for not being able to win the heart of Emma Bembet before his marriage with Liesel; how, in the progress of their lives, the friendship between Walter and Jâmes Laroche came to an end:

Le malheureux Walter entra vers l'hôte de feu. « Très bien arrangé, très... », disait celui-ci avec le plus profond dédain. Il lui tendit une main dont le petit doigt resta replié contre la paume ; le malheureux Walter la saisit et la secoua puis dut l'abandonner. « Mais tu me tutoyais, malheureux, aux temps de notre enfance ! » En effet, ils se tutoyaient au collège du bourg où le petit Jâmes avait passé quelque temps avant de s'envoler avec ses tristes yeux d'anthracite vers l'institution de jeunes rois où il trouva le dauphin d'Espagne mais manqua le prince chinois de deux longueurs de char. « Eh bien ! Jâmes, disait le maître de latin, vous n'avez que quelques mots justes dans votre feuille ; je sais bien qu'on peut discuter sur la forme de certains mots latins. Mais dites-moi, ajoutait-il précipitamment, comment vont vos lapins ? » Jâmes élevait des lapins de race et les présentait aux concours agricoles. Son père, séparé du monde par une culotte de cheval à triple fond, faisait obéir à la cravache les clients de la banque, sa femme et son fils. Le petit n'avait que cinq ans qu'il lui donna une couple de lapins et exigea qu'il les soignât lui-même ; [...]

Jâmes disait « tu » à Walter, puis dès la quinzième année « tu » et « vous ». Maintenant le « vous » paraissait définitif ; et même, peu après le mariage de Walter, ils se rencontrèrent dans la Grand-Rue du bourg un jour de marché où flottaient devant la banque dans la brume de septembre les chevaux marins. Le jeune Goson donnait le bras à Jâmes radieux. Comme Walter se précipitait : « Rappelez-moi donc votre nom... Ah ! c'est juste, Angenaisaz », avait-il dit en se frappant le front et il s'était éloigné rapidement, dépourvu de pectoraux.<sup>40</sup> (*CE*: 764–5)

The most recent experiences can only be apprehended in retrospect with the earlier events in this passage. The narrative develops on the vertical axis. Walter Angenaisaz's and Jâmes Laroche's current relationship is mainly read through the lens of the past. This suggests that in *CE* we shape our understanding of 'now' within the confines of the past. The tendency of the narrative to move back and forth also corresponds to the message developed within the book: the resistance towards narrating a 'complete biography'. In contrast to those novels that have numerous passages discussing a character, one or two lines are sufficient to describe his/her life in Colomb. The 'economic' use of words for the description of facts and events demonstrates Catherine Colomb's use of correct terms for attaining the right effects. But it also helps represent the passing of time. Time finds its shape on the bodies and faces of the people in *CE*. In Chapter VI, for example, time erases the characters' faces and turns their bodies into

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40 Eng. 'The unfortunate Walter went towards the late guest. 'Very well arranged, very...,' the latter said with the deepest disdain. He handed a hand, the little finger of which remained folded against the palm; the unfortunate Walter seized it, shook it, and then let it go. 'But you were addressing me in a familiar form during our childhood!' Indeed, they addressed each other using the 'tu' form at the college of the town where the small Jâmes had spent some time before flying off with his sad eyes of anthracite to the institution of young kings where he found the heir apparent of Spain but missed the prince of China over two wagon length distance. 'Well! Jâmes, the teacher of Latin used to say, you only have a few correct words in your notebook; certainly, we can discuss the form of some Latin words. But tell me, he added hastily, how are your rabbits? Jâmes used to raise breedy rabbits and present them to the agricultural competitions. His father, separated from the world with a pair of saddlebags, made the customers of the bank, his wife and his son obey the whip. The child was only five years old when he was given a couple of rabbits and was demanded to look after them himself; Jâmes used to address Walter using the 'tu' form, later, when they were fifteen, 'tu' et 'vous'. Now the 'vous' seemed definite; moreover, shortly after Walter's marriage, they met in the main street of the town, on a market day, where the sea horses floated in front of the bank in September fog. Young Goson was giving a hand to the glorious Jâmes. As Walter rushed forward: 'Remind me of your name, then! Ah! That's right, Angenaisaz', he had said as he hit on his forehead and moved away quickly, devoid of peccs.'

corpses: 'Old age fixed the facial expression of Virginie one day'.<sup>41</sup> [*[L]a vieillesse fixa un jour l'expression de Virginie.*] (CE: 846) We notice that the characters are going to die, that 'the ladies with tiny parasols were turned towards the tireless couch, the winner who seemed motionless, but who went with an extreme speed in the sky of Mars and Saturn. [*[D]es dames à minuscule ombrelles, dirigeaient vers le couchant d'Indomptable, le Vainqueur qui paraissait immobile, mais qui passait à une vitesse extrême dans le ciel de Mars et de Saturne.*]' (CE: 839.) From this chapter until the end of the novel, aging and death are exposed as the main themes. Even such technological inventions as photography cannot challenge time. The word 'Chinese' is used to refer to the grotesque effects that the technology has on humans. A photograph cannot show the difference between people and instead makes them look identical: 'all attributed a great importance to their precarious faces, which photography began to fix in a ridiculous eternity; they made much effort to differentiate their faces from their relatives! And after death, the differences faded, they are the same uncles, the same aunts who populate the red velvet album of the Angenaisaz'. After the invention of photography, the characters 'look like each other like the Chinese', and 'they have joined a group of the dead of the Far East'. [*[T]ous attribuaient une grande importance à leurs précaires visages que la photographie commençait à fixer dans une éternité ridicule ; ils se donnaient tant de peine pour les différencier des visages de leurs prochains ! Et dès après la mort, les différences s'effacent, ce sont les mêmes oncles, les mêmes tantes qui peuplent l'album en velours rouge des Angenaisaz [...] ; ils se ressemblent entre eux comme des Chinois ; ils ont rejoint en troupes l'Extrême-Orient des morts.*] (CE: 785) The flow of time brings destructive effects on humans and the world of CE. The end of the novel, in particular, shows that the characters have not made any difference by living. Even Galeswinthe, whose life is so elusive, symbolizes more a mother's ghostly spirit than a real person.

The second half of CE is about death and decline. However, neither does the first half of the novel focus on 'life'. On various occasions, we read: 'These ladies were sitting in front of the curtain of Aristoloche, on the chairs covered with a coat-of-mail during all summer on a gravel terrace'. [*Ces dames étaient assises devant le rideau d'aristoloche, sur les chaises en cotte de mailles enracinées tout l'été dans le gravier de la terrasse.*] (CE: 752) We have 'Adophe's old mother, with so disturbed spirit that her bust was skewed like a cactus; she who was always seated on her handkerchief, pulled it abruptly from under her butt and giggled'. [*[L]a*

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41 The idea is further developed in Part 2 'Philosophy of time', in a comparative study of Colomb's novels and *La Recherche*.

*vieille mère d'Adolphe, à l'esprit si dérangé que son buste était planté de travers comme un cactus ; toujours assise sur son mouchoir, elle le tirait brusquement de sous son derrière et pouffait de rire.*] (CE: 753) Characters are frozen as in photographs, standing and sitting motionless and emotionless most of the time: 'Émilie Févot could not blush, she had thick skin just like *Madame Louis Laroche* who was sitting in the middle of her sofa in the salon of the Graces right now'. [*Émilie Févot ne réussit pas à rougir, elle avait la peau épaisse comme Mme Louis Laroche, en ce moment assise bien au milieu de son canapé dans le salon des Grâces.*] (CE: 788–9) Colomb thus tells the past through the still life in which time does not flow.

Death is one of those elements that the reader is constantly reminded of in the novel. CE envelops the idea that the reasons why people die are beyond the reach of human understanding: 'you never know why exactly the men die' [*on ne sait jamais exactement pourquoi les hommes meurent*']. (CE: 900) Death is also utilized to achieve a sort of order and finality. It opens and closes the narrative of CE. The novel starts with the description of the premature death and finishes with the death of the protagonist Galeswinthe.

### 1.3.3 Point of view

The notion of point of view distinguishes Catherine Colomb's novels from other literary texts that observe and discuss the external world from an objective perspective. Colomb tries to represent as many diverse views as possible. The narrative incorporates the diverse and sometimes contrastive views of different characters. There is a constant shift in the viewpoint from which the events and the experiences of the community are surveyed. For instance, the christening banquet is not directly presented to the reader but rather through the gaze of Émilie Févot, who believes that the guests are 'a gang of peasants' [*« Bande de croquants »*']. (CE: 749) Or we have Mme Alphonse Angenaisaz, who 'critically examined the christening banquet table, set on the terrace in the shade of the Sycamore maple, which dropped from time to time spinning seeds'. [*... examina d'un œil critique la table du baptême, dressée sur la terrasse à l'ombre de l'éérable-sycomore qui laissait tomber de temps en temps une graine tournoyante.*] (CE: 751) Again, the dinner menu is informed through Adolphe's perspective: 'Ho! Ho! Trout *au bleu!* You have done it right my dear sister-in-law. What? You don't like trout, Madame?' [*« Ho ! Ho ! des truites au bleu ! vous avez bien fait les choses, petite belle-sœur. Quoi ? Madame, vous n'aimez pas les truites ? »*] (CE: 757) Adolphe's voice further integrates a certain Madame's viewpoint, as

the last sentence shows. Thus, the reader may discover scenes through the perspectives of different characters.

Likewise, the characters' life events are often told by others, as in the following passages:

[N]é de parents pauvres qui tenaient une petite épicerie à cheval sur la frontière du Jura, comment Elise avait-elle pu l'épouser, le choisir, le voire seulement ? C'était la faute de Marianne, du frère de Marianne, le Pollet, ce gros marchand de bois, mon frère puîné, disait sa sœur qui ressemblait à une pintade et parlait en fermant à demi les yeux. Seulement quelle enfance il avait eue, ce Pollet, avec un père qui ne pouvait dormir que des rubans de velours noir autour des jambes et s'il allait au petit endroit et le trouvait occupé secouait la porte à démolir les murs, si bien qu'on avait dû en construire un second réservé à son usage au bout d'une galerie dans cette grande maison muette et grise entre ses sapins verts. Le soir qu'Elise, hôte de Marianne, vit pour la première fois Adolphe invité à contrecœur par Madame toute bruisante de soie et qui portait une grosse broche en cheveux, le père venait de mourir, il y avait du caviar ; Adolphe entra, Elise redressa son étrange dos en pente et, l'apercevant le reconnut. Elle réclama sa part que son frère put lui donner en titres et en argent liquide car d'heureuses vendanges, des dahlias au chapeau, amenaient chaque automne cent mille litres sous le pressoir, en cette saison où le monde est remis sur le chantier, le lac fume, les obliques tempêtes viennent de l'est et de l'ouest, et dans les assises des maisons les madriers s'ébranlent et tournent huit jours comme des roues. Adolphe quitta le commerce de bois pour la banque où de tout temps les Angenaisaz déposaient leurs titres et chaque automne en compte courant l'argent de la vendange. [...] C'était là tout ce que savait la vieille Angenaisaz de la vie d'Élise, la brève biographie qu'elle se remémorait rapidement chaque fois qu'elle l'apercevait. (CE: 752-3)

« Caroline est venue hier, elle nous a présenté son fiancé », dit Elise en s'évadant avec ses gants. « Tu le connais, Adolphe ? » [...] « Un bel homme, dit cousine Laure qui descendait des Farnèse, un bel homme, le fiancé de Caroline ». (CE: 754)

Alphonse qui, sous les yeux de sa mère languissante, inclinant sa petite ombrelle, était tombé du grand mur, au ralenti, comme se font les chutes anciennes des morts, est assis maintenant devant sa tente avec Ferdinand de Lesseps, tous barbus, des filets à papillons sur les genoux.<sup>42</sup> (CE: 761)

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42 Eng. (1). 'Born of poor parents who ran a small grocery store across the border of Jura, how could Elise marry him, choose him, even meet him? It was Marianne's fault, rather Marianne's brother's fault, the Pollet, that big wood merchant, my younger brother, said his sister who looked like a guinea-fowl and spoke with half-closed eyes. What kind of childhood had he in company with his father who could not sleep otherwise than with black velvet ribbons around his legs and if he went to a small place and was found busy, in the process of shaking the door to demolish the walls, so that there was a need to install the other door, reserved for this use at the end of a gallery in this large house, mute and grey between the green pines. That evening when Elise, Marianne's

In the first passage, the story of Elise and her husband Adolphe is told from *Mme Angenaisaz's* perspective. In the second one, Elise and 'Cousin Laure' chat about the 'fiance' of some Caroline who does not even appear in the text. Memories of 'the old Angenaisaz' involve various temporal perspectives. They include the moment when she thinks as well as different episodes in other characters' pasts. *Mme Angenaisaz's* memory reaches as far as Adolphe's childhood spent in a poor family. Soon after, more recent events, such as Adolphe's meeting with Elise and their marriage, are also recalled. Elise first met Adolphe at Marianne's, as presented through the perspective of Madame Angenaisaz. They were introduced to each other by Marianne's brother Pollet. The narrative then further develops around Pollet's short biography, integrating his own experience of time.

In the given fragments, the characters' experiences in time become interconnected with the real-world experiences. It is relevant that the transformation in history is observed through the changes in a character's life. Adolphe and Elise married when 'after a fruitful harvesting of dahlias, hundred thousand liters went under the press every year'. Economic stability however did not last long, as we read in the following sentence. Development of the banking system ('the lived time' (Ricoeur 1985: 75)) changes Adolphe's life ('fictive time' (*ibid.*)). However, the events of historical significance are only reported through the character's experience: 'Adolphe left woodworking business for a banking job'. (*CE*: 753)

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guest, saw Adolphe for the first time, the one who was reluctantly invited by Madame who wore silk clothing which made noise and carried a big brooch in her hair, that evening the father had died, there was caviar; Adolphe entered, Elise straightened her strange, sloping back, and as she noticed him, she recognized him. She claimed her share which her brother could give her in the form of securities and cash, because, after a fruitful harvesting of dahlias, hundred thousand liters went under the press every year, in that season when everyone is back to the construction site, and there is a steam fog over the lake, slanting storms come from the east and the west, and in the foundations of the houses the planks move and swing like wheels for eight days. Adolphe left the woodworking business for a banking job; the Angenaisaz had always been depositing their securities and the money earned from the harvest in their current account every autumn. [...] This was all that old Angenaisaz knew about Elise's life, a brief biography that she recalled quickly every time she saw Elise'. (2). "Caroline came yesterday, she introduced us to her fiancé, said Elise as she fanned herself with her gloves. Do you know him, Adolphe?' [...] 'A handsome man, said Cousin Laure, who was a descendent of the Farnese, a handsome man, Caroline's fiancé"' (3). 'Alphonse who, in front of her weak mother's eyes, tilted at his small parasol, had fallen from the big wall, in slow motion, as do the ancient falls of the dead, now is sitting in front of his aunt with Ferdinand de Lesseps, all bearded and with butterfly nets on their knees'.

This fragment hence draws together fictive time and real (historical/lived) time, suggesting that '[f]ictive time is never completely cut off from lived time, the time of memory and of action.' (Ricoeur 1985: 75) Thus, *CE* navigates between the real and the fictional worlds with their own experiences of time.

### 1.3.4 *Repetition and time*

As in memory, some themes, motifs, and dialogues often recur unaltered in Colomb's novels. Readers of *CE* also encounter repeatedly biographical details, physical descriptions, and the character gestures evoked alongside their names. Numerous minor characters are briefly introduced and then disappear in the text. Some of them are even nameless. Consequently, they retake their positions in the course of the events through previously evoked biographical details and a series of things they say or do. For instance, 'It was the pastor's brother who only burned raspberry branches during the catechism. "There", he said as he closed the stove door noisily and tightened a Scotch cap on his skull, there is a good fire. "Yours!" He cried in a terrible voice: "who created the world?"' [*[C]était le frère du pasteur qui ne brûlait pendant le catéchisme que des rameaux de framboisier. « Là, disait-il en fermant bruyamment le portillon du poêle et en raffermissant sur son crâne un bonnet d'Écossais, là, voilà une bonne flambée. À toi ! criait-il d'une voix terrible : qui a créé le monde ? ».*] (*CE*: 748) We often read about 'Adolphe with his weary wrinkled eyes behind his lorgnon, Eugène whose big rosy face sports the stripe of a salt-and-pepper moustache'. [*'Adolphe les yeux fripés derrière son lorgnon, Eugène ce grand visage rose barré d'une moustache poivre et sel.*] (*The Spirits*: 9; *ET*: 953) and Zoé, who is 'all sisterly affection done away with and dressed in the white gown of insane women'. [*'Zoé, toute affection fraternelle abolie, vêtue de la robe blanche des folles.*] (*The Spirits*: 36; *ET*: 973) We experience sudden shifts in time when the characters reappear in the text. Some monologues also repeat themselves: 'if I may ask?' [*'je te demande un peu ?*] (*The Spirits*: 8; *ET*: 952) or "'Where are my brothers, my sister from back then? Where are the children? In my dreams, I meet up with them"'. [*'Où sont mes frères, ma sœur d'autrefois ? Où sont les enfants ? Dans mes rêves, je les rencontre...'*] (*The Spirits*: 8; *ET*: 953) 'And yet how he lives in clover! Six months here, six months there, with Adolphe and Mélanie. Put up, fed; furnished with light and clean laundry'. [*'[Q]uel coq en pâte ! Six mois ici, six mois là-bas, chez Adolphe et Mélanie. Logé, nourri, éclairé, blanchi.'*] (*The Spirits*: 7; *ET*: 952) The repeating dialogues create the cyclical temporality. The same themes are developed in different novels namely a family drama and fight for the heritage, the desire to get the childhood back. There are also themes of memory and the obsession with



maternal figures that Galeswinthe (in *CE*), the 'tourterelle' ['turtledove'<sup>43</sup>] (in *ET*), and the figure 'à la pèlerine de laine noire' [with a 'black wool cape'] (in *TA*) represent. The narrative also evolves by some motifs. The images depicting 'white roses' dropping from the 'coffin of the young dead', Jâmes Laroche's 'little finger bending in towards his palm', the *uncle Alphonse's* fall from a 'big wall', the 'copper lamp' that accompanies Galeswinthe reappear many times in the course of the novel. Considering the same themes and motifs developed in different novels, Georges Anex states that 'each time, [Colomb] rewrites the same [prose] poem with a new story.'<sup>44</sup> (Anex 1962: 12) All other novels indeed represent the themes of memory and time, the importance of childhood memories, maternal love and grief, fight for ancestral property together with the fairy-tale motifs and the motif of embroidery. Colomb also develops the action in the same places within different texts, such as: in the big house with three terraces, in *château de Fraidaigue* or the 'Possessions', along the lake, near a vineyard and close to the Jura Mountains. These recurring themes and motifs are told in different ways in each of her novels.

The meaning of repetition lies beyond what the repeated words or groups of words explicitly suggest. The recurrences of apparently insignificant elements in *CE* often participate in the representation of time, as in this extract from Chapter VII:

« Gardez, gardez », répétait beaucoup plus tard Mme Louis, imitant son beau-frère, lorsque la Révolution russe changea son or en chiffons de papier. « Gardez, gardez, comme disait Jâmes », répétait-elle, posant sur sa table à jeu en acajou, à côté des patiences, *L'Amant de Lady Chatterley* qui ne parvenait pas à faire rougir sa peau épaisse et blanche. « Gardez, Madame, gardez ... » comme disent les infirmières quand elles vous donnent un lavement. Paul expédia une deuxième dépêche : « Je viens. Envoyez argent voyage ».<sup>45</sup> (*CE*: 873–4)

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43 The 'turtledove' ('la tourterelle' in French) may also be called 'colombe' in French, and refers to the author's surname, i.e., Colomb, who like her characters, lost her mother at a young age.

44 Fr. '[À] chaque fois, [Colomb] réécrit le même poème à travers un nouveau récit.'

45 Eng. "“Keep, keep”, Madame Louis was repeating much time later, imitating her brother-in-law when the Russian Revolution changed her gold into scraps of paper. “Keep, keep, as Jâmes said”, she repeated, resting the elbow on her Mahogany game table, next to the patients, *Lady Chatterley's Lover* that could not make her thick, white skin blush. “Keep, ma'am, keep...” as the nurses say when they give you an enema. Paul sent out a second dispatch: “I am coming. Send money for the trip””.

The flow of time is represented through the recurrence of a phrase: 'Keep, keep' or 'Keep, ma'am, keep'. The repetition of these words contributes to a re-elaboration of thought. It alters the linear progression by blurring the division between two moments: when her brother Paul sent his two letters to Galeswinthe (here introduced under the name of *Mme Louis*). The use of repetition further allows discovering that nothing meaningful occurred in Galeswinthe's life between times, except in her thinking about whether to sell her ancestral property or not. As a result, the recurrences of various details create the effects of both flow of time and cyclical time in *CE*.

We further focus on the significance of recurring motifs in Colomb's representation of time in comparison with Woolf's organization of narrative around 'moments' in Chapter 3.

#### 1.4 The old and new narrative formulas: Colomb's two modes of writing

The previous sections show that the novel *CE* lacks the characters whose internal experiences would have been conveyed in a similar way to the novels of *consciousness*. Furthermore, the discussions held above regarding the use of verbal tenses shed light on the proximity of *CE* to 19<sup>th</sup>-century French novel, and to the novel of 'the school of the gaze' [*roman de l'école du regard*]. The aim set by this section will now be to show that memory is more than a central theme in Colomb's novels: it can also be regarded as a method of composition. This section includes the analysis of her two novels *CE* and *ET*.

Colomb's style is sometimes marked by variation in narrative flow, in other cases by constructing the inalterable sequence. When the style is marked by steady and precise proceedings, we have to do with the narrative of a novel that has a linear sequence. Linear narrative is adapted to the representation of more regular occurrences of external events; everyday life is measured by objective time, which controls the mundane activities of humans. Such narrative represents time as what Ricardo Quinones calls a 'predicative' phenomenon, (Quinones 1985: 38), i.e., the predictive, controlling aspect of time. A few such examples of a linear narrative sequence are found in *CE* and *ET*. In *ET* some scenes are described with a linear narrative, such as Eugène's and Madame's meeting and marriage:

[Eugène et César] virent, le fiacre arrêté, descendre une personne dont la robe était si vaste que son père la conduisant au bal marchait sur le trottoir et lui donnait la main pour n'être pas distancé. Le buste qui montait l'escalier devant eux s'enfonçait dans une corolle blanche. D'autres bustes étaient alignés sur des chaises le long de la paroi,

et des bras solides cachés presque entièrement par des peaux blanches tendues les éventaient en silence. [...] Eugène s'éloignait, il traversait les étendues de parquet ciré, Eugène s'inclinait devant la jeune fille, il l'invitait à danser... Ses larges yeux reflétaient le gaz, elle était grande et forte. Puis elle mangea un biscuit sans ôter ses gants de peau blanche. [...] Eugène ne comprit jamais quelle idée lui vint, le lendemain, d'épouser la jeune fille du bal. [...] Le mariage fut vite conclu, à cause de ce château, et surtout de Monsieur Anselme. Tout était si facile, il n'y aurait jamais plus ni famine, ni peste, ni guerre naturellement, et les dernières vendanges avaient apporté cent mille litres sous le pressoir.<sup>46</sup> (ET: 1097–1099.)

In the given episode, Colomb adheres to the norms of a classical novel's linear representation. The story of Eugène's and his wife's meeting followed by their marriage is organized in chronological order. There are no digressions or anticipations of events. The scene reveals Eugène's meeting with his wife for the first time. Eugène makes up his mind to marry her (Sémiramis, also called 'Madame') quickly after dancing with her at the ball. Remarkably, the scene is described on the final pages of the novel, whereas it takes place earlier than the rest of the events. From this moment on, the life experiences of the protagonist César no longer arrange themselves in order. His younger brother Eugène claims the ancestral house after his marriage with Sémiramis. César loses all hopes after Eugène's marriage. He seems less concerned about losing his property. He knows that once married, Eugène will never be a child again. César views marriage as a brutal separation from childhood. From this moment on, César's life experiences are told with a nonlinear narrative. Thus, Colomb tries to order the events following the character's perception of reality.

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46 Eng. '[Eugène and César] saw coming out of the halted fiacre a woman whose gown was so vast that her father, accompanying her to the ball, had walked on the pavement and gave her his hand in order not to be left behind. The bust that climbed the staircase in front of them plunged into the white corolla. Other busts, lined up on chairs along the wall, were being fanned silently by solid arms almost entirely hidden by long white gloves. [...] Eugène was walking away, crossing expanses of the wooden floor, bowing to the young woman and inviting her to dance... Her big eyes were reflecting the light from the gas lamps. She was tall and strong. Then she ate a biscuit without taking off her white leather gloves. [...] Eugène never understood what notion came to him, the following morning, to marry the young woman at the ball. [...] The marriage was quickly arranged because of the château and especially because of Monsieur Anselme. Everything was so simple, famine, plague or war would, of course, no longer exist, and the most recent harvests had brought one hundred thousand liters under the winepress. (*The Spirits*: 212–215)

Some conventional features of novel composition, such as a temporal order of events, are also respected in *CE*. The novel contains several relatively long episodes. The following episodes get described within chronological order:

1. Jenny's death and funeral;<sup>47</sup>
2. Invitation of Émilie Févot by the engineer at his aunt's;<sup>48</sup>
3. The christening banquet;<sup>49</sup>
4. The reception for the Shah;
5. Jämes Laroche's visit to Walter Angenaisaz;<sup>50</sup>
6. Galeswinthe's visit to Jämes Laroche;<sup>51</sup>
7. Marguerite's marriage;<sup>52</sup>
8. The death of Galeswinthe's daughter Marguerite;<sup>53</sup>
9. The arrival of Galeswinthe's brother Paul;<sup>54</sup>
10. Galeswinthe is forced to move out of her ancestral house;<sup>55</sup>
11. The death of Jämes Laroche;
12. The death of Galeswinthe.<sup>56</sup>

The order in which these events actually occur matches the order in which they are described in the narrative, apart from the first episode, i.e., Jenny's death,

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47 It is the first episode of *CE*, which appears on the first two pages of Chapter I. (*CE*: 747–748)

48 The episode follows the funeral of the young dead in Chapter I. (*CE*: 748)

49 The episodes of the christening banquet and the reception for the Shah develop in parallel and expand through many pages. The first scene (i.e., the christening banquet) develops on almost half of the novel (in Chapters I, II, III and IV). The scene follows Émilie Févot's invitation by the engineer at his aunt's in Chapter I. (*CE*: 748) As for the reception for the Shah, this scene is only described in Chapter IV. (*CE*: 794–813)

50 This episode (Jämes Laroche's visit to Walter Angenaisaz) is given in Chapter II. (*CE*: 762–769) It is inserted within the description of the christening banquet. The latter is interrupted again by characters' biographical details. For instance, in Chapter II, the brief stories of Mme Angenaisaz, (*CE*: 769–771) Elise (*CE*: 771) and Gustalof (*CE*: 772–773) are inserted within the scene of the christening banquet.

51 The scene develops in Chapter V. (*CE*: 826–827)

52 Marguerite's marriage is described in Chapter VI. (*CE*: 839–842)

53 We learn about Marguerite's death in Chapter VI. (*CE*: 845)

54 Paul meets his sister Galeswinthe in Chapter VI. (*CE*: 874)

55 After Paul's arrival, Galeswinthe is forced to leave her ancestral house. The information is given at the end of Chapter VII.

56 Jämes Laroche and Galeswinthe die in the final Chapter VIII. The novel ends with Galeswinthe's death. (*CE*: 908)

which, as the opening episode in *La Recherche*—the Narrator's waking up—cannot be dated with precision. Also, the fourth episode does not follow the third one. They are presented as parallel scenes in the narrative.

Yet, the time projected in Colomb's novels is not limited to representations of clock time (hours) and calendar time (days, year), which march forward. We may refer to the narrative in its linear extension as the 'narrative of a novel' [*'récit du roman'*]. The one characterized by the change in the movements and pace might be called the 'memory narrative' [*'récit des souvenirs'*].<sup>57</sup>

J.-L. Seylaz suggests that 'memory does not tell, memory does not compose'.<sup>58</sup> (Seylaz 1973: 86) Yet, he does not deny that memory can be understood as a process leading to artistic creation: 'As in her other novels, in *The Spirits of the Earth*, Catherine Colomb entrusts her pen to a mental activity in which memory plays an essential role'.<sup>59</sup> (*Ibid.*) Colomb herself explained that memory can become a source for the emergence of recollections, of dreams and reflections: 'Does not memory continuously intervene, generating a parallel life, bringing along hundreds of recollections, elusive visions, daydreams...' [*'Est-ce que la mémoire n'intervient pas sans cesse, créant une vie parallèle, qui amène des centaines de souvenirs, de visions fugitives, des rêves...'*] (2019 (1964): 1657) She further added that these recollections could give birth to the creative process: 'But I take this sheet, my pen, and the memories come back to me in droves, thorns, impossible to tear them off. They encircle my legs, my feet. I tear them from my limbs one after the other to be finally able to begin to tell in a desert.' [*'Mais je prends cette feuille, mon stylo, et les souvenirs me reviennent en foule, épines, impossible de m'arracher, ils encerclent mes jambes, mes pieds, je les arrache de mes membres l'un après l'autre pour pouvoir enfin dans un désert commencer à raconter.'*] (*Ibid.*) According to this passage, Colomb's novels are the consequences of the recollections derived in the process of writing. In *À la rencontre de mes personnages* [Eng. *Meeting with my Characters*], Colomb stated that her characters were inspired by her memories. Her imagination was nourished with the photograph she had seen in her father's office as a child:

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57 The terms 'récit du roman' and 'récit des souvenirs' with reference to Colomb's novels were used by J. L. Seylaz. (1973: 71–90)

58 Fr. '[...] la mémoire ne raconte pas, la mémoire ne compose pas.'

59 Fr. '*Les Esprits de la Terre* sont sans doute nés, comme les autres romans de Catherine Colomb, d'un abandon de la plume à une activité mentale dans laquelle la mémoire joue un rôle essentiel.'

Je me souviens : dans le bureau de mon père, il y avait au mur, à côté du baromètre, une grande photographie : des jeunes gens à casquettes blanches, bien enfoncées sur les yeux, installés par petits groupes sur des rochers, des rochers de carton. Ils apparaissent dans la brume dorée de la petite enfance, mais maintenant, maintenant, je m'avance sur une plaine, dans le brouillard, tout au fond une sorte de forêt impénétrable, d'où sortent des animaux, des inconnus, et soudain, miracle, je les reconnais.<sup>60</sup> (Colomb (2019 (1962): 1372))

Colomb, as an adult, has at first precise recollections of the objects seen in her father's office. After many years, she can still remember some details vividly, such as a photograph next to the barometer hanging on the wall in her father's office. Whitecaps on the heads in the photograph, the rocks made out of cardboard boxes are among her childhood memories. Later Colomb claims that her memories look like an 'impenetrable forest', inaccessible. But writing them down gives them shape. Colomb thus uses her childhood memories as the material in the creation of her novel. But these memories lead her to tell the stories of other lives based on intuitive knowledge. Hence, memory stimulates a rather intuitive writing method.

In his article on Colomb, J.-L. Seylaz points at different qualities that her work contains: 'the ideal world, which is marked by transparency and certainty in the traditional novel, is replaced by what corresponds to a rich taste for our time: a mode of uncertainty, perhaps, in which meaning remains suspended; an experience of reading requires submission to an unusual process, an obligation of an always problematic reconstruction, a perception of the text as otherness.'<sup>61</sup> (1972: 176)

Catherine Colomb's texts may be regarded as 'Works in Progress'— the term by which Joyce defined over many years what later became *Finnegans Wake*. From the initial to the last pages of *CE* the story runs at a fast pace. As a result, the motif or action is laid out implicitly in her novels. She admitted: 'Very far,

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60 Eng. 'I remember: in my father's office, on the wall, next to the barometer, there was a large photograph of young people in white caps, with their deep-set eyes, installed in small groups on rocks, on cardboard rocks. They appear in the golden haze of childhood, but now, right now, I advance on the plain, in the fog with a kind of impenetrable forest in the background, where some animals, strangers come out from, and suddenly the miracle happens. I recognize them.'

61 Fr. 'au monde idéal de transparence et de certitude du roman traditionnel se substitue ce qui correspond à un goût profond de notre temps : un mode du peut-être, de l'incertain, où le sens reste suspendu ; une expérience de la lecture comme une soumission à une démarche insolite, comme obligation d'une reconstitution toujours problématique ; une perception du texte comme altérité.'

very high, it seems to me that a voice tells me that nothing has been said, that everything remains to be said. And I start again, from nothing, not knowing how I will finish the starting page. [*T* très loin, très haut, il me semble qu'une voix me dit que rien n'a été formulé, qu'il reste tout à dire et je recommence, partant de rien, ne sachant pas comment je finirai la page commencée.] (Colomb, quoted in Favre (1993: 29)) Colomb tried to record quickly numerous events, characters, and objects springing from her memory. She sketches quickly her imagination not to lose the thread of reminiscences: 'So many things to say! I'm overwhelmed ... How to write fast enough?' [*Mais que de choses à dire, je suis débordée... Comment écrire assez vite ?*] (Colomb, quoted in Seylaz (1967: 133))

Recording the memory processes leads to a temporal transformation of Colomb's narrative. In a linear narrative sequence, two scenes relate based on temporal logic. Whereas *CE* and *ET* do not always give the spatial and temporal location to the readers who are often placed in an arena charged with characters and commentaries. In *CE*, the events do not always have some apparent tie, the causal relationship between them. The initial episode, Jenny's death, is not related to any other following incidents. The absence of the description of Jenny's death and funeral would not have affected the development of the rest of the events. Although several long episodes in *CE* are aligned one after another according to a temporal sequence, they branch out into several segments. The segments are multiplied, inter-twisted, delayed, and reactivated for the progression of the narrative. The ties are less obvious between various associations. As a result, the reader experiences jumping from one temporal level of the past to the other (such as from the distant to the recent past or the imaginary past) in a rapid and spatial mode: 'the lake waves washed up the shore like that night when some lady, as it was said before, walked on the white roses fallen from the coffin of the young dead.' [*L*e lac brassait ses vagues le long de la rive comme cette nuit où une autre, dit-on, marcha sur les roses blanches tombées d'un jeune cercueil.] (*CE*: 871) There are two temporal levels introduced in the same sentence. The use of the expression *dit-on* highlights a temporal distance between the earlier moment, i.e., when a woman walked on the flowers fallen from the tomb of the young dead, and a more recent moment. Two temporal layers are brought close to each other by association: '*le lac brassait ses vagues*'. (*Ibid.*) The association produces a temporal shift in the sentence by linking the earlier and later moments. But it also offers an instant view of temporally distant memories because, quoting Lise Favre, 'everything in memory is related, everything is located on the same

plane.<sup>62</sup> (Favre 1993: 43) Thus, memory destabilizes hierarchies between various recollections. Because memories escape control and linear time; the memory narrative develops at the expense of what the words or phrases might suggest during the elaboration process.

As a consequence, in *CE* and *ET*, readers cannot anticipate what comes next. They cannot keep track of the narrative developed on the ground of a game of associations. The narrative full of ruptures and breaks throws the readers into the world of fractures, troubles, and uncertainty. The fragmented narrative displays time as a series of obstacles, loss, and change. It often consists of a vast number of anachronisms.<sup>63</sup> Two types of anachronisms—i.e., recounting of events out of order—appear in Colomb's novels: retrospections and anticipations. They influence the temporal organization of narrative. The retrospections take on an explanatory role by recalling the earlier events from the characters' past. The anticipations leap ahead and partially reveal the facts which will be recounted at some later point in the text. The anachronisms are found in cases similar to this one:

[César] évitait la place où s'élevait autrefois la tour, place que Valà-Valà foula sans aucune crainte, ce qui le tua sous les pieds des chevaux quelque trois ans plus tard, et où marchait Madame sur ses gros pieds bosselés d'oignons, ce qui pourrait bien causer sa mort affreuse dans la barque.<sup>64</sup> (*ET*: 1067)

The narrative following a memory path allows tracing audacious temporal shifts. The place where once the tower stood evokes various recollections. These recollections—retrospections (such as Valà-Valà trod there; Madame walked there) mingle with one another in one sentence and contribute to a multifold narrative progression. The narrative (within the same sentence) also makes room for anticipations and daydreams: Valà-Valà will be killed after being dragged by

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62 Fr. '[T]out dans la mémoire est contigu, tout se situe sur le même plan'.

63 Genette differentiates *normal* and *anachronous* sequences in the narrative. The term 'normal sequence' Genette uses to designate a linear sequence, where the discourse and the story have the same order. As for the term 'anachrony', it designates non-chronological order; see Genette (1972: 72–182); (1970: 93–118). I apply Genette's term to Colomb's novels to define the breaks in chronology, which disrupt linear representation, however, do not prevent the readers from discerning the story sequence.

64 Eng. '[César] would avoid the ground where the tower formerly rose, ground across which Well-Well trod fearlessly and on which he would be killed beneath horses' hooves some three years later, and across which Madame herself walked on her big bunion-bumpy feet, an act that could indeed cause her atrocious death in a rowboat'. (*The Spirits*: 168)



a horse in three years; César fantasizes about killing Madame in a boat. Colomb does not choose to present the events in the order they could have occurred. Instead of introducing Valà-Valà's, Madame's, and César's life experiences in their linear extension and by spreading them over hundreds of pages, she summarizes them in one sentence.

Recording associations, i.e., the activity of memory, with continual movement in time constitutes Colomb's experimentalism with prose narrative. The narrative composition of her selected works does not rely on the plot organized according to the development of a character or an action. What holds the centre of attention is the stirring of associations, the diversity of temporal levels, memory recordings. Colomb's *Trilogy* (i.e., *CE*, *ET*, and *TA*) depends on the relationships between numerous characters, objects, and events. Different ideas are held together without a recognizable connection. What comes into a sharper focus is a sequence itself of various details—conversational snatches, gestures, thoughts—introduced to mirror a remembering consciousness. The reader, unable to follow numerous threads, starts to apprehend the figurative meaning that the book conveys. He realizes that the book mirrors the complexity of human memory and imagination processes. The more he reads, the more obvious it becomes to the reader that the logic of composition of the narrative in *CE* and *ET* is as difficult to discern as how our mind operates and relates inconsistent facts, subjects, objects, or phenomena with each other. Various types of temporalities and a discontinuous structure result from the development of the narrative around the memory processes. Objects, events, and characters evoke various associations and memories of different times. Time is laid bare by placing together these associations and recollections. Constant temporal changes display time as the prime mover of the narrative.

The old narrative formulas in terms of plot composition are more present in *ET* than in *CE*. With its narrative sequence, *CE* differs from the novels which contain the elements of a 'sequence of the prototypical narrative.' Such sequence consists of the following elements: 'The initial situation, node, action or evaluation, denouement, final situation.'<sup>65</sup> The reader is never given any indication of the direction a story will lead. The narrative thread rarely develops around some fictive event or plot (Fr. 'intrigue') principles in *CE*. Nor does *CE* offer a character-driven story generally found in 19<sup>th</sup>-century novel (for instance in Balzac's *La*

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65 Fr. 'Séquence narrative prototypique.' (Adam (1994: 104)) 'Situation initiale, Nœud, Action ou Évaluation, Dénouement, Situation finale.' (Adam (1994), quoted in Baroni (2007: 66))

*Comédie humaine* and Tolstoy's *Война и миръ* [Eng. 'War and Peace']). 'The plot requires the presence of an internal narrative tension, which must be created at the beginning of the story, maintained during its development, and resolved in the outcome.'<sup>66</sup> (Bourneuf et Ouellet (1972: 43), quoted in Baroni (2007: 45)) The narrative tension is generated effectively in the texts where the events are connected by some temporal logic. (Baroni 2007: 55) The lack of arrangement of events in a temporal order explains why the narrative tension works differently in Colomb's novels than those with a linear sequence. As Chapter 1 explained, the narrative tension is not produced by thematic material—generally found in the novels with a linear development of plot; instead, it is achieved through features of discourse in *CE*. Colomb enlarges the scope of fiction. For her, real-life stories do not always have a beginning and an end. They also seldom lead up to a climax. For her, memory and real-life experiences escape linear time. Within her imaginative prose, she voices the idea that the realities of human experiences seldom arrange themselves symmetrically.

Careful and attentive reading is fundamental for comprehending Colomb's novels. The writer prevents her readers from adopting a comfortable stance while stretching their imagination into the vertical axis. The readers not only scan the book made out of memories, but they also follow the memory processes. Since a variety of incidents connected with the story are thrown out in different parts of the text, the reader needs to remember and put them together to come up to an understanding of a unified story. The representation of memory involves the disjointed narrative—a narrative technique that consists of 'throwing the parts out of orderly connection.' (*OED*) Colomb deliberately uses such a narrative to illustrate the way human memory recalls. Through the manifold narrative, she creates a puzzling storyline and encourages her readers to put different parts together. Various stories are inserted in the main episodes of *CE*. For instance, the characters' brief biographies are often inserted within the description of the two meals. To unlock the puzzle, the reader needs to memorize and put together various connecting elements of the story. Thus, Colomb engages her readers in memorizing and recalling processes.

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66 Fr. 'L'intrigue, en tant qu'enchaînement de faits, repose sur la présence d'une tension interne entre ces faits qui doit être créée dès le début du récit, entretenue pendant son développement et qui doit trouver sa solution dans le dénouement'.

## II. The Aesthetics of Time & the Poetics of Memory in Colomb: in Dialogue With Proust

### 2.1 Introduction

For a study of the aesthetics of time the discussion developed in this chapter will mainly focus on the mechanism of memory in Proust's and Colomb's works. Considering the aims of this comparative study and the length of Proust's novel (about three thousand pages), we pay particular attention to the first (*Swann's Way*) and final (*Time Regained*) volumes of *La Recherche*.<sup>67</sup> The episodes of involuntary memory, such as the one of the madeleine or a sequence of involuntary reminiscences in *Time Regained*, are particularly interesting for our analysis because, by reflecting distant eras in each other, they afford what Luc Fraisse calls 'the supreme wealth of psychology in time'. [*la suprême richesse de la psychologie dans le temps*']. (1995: 114) These volumes also represent the childhood memories. Furthermore, they are interesting for the analysis of Proust's temporal experimentations. To illustrate how time gets represented in Colomb and *La Recherche*, next to the most famous passages of involuntary memory, this comparative study also focuses on a wide range of other memory events that the complex narrative construction and temporal discontinuities of Proust's novel depend on.

### 2.2 Review of studies on time and memory in Proust

There is no agreement on the role of memory between Proust's critics. In earlier studies, Gilles Deleuze highlighted 'the secondary role of memory', because, for him, what matters in *La Recherche* is not time and memory, but 'the sign and the truth'.<sup>68</sup> (1964: 66, 70) In his historico-metaphysical analysis of the time-problem,

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67 Proust began writing *La Recherche* in 1909. Between 1913 and 1927, the novel appeared in seven volumes: 1/*Du côté de chez Swann*, 2/*À l'ombre des jeunes filles en fleurs*, 3/*Le côté de Guermantes*, 4/*Sodome et Gomorrhe*, 5/*La prisonnière*, 6/*La fugitive*, and 7/*Le temps retrouvé*. The first part, *Du côté de chez Swann* (translated into English as *Swann's Way*), was published by Bernard Grasset in 1913. Proust was still editing the final three volumes (*La Prisonnière*, *La Fugitive* and *Le Temps retrouvé*) when he died in 1922. They were published posthumously.

68 Fr. (1) 'rôle secondaire de la mémoire' ; (2) 'l'essentiel dans la *Recherche*, ce n'est pas la mémoire et le temps, mais le signe et la vérité.'

Georges Poulet (*Études sur le temps humain, 1, Mesure de l'instant*, 1968: 364–404) writes that the ‘first instant’ at the beginning of Proust’s novel is not oriented towards the ‘becoming’ [*devenir*] or what is ‘yet to come’ [*n’est pas encore*] (*Ibid.*, 364), but towards something that is *no longer* [*n’est plus*]. (*idem.*). He found the Proustian ‘*durée*’ to be made of ‘full-time atoms, sailing far from each other in a sort of empty time, nothingness of oblivion which memories pierce with their intermittent fires.’<sup>69</sup> (Poulet (I: 433); Rocher (1976)) Bernard Brun (1981) and J.-Y. Tadié (1971) locate the proustian notion of memory between aesthetic theory and perception.

Earlier critics have further made the well-known distinction between voluntary and involuntary memory. Involuntary memory is not just a philosophical principle, for Brun, but central to the ‘novelistic technique.’ (Brun 1981: 12) Beckett qualified *La Recherche* as a ‘monument to involuntary memory and the epic of its action.’ (1931: 21) But Proust’s earlier commentators have seen a Proustian involuntary memory either as a structural, an aesthetic element, or a metaphysical one. Bonnet considers privileged moments in *La Recherche* more as part of Proust’s aesthetic system than of a ‘general theory of memory.’ (1973: 1705) Unlike Bonnet, in his analysis of the Narrator-protagonist’s different impressions, Hachez highlights their structural role. (1973: 1703) Quaranta does not neglect the aesthetic role of involuntary memory that the novel’s structure and psychological depth relies on. However, involuntary memory is more useful than ‘essential, more a vector of the meaning of Proust’s work than the explanation of this meaning.’<sup>70</sup> (Quaranta 1997: 108)

The complexity of Proustian memory is now well defined by Geneviève Henrot. By focusing on about a hundred episodes of involuntary memories in *La Recherche*, Henrot defines the mechanism of memory in relation to the Narrator’s experiences of suffering and transgression. She also sees the episodes of involuntary memory as ‘fictiogenetic’, useful in establishing narrative tension in *La Recherche*. (Henrot 2018) A novelistic ‘writing of involuntary memory’ (Bensussan 2020) is in Gérard Bensussan’s centre of attention. His recent study *L’Écriture de l’Involontaire: Philosophie de Proust* (2020) shows that the writing of involuntary ‘feeling’ allows disclosing time not as the past moment (2020:111) but eternity or ‘only this past that was never present.’<sup>71</sup> (2020: 112)

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69 Fr. ‘atomes de temps plein, naviguant loin les uns des autres, dans une sorte de temps vide, néant d’oubli que trouent de leurs feux intermittents les souvenirs.’

70 Fr. ‘...elle est plus utilitaire qu’essentielle, plus un vecteur du sens de l’œuvre que l’explication de ce sens; on ne saurait l’y substituer.’

71 Fr. ‘...seul ce passé qui jamais ne fut présent.’

No longer does Guillaume Perrier's *La Mémoire du lecteur: essai sur 'Albertine disparue' et 'Le Temps retrouvé'* (2011) discuss Proustian memory only with regard to the distinction between voluntary and involuntary memory. By drawing his attention to Proust's 'art of memory' (2011: 150) or the practices of allegory, visual memory and mnemotechnics, Perrier studies the reader's 'contextual memory'.

These studies suggest that Proustian memory is a complex notion and there are many ways of reading it. They also show that the subject of time is inseparable from memory as a theme and a structural element. Different types of memory identified in the studies on Proust are also central to our analysis.

### 2.3 Colomb and Proust: The novelists of memory

Colomb and Proust represent the memories of childhood as the most powerful. Proust famously invokes vivid memories of the Narrator's childhood in Combray, an initial part of the first volume of *La Recherche*. The young Narrator's emerging awareness of the world, himself, and the people around him are described through the eyes of the adult Narrator who remembers. Immediately after the opening scene of awakening in *Combray*, he deliberately reflects on his childhood sufferings for being sent to bed without receiving a goodnight kiss from his mother on the nights when Monsieur Swann came to visit and his mother's late-night reading of *François le Champi*. The episode of the madeleine—the most famous instance of involuntary memory—immediately intervenes and the images of 'all the flowers in our garden and in M. Swann's park, and the water-lilies on the Vivonne and the good folk of the village and their little dwellings and the parish church and the whole of Combray and its surroundings, taking shape and solidity, sprang into being, town and gardens alike, from my cup of tea.' (*Remembrance I*: 51) [*'Toutes les fleurs de notre jardin et celles du parc de M. Swann, et les nymphéas de la Vivonne, et les bonnes gens du village et leurs petits logis et l'église et tout Combray et ses environs, tout cela qui prend forme et solidité, est sorti, ville et jardins, de ma tasse de thé.'*] (*La Recherche I*: 47)

These experiences are connected to the essential moments of the book and develop later new significance. Various scholars have recognized the Narrator's agony of awaiting his mother's kiss as Proust's preparing the ground for a deeper exploration of obsessive love. Geneviève Henrot compares the Narrator's jealous love for his mother to the one for Albertine. (1991: 45–46, note 21) The Narrator's relationship with Albertine and Swann's love for Odette, for Howard Moss (1966 (1962): 51) and Luc Fraisse (1995: 116) symmetrically complement each other. George Sand's book *François le Champi* is important to the representation of

memory and time in *La Recherche*. It is a source of reminiscence, connecting two moments from the Narrator's boyhood and adulthood. They occur at the beginning and the end of *La Recherche*. The first moment gets represented in his little room at Combray, on the famous evening of the 'bedtime drama,' and the second moment—in the Prince of Guermantes' library. Near the beginning of Combray, this scene follows the description of the magic lantern and the mention of Geneviève de Brabant, who later turns out to be the Guermantes' medieval ancestor.<sup>72</sup> That time, 'incomprehensible title' gave George Sand's book 'a distinct personality and a mysterious attraction' for the Narrator. As he had never read any novelist before George Sand, he 'imagine(d) that *François le Champi* contained something inexpressibly delicious.' [*imagin[ait] dans François le Champi quelque chose d'indéfinissable et de délicieux.*] (*Remembrance* I: 44; *La Recherche* I: 41) Some three thousand pages later, the adult Narrator sees *François le Champi* again on the bookshelf and recalls his first contemplation of the book and his being fascinated by the discovery of the world of fiction. This reminiscence reveals the change of the Narrator's personality and vision in time. 'That book my mother had read aloud to me almost until morning at Combray, retained for me all the charm of that night' [*ce livre que ma mère m'avait lu haut à Combray presque jusqu'au matin, avait-il gardé pour moi tout le charme de cette nuit-là*]. (*Remembrance* IV: 151; *La Recherche* IV: 463) Yet, it 'did not appear to me a magical pen as it so long did to my mother before she modeled her literary tastes on mine' [*ne me semblait pas du tout, comme elle avait paru si longtemps à ma mère avant qu'elle modelât lentement ses goûts littéraires sur les miens*']. (*Ibid.*) The adult Narrator feels that the 'the former groupings of my thought but even the aim of my life and perhaps that of art were illuminated' [*retrouvé (...) non seulement les tâtonnements anciens de ma pensée, mais même le but de ma vie et peut-être de l'art*']. (*Remembrance* IV: 151; *La Recherche* IV: 465) in time. No longer does *François le Champi*, just as the projections of the magic lantern, seem to the adult Narrator so mysterious as in his boyhood. In his boyhood, he misinterpreted the legend of Geneviève de Brabant.<sup>73</sup> 'This

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72 '...telle personne dont j'avais fait la connaissance dans le monde était cousine de Mme de Guermantes, c'est-à-dire d'un personnage de lanterne magique'. (*La Recherche* IV: 462) | '...a particular individual whose acquaintance I had made in society was the cousin of mme de Guermantes, that is to say, the cousin of a personage on a magic lantern slide'. (*Remembrance* IV: 150–151)

73 'Le château et la lande étaient jaunes et je n'avais pas attendu de les voir pour connaître leur couleur car, avant les verres du chîssis, la sonorité mordorée du nom de Brabant me l'avait montrée avec évidence'. (*La Recherche* I: 9) | 'This castle was cut off short by

was an old childish impression with which my memories of childhood and of my family were tenderly associated. [*C'était une impression bien ancienne, où mes souvenirs d'enfance et de famille étaient tendrement mêlée.*] (*Remembrance* IV: 151; *La Recherche* IV: 462) No longer are the Guermantes wrapped for him in mystery at the end of *La Recherche*. Despite the temporal gap between the original experience and its reminiscence and the changes of his personality over time, the adult Narrator feels that the child he used to be is not forever buried in oblivion.<sup>74</sup> Nevertheless, regaining Combray within himself does not imply a nostalgia-driven moving back to childhood,<sup>75</sup> which Proust represents as the 'age of names and beliefs' (Fraise 2014: 21), of false appearances and mystification, 'which makes us not merely regard a thing as a spectacle, but believe in it as in a unique essence' [*qui nous fait non pas considérer une chose comme un spectacle mais y croire comme un être sans équivalent*'], (*Remembrance* I: 71; *La Recherche* I: 65) preventing the Narrator of 'Combray' from seeing people and things as they are.

The memories of childhood appear as the main theme in *CE* and *ET* as well. The title '*Châteaux en Enfance*' highlights that childhood serves as a theme of profound importance. The novel appears as a treasure trove of memories from childhood. Colomb herself admitted how her memories of childhood served her as myths of creation. (2019 (1962): 1372) Remarkably, the novel *CE* was initially entitled *Les Chemins de Mémoire* to highlight the importance of memory in the book. (*TCC*: 726) Not only in *CE*, but *ET* too the themes of time and memory hold central places. The memories of childhood provide comfort to the protagonist against the harsh realities of adulthood in *ET*. But the novel also suggests

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a curved line which was in fact the circumference of one of the transparent ovals in the slides which were pushed into position through a slot in the lantern'. (*Remembrance* I: 10)

74 'Si je reprends, même par la pensée, dans la bibliothèque, *François le Champi*, immédiatement en moi un enfant se lève qui prend ma place, qui seul a le droit de lire ce titre: *François le Champi*, et qui le lit comme il le lut alors, avec la même impression du temps qu'il faisait dans le jardin, les mêmes rêves qu'il formait alors sur les pays et sur la vie, la même angoisse du lendemain'. (*La Recherche* IV: 464) | 'If, ever in thought, I take up *François le Champi* in the library, immediately a child rises within me and replaces me, who alone has the right to read that title *François le Champi* and who reads it as he read it then with the same impression of the weather out in the garden, with the same old dreams about countries and life, the same anguish of the morrow'. (*Remembrance* I: 152)

75 Henrot suggests that 'the Proustian memory is not so much a journey from the present to the past as the invincible intrusion of the past into the present'. (1991: 205)

that obsession with the past keeps us from the truth of the present and provokes further pain.

Both Colomb and Proust focus on a process of artistic creation, invention. The opening lines of *CE* are about ‘the canvas on which she was embroidering... the alphabet’. [‘*L*]e canvas où elle brodait ... *l’alphabet*.’] (*CE*: 747) The allusions to writing, alphabet, and canvas, frame the text as an artist’s workspace where the protagonist wishes to be the hand that turns memories into a book. With ‘the alphabet of Jenny, Sophie or Eugénie’ [‘*L’alphabet de Jenny, Sophie ou Eugénie*’] (*CE*: 871), Colomb speaks aloud her concern with a novel composition, of turning memories into words.<sup>76</sup> However, these metatextual allusions to artistic creation do not structure her novels. By contrast, the story of the Narrator becoming a writer constitutes the essential axis of *La Recherche*:<sup>77</sup> ‘invisible vocation of which these volumes are the history’ [‘*la vocation invisible dont cet ouvrage est l’histoire*’]. (*Remembrance* II: 122; *La Recherche* II 691) The Narrator’s moments of enthusiasm and despair parallel the movement of the narrative. In *Combray*, the impression given by the steeples of Martinville inspires the young Narrator to write. At other times, he lives the moments of disappointment<sup>78</sup> and

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76 The next chapter compares Woolf and Colomb. While focusing on fresh insights, lyrical and poetic techniques utilized in Colomb’s and Woolf’s novels, it shows that their novels are not merely created on the basis of intuitive writing. It further sheds light on a delicate re-working of Colomb’s spontaneous writing based on memory.

77 Genette summed up three thousand pages of *La Recherche* in three words: ‘*Marcel devient écrivain*.’ [‘Marcel becomes a writer.’] (1972: 237)

78 (1) [‘P]uisque je voulais un jour être écrivain, il était temps de savoir ce que je comptais écrire. Mais dès que je me le demandais, tâchant de trouver un sujet où je pusse faire tenir une signification philosophique infinie, mon esprit s’arrêtait de fonctionner, je ne voyais plus que le vide en face de mon attention, je sentais que je n’avais pas de génie ou peut-être une maladie cérébrale l’empêchait de naître.’ (*La Recherche* I: 170) | [‘S]ince I wished some day to become a writer, it was high time to decide what sort of books I was going to write. But as soon as I asked myself the question, and tried to discover some subject to which I could impart a philosophical significance of infinite value, my mind would stop like a clock, my consciousness would be faced with a blank, I would feel either that I was wholly devoid of talent or that perhaps some malady of the brain was hindering its development.’ (*Remembrance* I: 188–189) (2) ‘Combien depuis ce jour, dans mes promenades du côté de Guermantes, il me parut plus affligé encore qu’auparavant de n’avoir pas de dispositions pour les lettres, et de devoir renoncer à être jamais un écrivain célèbre. Les regrets que j’en éprouvais, tandis que je restais seul à rêver un peu à l’écart, me faisaient tant souffrir, que pour ne plus les ressentir, de lui-même par une sorte d’inhibition devant la douleur, mon esprit s’arrêtait entièrement de penser aux vers, aux romans, à un avenir poétique sur lequel mon manque de talent



counts himself among those ‘who have no aptitude for writing’ [*qui n'ont pas de dispositions pour écrire*']. (*Remembrance* I: 189; *La Recherche* I: 171) As a consequence, ‘utterly despondent, I renounced literature for ever’ [*découragé, je renonçais à jamais à la littérature*']. (*Remembrance* I: 190; *La Recherche* I: 171) The Narrator’s discovery of his artistic calling extends until the end of Proust’s novel. Unlike *CE*, the Narrator’s artistic creation is off-stage. As Proust himself suggests, we are not told that he becomes a writer at the end of the day.<sup>79</sup> (*Corr.* III, 1920: 306)

The Narrator’s aspiration to write marked by the moments of illusion and disillusionment, his slow and long learning process full of mistakes and obstacles (extending over seven thick volumes), is essential to the nineteenth-century coming-of-age novel.<sup>80</sup> The representation of a complex personality in the changing social world, the use of cyclic structure, and numerous reappearing characters in *À la Recherche* have been seen as evident marks of kinship with Balzac.<sup>81</sup> Proust twists or inverts chronology, but does not abandon ‘classical time [which] has no other figure than that of a destroyer of perfection (Chronos and his scythe)’. (Barthes 1972 (1954): 20) As in the work of his nineteenth-century predecessors such as Balzac, Flaubert, and Baudelaire, ‘in Proust [...] the object is the vehicle of melodrama; it decays, vanishes, or recovers a final glory, participates in short in a veritable eschatology of matter’. (*Ibid.*) Antoine Compagnon’s excellent study *Proust entre deux siècles* has confirmed that Proust pays tribute to the intellectual and artistic movements of the *fin-de-siècle* period.

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m’interdisait de compter’. (*La Recherche* I: 176) | ‘How often, after that day, in the course of my walks along the Guermantes way, and with what an intensified melancholy, did I reflect on my lack of qualification for a literary career, and abandon all hope of ever becoming a famous author. The regrets that I felt for this, as I lingered behind to muse awhile on my own, made me suffer so acutely that, in order to banish them, my mind of its own accord, by a sort of inhibition in the face of pain, ceased entirely to think of verse-making, of fiction, of the poetic future on which my lack of talent precluded me from counting’. (*Remembrance* I: 194)

79 ‘La seule chose que je ne dise pas du personnage narrateur, c’est qu’il soit à la fin un écrivain.’

80 Gilles Deleuze suggests not to consider Proust’s work only as ‘an exposure of involuntary memory’ but also ‘a narrative of learning’ [*une exposition de la mémoire involontaire, mais du récit d’un apprentissage*]; see Deleuze (1964: 10).

81 However, the ways Proust and Balzac introduce their characters differ. This difference, for Ilaria Vidotto, lies in the recurrence of the same characters. See Vidotto (2020b: 105–121).

For the exposition of his innovative thoughts on sensory experiences, the phenomena of voluntary and involuntary memory, Proust has not chosen an entirely experimental form of writing. He tells the story with the utmost accuracy, offering long and linear sentences. In *La Recherche*, the limits of temporal experimentations are clearly defined, and at various instances, except for the temporal and spatial gaps between the episodes, the events follow temporal order. 'A pleasant succession of scenes, paintings, portraits, digressions of all kinds, skilfully linked by the unsurprising thread of a "coming-of-age novel" attract the reader's attention almost immediately.'<sup>82</sup> (Genette 1966: 58) A Proustian sequence is marked by temporal progression and an identifiable beginning and ending whether it describes the Narrator's line of reasoning, a conversation or a series of events such as a memory of the bedtime scene in *Swann's Way*, the Narrator's visit to Elstir's studio at Balbec and the dinner with M. de Norpois described in *Within a Budding Grove*, the long dinner party scene at the Guermantes (*The Guermantes Way*), etc.

If Proust's novel does not entirely revolve around the flowing reminiscences and remembrances, Colomb's narrative mainly follows the impulses of memory. The narrative line in *La Recherche* is much more chronological than in Colomb's novels. Her sentence is often intuitive, springing from an immediate intuition and situation:

Une demi-heure après le père *était mort*. Régula *vint* de Varsovie, le fils d'Angleterre *embarqua* en toute hâte, il *aida* à porter le cercueil, ses bretelles *étaient* mauves à dessins ton sur ton. Ils *voyaient* à côté d'eux le jeune mort d'*autrefois*, l'enfant de treize ans tué par les chevaux sur la colline, il se *tenait* debout, sa petite poitrine couverte de terre, ses mains *épaisses* gercées par les premiers froids.<sup>83</sup> (ET: 956–957)

Le directeur *m'offrait* pour l'année prochaine de meilleures chambres, mais je *m'étais attaché* maintenant à la mienne où *j'entrais* sans plus jamais sentir l'odeur du vétiver, et dont ma pensée, qui *s'y élevait* jadis si difficilement, *avait fini* par prendre si exactement les dimensions que je *fus obligé* de lui faire subir un traitement inverse quand je dus coucher à Paris dans mon ancienne chambre, laquelle *était* basse de plafond.

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82 Fr. 'Agréable succession de scènes, de tableaux, de portraits, de digressions de toutes sortes, habilement liée par le fil sans surprise d'un 'roman de formation'.

83 Eng. 'A half-hour later, the father was dead. Régula came from Warsaw, the son from England rushed home, helped to carry the coffin, his braces mauve with designs in matching tones. They noticed, alongside, that dead boy from long ago, that thirteen-year-old child killed by the horses on the hill, now he was standing there, his little chest covered with dirt, his thick hands chapped with the first cold spells.' (*The Spirits*: 14) (The italics are mine.)

Il *avait fallu* quitter Balbec *en effet*, le froid et l'humidité étant devenus trop pénétrants pour rester plus longtemps dans cet hôtel dépourvu de cheminées et de calorifière.<sup>84</sup> (*La Recherche* II: 305)

In this passage, the description of the scene—Ulysse's father's funeral—evokes an association, namely, a brief story of the child killed by horses. The story is introduced in one sentence. It will no more be recalled in *ET*. The two stories are interconnected by the idea of death. The interconnection between the stories suggests that Colomb does not reject the mind in the writing process. The rational level of knowledge is also used in turning memories into words. Therefore, her writing cannot be considered merely spontaneous. However, she allows the creating writing process to happen without the usual restrictions imposed by rational thinking. Her text comprises an intuitive level of knowledge. She records the associations brought to mind by a memory of the funeral of Ulysse's father. The two stories of funerals appear intuitively assembled in the given passage. The narrative mainly follows the memory of the funeral of Ulysse's father. Later it is interrupted by the association deriving from the recollection of the father's funeral. The association comes alive by giving freedom to the imagination. Instead of establishing boundaries to her mind, Colomb creates this and other pieces of her texts by recording the associations that emerge from writing her memories down.

Proust develops the passage around similar events: the Narrator's stays in the hotel room in Balbec, a memory of a strange aspect of his old room in Paris, the departure from Balbec. He creates the shifts in time otherwise than by recording the associations in his long sentences. The change of verbal tense creates sudden shifts in time perspective. We see the uses of *plus-que-parfait* (*ET*: 'était mort'; *La Recherche*: 'était attaché', 'avait fini', 'avait fallu'), *imparfait* (*ET*: 'étaient', 'voyaient', 'tenait'; *La Recherche*: 'offrait', 'entraîs', 'élevait', 'était') and *passé simple* (*ET*: 'vint', 'embarqua', 'aida'; *La Recherche*: 'fus obligé', 'dus') tense pairs. Proust's use of *plus-que-parfait* tense form ('avait fini') shows a move in

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84 The first-person pronoun in the second paragraph is maintained in the translated text. 'The manager offered to reserve better rooms for me next year, but I had now become attached to mine, into which I went without ever noticing the scent of vetiver, while my mind, which had once found such difficulty in rising to fill its space, had come now to take its measurements so exactly that I was obliged to submit it to a reverse process when I had to sleep in Paris, in my own room, the ceiling of which was low.

For we had had to leave Balbec at last, the cold and the damp having become too penetrating for us to stay any longer in a hotel which had neither fireplaces in the rooms nor central heating' (*Within a Budding Grove*, 1016) (The italics are mine.)

time and space. If in Colomb's passage we read stories of death at different times, Proust's use of *plus-que-parfait* in the second paragraph is revealing the departure, what is no longer. His somewhat unusual use of present time adverbs ('*je m'étais attaché maintenant*') with the *plus-que-parfait* verbal tense also indicates the temporality of habit. In these lines, Proust's and Colomb's narratives rely on the literary representation of memory rather than on a realistic description. '*Jadis*' transports the reader from Balbec to Paris; the time adverbs '*autrefois*' (*ET*) and '*jadis*' (*La Recherche*) both refer to an indefinite time in the past. These passages of Colomb and Proust show hesitations in memory through the abundant use of commas. Proust avoids using the first-person pronoun in the second paragraph: the ellipsis helps avoid a monotonous narration of successive events or realistic representation, leaving it to the reader to infer the omitted events.

What is obvious about Colomb's novel is its fragmentary quality. While only by giving up a vantage point of observation in favour of a microscopic examination of Proust's work that can we see its inherent discontinuity. (Fraisie 1988: XIV–XV) The almost linear or teleological development of narration in Proust's text still makes room for the gaps in the chronology due to the self-analysis of a remembering character who does not cease to change over time, because 'every person is destroyed when we cease to see him; after which immediately preceded it, if not from them all'. [*Chaque être est détruit quand nous cessons de le voir; puis son apparition suivante est une création nouvelle, différente de celle qui l'a immédiatement précédée, sinon de toutes.*] (*Remembrance* I: 979; *La Recherche* II: 270) A new state of being is born on the fragmentation and forgetting of the old self. The rebirth may happen if we undergo 'in a real sense the death of the self, a death followed, it is true, by resurrection, but in a different self' albeit followed by a resurrection, but a resurrection in the form of a different self' [*une vraie mort de nous-mêmes, mort suivie, il est vrai, de résurrection, mais en un moi différent*']. (*Remembrance* I: 722; *La Recherche* II: 32)

The fragments of memory feeding the non-linear narrative of Colomb's novels often create the sense of a lasting experience. (See 3.8 *A story within Colomb's leitmotif & Woolf's 'moment'*) Whereas the lack of continuity characterizing the self and the experience weighs on Proust's text and the vision of the world that opens to the Narrator and the reader. A Proustian fragment is what 'pulverizes the duration, the consciousness, the reality, and of course the life of the Proustian hero – not the fragment which cuts out the sentences written by Proust.'<sup>85</sup> (Fraisie 1988: 3) Discontinuity is more apparent in the first part *Swann's*

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85 Fr. '...pulvérise la durée, la conscience, la réalité, et bien sûr la vie du héros proustien – non le fragment qui découpe les phrases écrites par Proust.'

Way.<sup>86</sup> The description of void and confusion and the waking subject's uncertainty regarding time, space, and self violate the chronology in the opening pages of *Swann's Way* the most. It is when the insomniac feels 'more destitute than a cave dweller' [*plus dénué que l'homme des cavernes*]. (*Remembrance I: 5; La Recherche I: 5*) and unable to hold 'the chain of hours, the sequence of the years, the order of the heavenly host' [*le fil des heures, l'ordre des années et des mondes*']. (*ibid.*) until he comes up with the idea to use memory to 'piece together the original components of (his) ego' [*recompos(er) peu à peu les traits originaux de (soi)*']. (*Ibid.*, 6) The apparent discontinuity of Proust's book, which lasts until *Within a Budding Grove*, also depends on the narrative voices that alternate and overlap. Combray is seen from different angles and by different characters. (Picon 2004: 220)

Introducing new characters or the changes that characters undergo subsequently alter the course of events in *La Recherche*. For instance, the appearance of Albertine, Ilaria Vidotto suggests, significantly disturbs the development of Proust's three volumes, altering thematic and structural direction of the rest of the novel; nonetheless, the author manages to bind different volumes internally by setting up an intricate network of analepses and prolepses. (Vidotto 2019: 52)

However, the first-person narration confers compositional unity to Proust's novel. Except for the third-person narrative in the second part of *Un Amour de Swann*, Proust's entire novel develops around the reflective consciousness of 'je' or 'I'.<sup>87</sup> Tadié writes: '*la création romanesque de Proust s'appuie sur deux*

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86 Genette illustrates the disparity between the order of the narration and the temporal sequence of the narrated events in *Swann's Way*. He lists seven moments: the first refers to the opening scene and the Narrator's sleeplessness, the second dealing with another sleepless night in the Narrator's childhood at Combray, when he suffered from 'the drama of his going to bed', the third bearing the episode of the *madeleine*, the fourth referring to the Narrator's return to Combray, the fifth moment referring to another sleepless night preceding the story of Swann's love, the sixth one dealing with Swann's love experiences, and the final seventh moment referring to the Narrator's stay in Paris and his love for Gilberte; see Genette (2005: 122). According to Genette, apart from these moments, the story follows a chronological development. This chronological alignment does not exclude, though, the presence of numerous anachronisms, namely, *retrospections* and *anticipations*. (*Ibid.*, 123) The text, for Guillaume Perrier, does not structure the reader's perception of time. It is up to the reader to reconstitute the temporal order of the story in *La Recherche* through various announcements and reminders; see Perrier (2011: 81).

87 The pronoun *I* does not apply to a person always identical to himself. Instead, *I* 'corresponds to a unique being each time.' (Benveniste, 1966: 252) According to Benveniste,

*formes essentielles: le je et le temps*. (1971: 282) The 'I' is both Narrator and protagonist. The difference between the two instances is temporal: on the one hand, we have the present moment of the narration, on the other hand, the past time of the lived experience. (*Ibid.*, 32.) Doubling the narrative voice obscures an origin and a point of view of the first-person retrospective statements. The distinction between Narrator and protagonist, Perrier suggests, can be made from the point of view of 'contextual memory': the protagonist or a character does not address and remind anything to the reader while the Narrator does. (Perrier 2011: 48) Representation of memory processes affecting the narrative linearity in Colomb's novels takes on solid shape via the first-person narration in *La Recherche*. The nonlinear structure of Colomb's novels is due to the absence of a distinct remembering consciousness who delves into the past and deliberately retrieves his/her past experiences with the help of memory. The absence of the narrator, who can filter his thoughts subsequently leads to the simultaneous recording of memory processes in *CE* and *ET*.<sup>88</sup>

Proust follows a pre-established plan to tell a story. A telescopic view seems more relevant for Proust than a microscopic study of different phenomena as we learn from the Narrator at the end of *Time Regained*. Colomb is not always guided by the plan. The idea that her novels were the fruit of intuitive writing and elaborated without following any particular plan was articulated by the writer herself. Why should writing follow any plan when life does not, she wondered.

Catherine Colomb ? Elle est vraiment impossible à comprendre. Il y a un tel fouillis de personnages... À la quinzième page, on ferme le livre, on renonce. [...] Savez-vous pourquoi ? Elle ne se comprend pas elle-même. Elle écrit au hasard, sans plan, sans but. [...] Mais pourquoi comprendre ? [...] La vie est-ce qu'elle agit conformément à un plan ?<sup>89</sup> (Colomb (2019 (1964): 1657))

Bientôt je pus montrer quelques esquisses. Personne n'y comprit rien. Même ceux qui furent favorables à ma perception des vérités que je voulais ensuite graver dans le temps, me félicitèrent de les avoir découvertes au 'microscope', quand je m'étais au contraire servi d'un télescope pour apercevoir des choses, très petites en effet, mais parce

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'I signifies "the person who is uttering the present instance of the discourse containing I." This instance is unique by definition and has validity only in its uniqueness'. (*Ibid.*)

88 See 1.4 *The old and new narrative formulas: Colomb's two modes of writing* and 3.7 *Simultaneity of multiple time frames*.

89 Eng. 'Catherine Colomb? She is undoubtedly impossible to understand. There is such a mess of characters... On the fifteenth page, we close the book. We give up. [...] Do you know why? She doesn't understand herself. She writes haphazardly, without a plan, without a goal. Does life follow a plan?'

qu'elles étaient situées à une grande distance, et qui étaient chacune un monde. Là où je cherchais les grandes lois, on m'appelait fouillera de détails.<sup>90</sup> (*La Recherche* IV: 618)

Since the protagonist of *La Recherche* is 'in search for the truth', as Proust defines his work, to gain access to hidden meanings the reader needs to remember bits of the story dispersed on numerous pages. The memories cannot shape a story in Colomb's novels. The title of the novel *Châteaux en Enfance*' [Eng. Castles in Childhood] may be interpreted as to allude to the unattainable past and inaccessible memories as the idiom 'Castles in the air' suggests unrealistic hopes, unachievable daydreams. (expressio.fr) The memories of some ideas, looks, and reflections are repeated many times in *CE* and *ET* to remember the other elements related to them. But these recollections do not always lead towards the generation of a story. The memories might even add new elements to the narrative, which, in their turn, would provoke new recollections and lead the initial idea to a new direction. Therefore, the reader of *CE* and *ET* is not more certain about some details at the end of the book than he/she is at the beginning. For instance, the scene of Jenny's death is repeated five times in an altered form within *CE*. This scene is described in the opening episode as well as in Chapter V, Chapter VII and in the beginning and at the end of Chapter VIII. The repeated scenes contain slight variations to add a few more specific details to the initial story. However, the opening scene is richer in the details about Jenny's death and funeral than the rest of the episodes. The original story is about a girl who starts to have a fatal headache when embroidering the canvas in a convent and about a delay in reporting Jenny's illness to the parents by a certain messenger. The opening scene further informs us of Jenny's death and funeral; of a certain lady taking a night-train from Germany to attend the girl's funeral but who would be one day late. We are told that 'Jenny dropped the canvas where she was embroidering in tiny cross-stitch two little tender green pine, a pink Chinese dragon, the alphabet, a number of years of her short life', and that she died because of a 'severe headache'. [*Jenny laissa tomber le canevas où elle brodait à minuscules points de deux petits sapins vert tendre, un dragon chinois rose, l'alphabet, les chiffres de ses brèves années ; elle se plaignit d'un violent mal de tête.*] (*CE*: 747) The reader is no longer certain about the identity of the young dead

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90 Eng. 'I was soon able to show an outline of my project. No one understood it. Even those who sympathized with my perception of the truth I meant later to engrave upon my temple, congratulated me on having discovered it with a microscope when, to the contrary, I had used a telescope to perceive things which were indeed very small because they were far away but every one of them a world. Where I sought universal laws, I was accused of burrowing into the "infinitely insignificant"'. (*Remembrance* IV: 274)

in the other chapters. In Chapter V, it is not obvious who went to find Jenny's or Sophie's parents at dawn, to tell them that their daughter was dying. [*[O]n ne sait qui vint chercher ses parents à l'aube, leur dire que Jenny—ou Sophie ?—se mourait.*] (CE: 815) In Chapter VII, it is again uncertain whether it was Jenny or Sophie who embroidered a Chinese dragon on a fine canvas. [*Jenny ou Sophie, qui brodait sur un fin canevas un dragon chinois.*] (CE: 871) In the final Chapter VIII, a young dead is referred to as any female—let it be 'Jenny or Sophie or Louise'—who 'embroiders an alphabet'. [*Jenny, ou Sophie ? ou Louise ? assise sur un tabours dans une maison des fées, brodant un alphabet.*] (CE: 883) Thus, the first lines might bring less confusion and leave fewer conflicting ideas than the final lines of the book. Time passes between these episodes. Memory loss is the consequence of the passage of time; even the name of the girl who embroidered the alphabet is forgotten by time.

In Colomb's fictional universe, nothing can stop the flow of time. The memories are forgotten with time. The more time passes, the more the stories of Jenny, Alphonse, Marguerite are forgotten. The people who died a long time ago can only be recalled by an epithet, by some detail. The various images represented in CE are pale, almost imperceptible as if borrowed from a dream or the far past. Even the memories of central character Galeswinthe, of her physical portrait, are blurred by night, by time. Galeswinthe, the mother of the baptized child, is among the last characters appearing in the text. She only appears at the end of the first chapter. The introduction of Galeswinthe to the reader is preceded by the description of physical appearances, biological ties, and short stories of numerous characters attending the dinner. She can only be recalled by the sight of the 'forest of fir trees' [*forêt de sapins*] (CE: 755), but a long wait is only followed by the quick and short appearance of Galeswinthe. Her physical appearance can hardly be remembered: 'The country was still covered with numerous fir trees mixed with aspens and beeches; a lady in a long skirt stood motionless under the pines, on an old faded postcard'. [*Le pays était encore planté de sapins nombreux mélangés aux trembles, aux hêtres ; une dame à jupe longue se tenait là-bas immobile au pied des sapins sur une ancienne carte postale pâlie.*] (CE: 755) Thus, different parts of Galeswinthe's and other characters' stories are displayed out of orderly connection as the narrative moves forward or draws back.

If Colomb releases information about the character sparingly via fragments, the fragmented vision of time in *La Recherche* depends greatly on Proust's presenting of different characters with multiple identities.<sup>91</sup> Proust makes a flow

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91 Luc Fraisse (1988) explores the role of fragment in Proust's aesthetics and the discontinuity of characters in *La Recherche*. Edward Bizub (2006) studies Proust's investigation of a succession of alternate lives, that is, the division of consciousness, in the context of the advances in experimental psychology.



of time perceptible by providing a moment-by-moment account of his characters' experiences to reveal how people change over time. For instance, the vulgar Biche frequenting the Verdurins' salon in *'Un Amour de Swann'* reappears as Elstir in *Within a Budding Grove*, whose Balbec painting studio appears to the Narrator 'like the laboratory of a sort of new creation of the world in which, from the chaos that is everything we see, he had extracted, by painting them on various rectangles of canvas.' (*Remembrance* I: 892) Charles Swann is at first introduced as a minor character—a family friend whose evening visits displease the Narrator—in Combray. As a central character, there is 'the Swann of the Jockey Club' [*'Swann du Jockey'*] (*Remembrance* I: 465; *La Recherche* I: 423) a desired guest 'to Twickenham or to Buckingham Palace.' (*Remembrance* I: 465; *La Recherche* I: 424) We also come to know the aesthete Charles Swann, the jew Charles Swann, the lover of "the *demi-mondaine*" (*Remembrance* I: 208; *La Recherche* I: 185), 'Odette's husband' [*'mari d'Odette'*] (*Remembrance* I: 465; *La Recherche* I: 423) or the one who leads his 'second life' [*'une seconde vie'*] (*Remembrance* I: 465; *La Recherche* I: 424) not among 'the brilliant society in which he himself had moved before his marriage, but former connections of Odette's.' [*'non pas des gens les plus brillants qui formaient sa société avant son mariage, mais des relations antérieures d'Odette.'*] (*Remembrance* I: 466; *La Recherche* I: 424). He is also introduced as Gilberte's father, and a sick person nearing his death. 'Like certain other jews, [Charles Swann] had contrived to illustrate in turn all the successive stages through which those of his race had passed, from the most naïve snobbery and the crudest vulgarity to the most exquisite good manners.' [*'comme certains israélites, (Charles Swann) avait pu présenter tour à tour les états successifs par où avaient passé ceux de sa race, depuis le snobisme le plus naïf et la plus grossière goujaterie jusqu'à la plus fine politesse.'*] (*Ibid.*) A permanent renewal of Proustian characters' personality, social status, names, and of the looks the Narrator casts on their sexual orientation contributes to the fragmented vision of their lives. If Charlus is considered to be Odette's lover in *Swann's Way*, in *Sodom and Gomorrah*, he turns out to be a homosexual. The Narrator in 'Combray' calls Odette the 'lady in pink' when he meets her while visiting his uncle Adolphe. She is referred to as a copy of Botticelli's Zéphora in *'Un Amour de Swann'*.<sup>92</sup> In *Within a Budding Grove*, Odette is disguised as a young man in Elstir's portrait of Miss Sacripant. In the

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92 When Swann visits Odette for the second time: 'Debout à côté de lui, laissant couler le long de ses joues ses cheveux qu'elle avait dénoués, fléchissant une jambe dans une attitude légèrement dansante pour pouvoir se pencher sans fatigue vers la gravure qu'elle regardait, en inclinant la tête, de ses grands yeux, si fatigués et maussades quand elle ne s'animait pas, elle frappa Swann par sa ressemblance avec cette figure de Zéphora, la

opening of *Swann in Love*, she is introduced as a former courtesan Odette de Crécy, admitted to Mme Verdurin's salon. Later she transforms herself into Mme Swann. After Swann's death, she became the Comtesse de Forcheville and the mistress of Guermantes. Albertine is the most complex and elusive of Proust's characters. She is introduced as 'a being scattered through space and in time [...] a series of events in which we can shed no light'. [*'un être, disséminé dans l'espace et dans le temps [...] une suite d'événements sur lesquels nous ne pouvons faire la lumière.'*] (*La Recherche* III: 612) The character's portrait is never fixed or final in *À la Recherche*.

Proust's building of a series of moments from the character's life is only apparently discontinuous. In his works *L'Espace Proustien* and *Études sur le Temps Humain*, Georges Poulet rightly suggests the juxtaposition of *moments of time* in Proust's novel. Reappearances of characters in an extended description of their changing personality and social traits reveal the permanent continuity of consciousness which evokes them and of 'other self'. (Bizub 2006: 120) which may culminate in genuine self-identification and aesthetic creation. Unlike Swann, who cannot fit together Odette's different moments, the Narrator, finding his vocation as a writer at the end of the novel, thinks of 'notion of the embodiment of Time, the inseparableness from us of the past that [he] now had the intention of bringing strongly into relief' [*'notion du temps incorporé, des années passées non séparées de nous qu'il a maintenant l'intention de mettre si fort en relief'*]. (*Remembrance* IV: 278; *La Recherche* IV: 623)

Proust's modern way of presenting the character's life as fragments is far more consistent than Colomb's. *La Recherche* is famously long and rich in characterization. To the study of the character Charles Swann Proust dedicates the whole part *Swann in Love* in *Swann's Way*. Colomb does not provide much information about her characters. With little time available, the readers of *CE* cannot discover the characters' experiences across many pages as in Proust; rather through few words or vignettes. For instance, all they know about one of the main characters Jâmes Laroche is that he is always in a hurry and fantasizes about meeting real

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fille de Jéthro, qu'on voit dans une fresque de la chapelle Sixtine'. (*Remembrance* I: 219) | '[S]tanding there beside him, her loosened hair flowing down her cheeks, bending one knee in a slightly balletic pose in order to be able to lean without effort over the picture at which she was gazing, her head on one side, with those great eyes of hers which seemed so tired and sullen when there was nothing to animate her, she struck Swann by her resemblance to the figure of Zipporah, Jethro's daughter, which is to be seen in one of the Sistine frescoes'. (*Remembrance* I: 243)

queens. They learn that Jâmes, who is quite good-looking and working in the banking industry, often reveals an exaggerated sense of his importance and believes himself to be superior to others. All these details are articulated within the following few lines, which sometimes recur in the course of the novel: 'I only have time, he whispered towards the end of Estelle's concert, pulling out his watch like a white rabbit and staring at it: ho! ho! I am late; I'm going, he added, raising his voice a little and stepping over the manager as tall and big as a mountain, I'm going to kiss the queen's hand. [*Je n'ai que le temps, murmurait-il vers la fin du concert d'Estelle en tirant sa montre comme le lapin blanc et en fixant dessus le regard de son front plissé et de ses yeux d'anthracite : ho ! ho ! je suis en retard ; je vais, ajoutait-il en élevant un peu la voix et en enjambant le syndic grand et gros comme une montagne, je-vais-baisier-la-main-de-la-reine.*]' (CE: 750) An epithet or two is sufficient to introduce '[Élisé's] crazy mother-in-law with her bust planted on askew like a cactus' [*'[S]a belle-mère folle, le buste planté de travers comme un cactus.*'] (CE: 771) and Gustalof, 'a silent cousin returning from Russia, turned into a mujik'. [*'[U]n cousin silencieux rentré de Russie, transformé en mujik*'] (Ibid.) Few lines encompass many years of the characters' life-length, of 'Madame de Goson with a round nose on any side you look at, *décolleté* like a marvelous chunky, curly hair on her forehead. Long after Mme de Goson's death, one will see in the windows of tobacco shops her portrait sharply stained with the wonderful 1890'. [*Mme de Goson au nez rond de quelque côté qu'on le regardâ, décolletée comme une grosse merveilleuse, les cheveux en bouclettes sur le front ; longtemps après la mort de Mme de Goson, on verra dans les vitrines des magasins de tabac son portrait fortement coloré de merveilleuse 1890.*'] (CE: 807) Mme Goson's present and the future (after her death) are told in these lines. Unlike Proust, Colomb shrinks the moments and knots them together. She resists telling a story and dries her texts out of those elements that help the chronological progression of the narrative. As a result, Proust's and Colomb's readers follow different paces. Meticulous descriptions of the scenes, events, or experiences of the characters generate suspense in *La Recherche*. Such examples of suspense are particularly evident in *Swann's Way*, when Swann, filled with jealousy and suspicion, cannot discern the truth about Odette's deeds; or when the Narrator is awaiting his mother for a goodnight kiss in his family's Combray house. While the climax is delayed and there are long suspenses in *La Recherche*, the scenes are offered without a space break in CE. Colomb's readers are confronted by the dizzying speed of development of motifs, ultimately experiencing a sense of vertigo.

Voluntary memory and the prolepses and analepses, which change the movement of the narrative and provoke the accelerations of pace, are intertwined with the architectural complexity of *La Recherche* and CE or ET respectively.

Forgetfulness (associated with voluntary memory and Colomb's abundant uses of prolepsis and analepsis) affects the readers' experience of time as they make their way through the novels. 'Contextual memory' or memories formed during reading is central to understanding and discerning the metaphysical and aesthetic significance of Proust's three-thousand-page book and even his long sentences.<sup>93</sup> (Perrier 2011) The reader directly shares with the Narrator (who is also the protagonist of his own story) a feeling of a temporal gap between the narrative recalls and the textual antecedents. (Perrier 2011: 31–32) With multiple narrative recalls used in his final volumes, Proust requires his reader to remember even the first pages of the initial volume. For instance, in *Sodom and Gomorrah*, the reader and the protagonist unexpectedly discover Albertine's close ties with Mlle Vinteuil and her lesbian friend whom we meet in Combray.<sup>94</sup> The looks the protagonist casts on Albertine during his Balbec stays and at this later moment are incomparable. The protagonist thinks that time's passing could not have brought such a big change. (*Des années plus nombreuses auraient pu séparer les deux images sans amener un changement aussi complet*). (*La Recherche* III: 583) In Part I of *The Guermantes Way* the protagonist learns that Charlus Morel is a son of his great uncle's former servant. Léa's letter reveals to Charlus her intimate relations with Morel and to Swann, Forcheville's with Odette. (*La Recherche* III: 720) Deleuze explains that 'truth is never the product of a prior disposition but the result of a violence in thought'. (1964: 12) The truth derives from the long-delayed explanation in *La Recherche*, because 'the Search is always temporal, and the truth always a truth of time'. (*Ibid.*)

The flow of time can also be indicated indirectly, by a symbolic element. A yellow stain on a photograph signals death, as well as the failure of technological

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93 Leo Spitzer (1928) studied Proust's sentence.

94 Albertine unexpectedly lets the protagonist know: 'Vous vous rappelez que je vous ai parlé d'une amie plus âgée que moi, qui m'a servi de mère, de soeur, avec qui j'ai passé à Trieste mes meilleures années et que, d'ailleurs, je dois dans quelques semaines retrouver à Cherbourg, d'où nous voyagerons ensemble (c'est un peu baroque, mais vous savez comme j'aime la mer), hé, bien! cette amie (oh! pas du tout le genre de femmes que vous pourriez croire!), regardez comme c'est extraordinaire, est justement la meilleure amie de la fille de ce Vinteuil, et je connais presque autant la fille de Vinteuil'. (*La Recherche* III: 499) 'You remember my telling you about a friend, older than me, who had been a mother, a sister to me, with whom I spent the happiest years of my life, at Trieste, and whom in fact I'm expecting to join in a few weeks at Cherbourg, where we shall set out on a cruise together (...). Well, this friend (...) is the best friend of your Vinteuil's daughter and I know Vinteuil's daughter almost as well as I know her'. (*Remembrance* III: 701–702)

inventions to resist the passage of time. Time is materialized into a stain on Mme Angenaisaz's photograph: "I wonder why this photograph has a shadow over there in the corner?" Said Adolphe to Elise. "Look, Mrs. Angenaisaz is very dark. I know black clothes ... but in short ..." [*« Je me demande pourquoi cette photographie a une ombre, là dans l'angle ? » dit Adolphe à Elise. « Regarde, Mme Angenaisaz est toute sombre. Je sais bien que les habits noirs... mais enfin... »*]. (CE: 851) The stain anticipates Mme Angenaisaz's death. While the practice of using photographs for the creation of lasting memories is doubtful, the antique objects, such as 'armoire genre Walter', 'la lampe de cuivre', 'les chaises Louis XIV' convey the meaning of time in CE. These objects are distributed along with technological inventions (i.e., tramway, washing machine, typewriter, photograph) in the text. The antique objects matter because of their age rather than because of their usefulness.

The photograph of the protagonist's grandmother that Saint-Loup takes in *Within a Budding Grove* also signals death and time's passing. The difference between photography and Proust's conception of memory is obvious by reading the episode of the protagonist looking at his grandmother's photograph during his second stay at Balbec, after the passage of 'intermittences of the heart' in *Sodom and Gomorrah*. A sudden and unforced memory triggered by the protagonist's attempt to take off his boots in his hotel room at Balbec reproduces his grandmother's face in all its vividness. By contrast, her photograph only provides an abstract visualization and gives the protagonist the feeling of temporal alienation: 'She no longer knew me, I should never see her again. We had not been created solely for one another; she was a stranger to me. This stranger was before my eyes at the moment in the photograph taken of her by Saint-Loup. [*Elle ne me connaît plus, je ne la reverrai jamais. Nous n'avions pas été créés uniquement l'un pour l'autre, c'était une étrangère. Cette étrangère, j'étais en train d'en regarder la photographie par Saint-Loup.*]' (*Remembrance III*: 237; *La Recherche III*: 172) In *Within a Budding Grove*, the grandmother is photographed in a fine coat and a wide-brimmed hat to shade the signs of her poor health and to leave her grandson her joyful portrait. At the time the Narrator interprets her behavior as coquetry and 'childishness'. However, contrary to her grandmother's intentions, neither can the photograph conceal her illness, nor can it provide a faithful image of her health state: 'the photograph, still profiting by the ruses which my grand-mother had adopted, which succeeded in taking me in even after they had been disclosed to me, showed her looking so elegant, so carefree, beneath the hat which partly hid her face, that I saw her as less unhappy and in better health than I had supposed'. [*La photographie, profitant encore des ruses qu'avait eues ma grand-mère et qui réussissaient à me tromper même depuis qu'elles*

*m'avaient été dévoilées, me la montrait si élégante, si insouciant sous le chapeau qui cachait un peu son visage, que je la voyais moins malheureuse et mieux portante que je l'avais imaginée.*] (*Remembrance* III: 242; *La Recherche* III: 176) Rather, the Narrator and her mother cannot see the photograph without thinking of death:

Et pourtant, ses joues ayant à son insu une expression à elles, quelque chose de plombé, de haggard, comme le regard d'une bête qui se sentirait déjà choisie et désignée, ma grand'mère avait un air de condamnée à mort, un air involontairement sombre, inconsciemment tragique, qui m'échappait mais qui empêchait maman de regarder jamais cette photographie, qui lui paraissait moins une photographie de sa mère que de la maladie de celle-ci, d'une insulte que cette maladie faisait au visage brutalement souffleté de grand'mère.<sup>95</sup> (*La Recherche* III: 176)

Barthes defines the act of being photographed as '*une micro-expérience de la mort*' ['a micro-version of death'], (1980: 30) because what a photograph captures is '*ni un sujet ni un objet, mais plutôt un sujet qui se sent devenir objet*' ['neither subject nor object but a subject who feels he is becoming an object']. (*Ibid.*) The photograph conveys an image of someone 'under sentence of death' in *Sodom and Gomorrah*. Contrary to Proust's conception of memory, the photography represents an irreparable loss and 'triggers a new stage in Marcel's mourning.'<sup>96</sup> (Eissen 1987: 64)

Another example of Proust's using a photograph to represent the passage of time is given in *Within a Budding Grove*. An old photograph of the 'little band' of adolescent girls reminds the Narrator of his first 'impression of the group, but the group itself that had been lacking in clearness' 'in those earlier years when they appeared for the first time before (him)'.<sup>97</sup> (*Remembrance* I: 881.) In the photograph, 'their childish troupe already presents the same number of participants as later feminine procession (...); but one cannot recognise them individually in it save by a process of reasoning, making allowances for all the transformations possible during girlhood.' ['(...) *leur troupe enfantine offre déjà le même*

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95 'And yet, her cheeks having without her knowing it an expression of their own, leaden, haggard, like the expression of an animal that senses it has been chosen and marked down, my grand-mother had an air of being under sentence of death, an air involuntarily sombre, unconsciously tragic, which escaped me but prevented Mamma from ever looking at that photograph, that photograph which seemed to her a photograph not so much of her mother as of her mother's disease, of an insult inflicted by that disease on my grandmother's brutally buffeted face.' (*Remembrance* III: 242–243)

96 Fr. 'La photographie semble ici provoquer une nouvelle étape dans le travail du deuil.'

97 Fr. 'Sans doute en ces années-là encore si peu éloignées, ce n'était pas comme la veille dans leur première apparition devant moi, la vision du groupe, mais le groupe lui-même qui manquait de netteté.' (*La Recherche* II: 180)

*nombre de figurantes, que, plus tard leur cortège féminin; (...) mais on ne peut les y reconnaître individuellement que par le raisonnement, en laissant le champ libre à toutes les transformations possibles pendant la jeunesse.*] (*Remembrance I*: 882; *La Recherche II*: 180.) The photograph may only matter when the reality it represents no longer exists.<sup>98</sup> ‘Who could now have recognised in them, scarcely and yet quite definitely beyond the age at which one changes so completely, an amorphous, delicious mass, still utterly childish, of little girls who, only a few years back, might have been seen sitting in a ring on the sand round a tent.’ [*Qui eût pu reconnaître maintenant en elles, à peine mais déjà sorties d’un âge où on change si complètement, telle masse amorphe et délicieuse, encore tout enfantine, de petites filles que, quelques années seulement auparavant, on pouvait voir assises en cercle sur le sable, autour d’une tente.*] (*Remembrance I*: 881; *La Recherche II*: 180) Albertine is among those girls, but her identity is vaguely discernable: ‘one would have distinguished a pair of eyes that sparkled more than the rest, a mischievous face, flaxen hair, only to lose them again and to confound them almost at once in the indistinct and milky nebula.’ [‘*O*n n’eût distingué deux yeux plus brillants que les autres, un malicieux visage, des cheveux blonds, que pour les reperdre et les confondre bien vite au sein de la nébuleuse indistincte et lactée ?’] (*Ibid.*) In the novel, each time the Narrator sees Albertine, he is amazed to see her transformations.<sup>99</sup> The snapshots cannot capture the idea of her metamorphosis which is more meaningful than any of Albertine’s portraits at any moment. Unlike Colomb’s and Proust’s conception of memory, the photograph is insufficient to show the complexity and elusiveness of existence. Creation

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98 ‘La photographie acquiert un peu de la dignité qui lui manque quand elle cesse d’être une reproduction du réel et nous montre des choses qui n’existent plus.’ (*La Recherche II*: 123)

99 ‘Quand j’arrivai chez Elstir, un peu plus tard, je crus d’abord que Mlle Simonet n’était pas dans l’atelier. Il y avait bien une jeune fille assise, en robe de soie, nu tête, mais de laquelle je ne connaissais pas la magnifique chevelure, ni le nez, ni ce teint et où je ne retrouvais pas l’entité que j’avais extraite d’une jeune cycliste se promenant coiffée d’un polo, le long de la mer. C’était pourtant Albertine.’ | ‘When I arrived at Elstir’s a few minutes later, I thought at first that mlle Simonet was not in the studio. There was certainly a girl sitting there in a silk frock, bareheaded, but one whose marvelous hair, whose nose, whose complexion, meant nothing to me, in whom I did not recognise the human entity that I had extracted from a young cyclist in a polo-cap strolling past between myself and the seay. Nevertheless it was Albertine.’ (*Remembrance I*: 930–931; *La Recherche II* : 225) ‘Peu de temps après, (...) je fus abordé sur la digue par une jeune fille portant un toquet et un manchon, si différente de celle que j’avais vue à la

implies not a too realistic depiction of reality that the photography may afford but a translation of memory.

The flow of time with its destructive effects is expressed from the opening episode in *CE*. Jenny's death brings forward the ideas of rupture and disorientation. They last alongside the episodes of the christening banquet, Marguerite's marriage, and the reception for the Shah. The idyllic atmosphere, which, in general, characterizes the christening banquet, is broken by the depiction of the cemetery. Death supersedes a celebratory mood when the tombs of Jâmes Laroche's ancestors, who is the main actor in one of these episodes, are described amid the baptism:

[Émilie Févot] vit, levant les yeux, les convives du baptême debout sur la première terrasse, appuyés des genoux au mur bas : le bel Adolphe, le pasteur au bonnet d'Écossais, Walter Angenaisaz qui avait fait ce singulier mariage, grandes figures qui cachaient la maison et, vues d'en bas, atteignaient le toit. [...] L'éérable-sycomore laissait tomber ses graines qui tournoyaient comme des hélices ; l'air était sans mouvement, sur la pelouse fleurissaient les roses de septembre, la lumière touchait pour la première fois dans l'année les feuilles charnues de la pervenche du bosquet ; à travers les arbres éclaircis on apercevait le cimetière sur sa colline et le monument des Laroche, restés fidèles au cimetière du village, eux qui auraient pu occuper dans celui du bourg la meilleure place près de la baignoire romaine.<sup>100</sup> (*CE*: 748–9)

These lines bring to mind the '*Bal de têtes*'—the final scene of the *matinée chez la princesse de Guermantes* in *Time Regained*, which also symbolises the triumph of ageing and death over life. Pale images, imperceptible, shadowy characters, stained photos, forgotten names and stories, multiple references to deaths,

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réunion d'Elstir que reconnaître en elle la même personne semblait pour l'esprit une opération impossible.' | 'Shortly after this, (...) I was accosted on the front by a girl wearing a little toque and carrying a muff, so different from the girl whom I had met at Elstir's party that to recognise in her the same person seemed an operation beyond the power of the human mind'. (*Remembrance I*: 936; *La Recherche II*: 231)

100 Eng. '[Émilie Févot] saw, looking up, the guests of the christening banquet standing on the first terrace, leaning their knees on the low wall: the handsome Adolphe, the pastor in the Scottish bonnet, Walter Angenaisaz who had made this singular marriage, big bodies, which hid a house view and reached the roof when seen from below. [...] The sycamore maple let its seeds, which whirled like propellers, fall. The air was motionless. The September roses were blooming on the lawn. The light touched the fleshy leaves of the periwinkle grove for the first time in a year. Through the shining trees, one could see the cemetery on a hill and the monument of the Laroche who remained faithful to the village cemetery, those who could have occupied the best place in the town cemetery, near the Roman baths.'



tombs, and cemeteries are among those numerous elements which materialize time in *CE*. The images, characters, objects, places—they all contain memories. These memories are quickly recorded when recalled not to forget them or not to lose a path amongst bonds, networks of associations that the evocation of images, characters, objects, and places produce. There is a search for an escape from time, a desire to defeat time and achieve permanence by inventing a story. But the memories cannot shape a story in *CE* because the novel suggests they are forgotten in time. The form of her novel corresponds to Colomb's vision of time. *CE* outlines the power of time and its capacity to freeze memories. The memories can only be recalled by details rather than in details in *CE*.

The section discussed Proust's and Colomb's representations of memory and time. The following sections will highlight the elements they include in their writings for creating the effects of memory functioning. They will only focus on common elements through which Proust and Colomb reveal principles of memory. These elements include Colomb's associations and Proust's reminiscences, which will be analyzed in the next section. I will show how associations and reminiscences produce multilinear narratives, helping us observe the aesthetics of time in their novels.

## 2.4 Associationism vs. reminiscences

This chapter explains why *CE* and *ET* need to be considered as novels of memory and time and what they share with and how they differ from *La Recherche* — a novel which is also considered as the treasure trove of memories and is literally 'in search of lost time'. I will demonstrate that the selected novels represent memory in action and give way to a temporal complexification of the narrative. The mechanism of the association will be considered as one of the major common elements in the comparative reading of memory within Colomb's and Proust's works. The studies of *La Recherche* by J.P. Houston (1980), R. Debray-Genette (1980), Genette (1980), and *The Trilogy* by Seylaz (1972, 1973) and Favre (1993) integrate the analysis of a mechanism of association. However, Colomb's and Proust's works have not yet been discussed together in this perspective.

*CE* and *ET* allow the reader to observe the memories, the mental processes being operated by association. Association is 'sensory perception or idea [which] may be associated with something from the past'. (Cuddon 1979: 60) Proust's work focuses on the sensory perceptions which derive from objects and places from the past.

However, *La Recherche* is also best known for the representation of *reminiscences*. Proust's eminent critic Gilles Deleuze recognized the superiority

of the reminiscences over the mechanism of association.<sup>101</sup> In his 1964 study, he discussed the value of reminiscences, yet without explaining how the reminiscences differ and go beyond the mechanism of association. In their critical contributions, Corboz (1962), Favre (1993), and Seylaz (1972, 1973) focused on the participation of associations of ideas in the narrative development within *The Trilogy*. However, our understanding of the mechanism of association in Colomb's work remains limited. More precisely, we need to evaluate whether associations derive from voluntary or involuntary imagination. We will also define the role played by associations in expressing the reality of time within Colomb's novels.

In the study of associationism and reminiscence, I observe how the associations of ideas and reminiscences are related with and involved in the expression of time in Colomb's and Proust's works. This analysis hypothesizes that both Proust's reminiscences and Colomb's associations convey the meaning of time. We will see that the difference lies in the fact that Proustian reminiscences translate into re-experiencing the event which occurred a long time ago and is forgotten at present, while Colombian associations consist in mingling separate moments together to form a single entity. Associations fuse separate memories, while involuntary reminiscences alone allow regaining the past by finally discovering and living '*l'être en soi du passé*' ('the past's being as past'), in its 'truth' and its fullness that has never been lived before. (Deleuze 1964: 72)

To proceed to the comparison, I start with the definition of the terms. The reflections assembled in the following section define such terms as *association* and *reminiscence*. They show the implications of the concepts in such fields as philosophy and psychology. Understanding the meaning of association and reminiscence in these disciplinary spheres will help us explain the notions in Colomb's and Proust's literary texts. Once the terms are defined, we continue by studying the complex nature of Colombian associationism before paving the way for a comparative analysis of Colombian associations and Proustian reminiscences.

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101 According to Gilles Deleuze, 'La reminiscence pose plusieurs problèmes qui ne sont pas résolus par l'association des idées.' ['Reminiscence poses several problems which are not solved by the association of ideas.'] (1964: 71)

## 2.5 Definition of terms

### 2.5.1 Association

The Oxford English Dictionary defines association as ‘an idea or recollection, linked in the mind or memory with some object of contemplation, and recalled to the mind in connexion with it.’ (Simpson 1989, I: 718) It follows that activation of memory through some object produces association. A Dictionary of Literary Terms explains that association represents the ‘shared connection between an object and ideas’, and ‘any sensory perception or idea may be associated with something from the past.’ (Cuddon 1979: 60) In both cases, association derives from attributing some idea to an object. But how exactly does an object evoke an association?

The term *association* derives from Latin *associātiōn-em*, meaning to unite, ally. (OED) Laws governing the spontaneous movements of thought and the principle of the mechanism of these movements started to attract the attention of the ancient metaphysicians in Egypt, Greece, India, and Palestine. (Coleridge 2004 (1817): Chapter V) In Greek philosophy, Aristotle defined association as a group of ‘ideas [which,] by having been together[,] acquire[d] a power of recalling each other; or every partial representation aw[o]ke the total representation of which it had been a part.’ (*Ibid.*) Aristotle named five causes occasioning associations: connection in time (i.e., simultaneity), space (i.e., vicinity), interdependence (cause and effect), likeness, and contrast. (*Idem.*) 17<sup>th</sup>-century philosophical studies enriched Aristotle’s analysis of association. (*Idem.*) In his *Biographia Literaria* (1817), Samuel Taylor Coleridge traced the history of the ‘law of Association’ from Aristotle to Hartley and defined association as a shared connection between ideas and objects. (Coleridge, 2004 (1817): Chapter V) Coleridge claimed that our knowledge about the laws of association was more detailed in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. He referred to the lectures of Sir James Machintosh affirming that such philosophers as Thomas Hobbes and David Hartley went so far as to discover ‘the laws that direct the spontaneous movements of thought and the principle of their intellectual mechanism.’ (*Ibid.*)

A strong emphasis on association and mental concepts during the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries stemmed from developing empiricism as a systematic approach to philosophy in the works of the British philosophers John Locke (1632–1704), George Berkeley (1685–1753), David Hartley (1705–1757), and David Hume (1711–1776).<sup>102</sup> Association of ideas was a key concept for the British empiricists.

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102 The names mentioned in this paragraph are quoted in Simpson (1989, I: 718)

The philosophers developed theories of *associationism* in order to reveal how complex mental processes arose from simple sensory experiences. In Locke's, Berkeley's, Hartley's, and Hume's epistemology, association mainly described the mental activity. During the 17<sup>th</sup> and the 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, the term association meant a mental concept, a sense of connection in the mind between objects and ideas that had some relation to it (such as by Locke (1690), the English poet Johnson L., P., Cowley (1779), among many). (Simpson 1989, I: 718)

In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the Scottish Common Sense Realism (founded by Thomas Reid and maintained by his successors: Dugald Stewart, Sir William Hamilton) started to rethink the empiricism of Locke, Hartley, and Hume. (Redekop 2004: 212) The Scottish philosophers suggested that Associationism activated the memory processes. They doubted the truthfulness of the empiricist theory according to which the impressions endured on the brain. Unlike the empiricists, Reid maintained that the *self* did not depend on memory and did not share anything with its past. Instead, it existed as an independent substance.<sup>103</sup>

Coleridge, who at first admired Thomas Hartley, later turned out as a critic of empiricists. In Chapter V of his book *Biographia Literaria.*, Coleridge also noted that our perceptions are governed by 'an external power, whether as a mirror reflecting the landscape, or as a blank canvas on which some unknown hand paints it'. (Coleridge, 2004 (1817): Chapter VII.) Interestingly, the canvas also appears in *CE* several times. The canvas might be echoing Coleridge's idea that our perceptions are often involuntary, produced without our interference, by a mechanism of their own. Yet, Coleridge then dismissed the empiricists' view of imagination as mechanical, non-rational activity. Ultimately, he adopted the look of such German philosophers and Romantic writers as Kant, Schiller, Schelling on the role of the will, which has the power 'to control, determine and modify the phantasmal chaos of association'.<sup>104</sup> It follows that associations are not merely free thoughts. Instead, they follow the dictates of the will, of the rational brain.

In Psychology, the doctrine suggesting that mental phenomena might be accounted for by association of ideas is called associationism. (Simpson 1989, I: 719) Psychologists often combine associationism with hedonism. Hedonism describes why events connect with one another. It explains that 'bonds are forged

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103 The reflections set out in this paragraph were borrowed from Reid (1915).

104 There are notes and comments on the works of such German philosophers and Romantic writers as Schiller and Schelling in Colomb's note-books (Fr. *carnets*) currently conserved at the Centre for Research in French Swiss Literature (CRLR). The comments in a way suggest that Colomb was aware of Schillerian and Schellingian versions of association and imagination.

by pleasant experiences, broken by painful ones.' (Audi 1996: 51) Associationism contributes to non-rational, non-intelligent processes. (*Ibid.*) The associationists, such as Hume and Mill among philosophers, Skinner and Thorndike among psychologists, believed that 'people thought as they did, not because of rational connections among thoughts, but because thoughts associatively bonded'. (*Ibid.*) Hence, the psychologists mainly adopted the empiricists' view of association according to which association stemmed from mechanical rather than voluntary or intelligence-based imagination. Davies explained that the mechanism of association relied on the impression rather than on the will. He called *associationism* 'a mechanism by which one thought automatically called up another close to it, on the basis of the impressions left in the mind by the force of external events working upon the senses. Establishing physical channels along the nerves and brain, the memory of sensory experience would set going a train of thought'. (Davies 2002: 175) Thus, association is closely linked with the phenomena of memory and recollection. Our minds retain strong impressions, which produce a train of thoughts. Hence, the association consists of chaining the thoughts.

The association technique represents an integral part of a Psychoanalytic therapy. Such a therapy is called the Free Association Method. The method was suggested by S. Freud in 1892. The free association technique is used to help patients discover their unconscious thoughts and feelings by expressing freely their thoughts, without any discrimination. (Bloch 2011 (1991): 96)

If we try to sum up the above-mentioned reflections in different disciplinary spheres, we can draw the following conclusions. In Greek philosophy, Aristotle thought that one idea may awake another idea through association. The empiricism of Locke, Berkeley, Hartley, and Hume defined association as a mental process, which derived from sense experiences. The empiricists' version of association was non-voluntary. Some associationists, namely the philosophers Hume and Mill and psychologists Skinner and Thorndike, shared the idea that thoughts bonded associatively rather than by logical connections between them. Coleridge criticized such a view of association. He defined the association as a will-based process.

In the end, these various reflections form two groups. While the empiricists and the associationists maintain that associations develop independently of the rational brain and have a mechanism of their own, the Scottish Common Sense School of Psychology and Coleridge—based on the theories of German philosophers and Romantic writers—claim the opposite: that the associations derive from reasoning and are controlled by the rational faculty of the brain.

### 2.5.2 Reminiscence

The word reminiscence derives from the Latin *reminiscentia*, which means ‘remembrance, recollection.’ (Online Etymology.) The doctrine of reminiscence, as translating Greek *ἀνάμνησις* (anamnesis), represents the theory of the Greek philosopher Plato (c. 429–327 BC) that knowledge originates before birth. According to Plato, the soul recovers knowledge from a former existence before it enters a new body. (Audi 1996: 620–22) For Plato, the soul did not die, and humans are exposed to the ‘Forms’ in their different existences. His theory of Forms is introduced in his first dialogue, *Phaedo*. (Audi 1996: 621) ‘Forms’ are the essences of various abstract objects. The ‘Forms’ may exist as ideas, independently of the objects. According to Plato, we come to know that a painted portrait of somebody is called a man because the colour on the canvas resembles a man. The portrait on the canvas and a true man share essences that Plato defined as ‘Forms.’ For Plato, the Forms are changeless, transcendent to space and time. Unlike Socrates, who thought that the dead lost consciousness, Plato suggested that knowledge was retrieved from a former existence through recollection or reminiscence. (*Ibid.*, 620)

On the grounds of Plato’s Theory of Forms, the knowledge that the pigment on the canvas is a man does not derive from experience, but by retrieving this knowledge from our former existence through reminiscence. (Matsumoto 2009: 787) The theory further implies that we learn by recollecting some past fact or experience, which is temporarily buried in our subconscious memory and can be reactivated ‘through questioning’. (Audi 1996: 620–22)

In Psychology, reminiscence is defined as a vague recollection of some events that occurred in early childhood. (Matsumoto 2009: 787) Unlike recollection, reminiscence is only remembered partially and confusedly. (*Ibid.*) Proust’s almost contemporary Freud stresses the influential role of reminiscence in his studies of memory. (Auroux 1990: 2230) Reminiscence is intimately related to traumatic memories in Freud. In his *Studies on Hysteria* (1895), Freud maintains that ‘Hysterical patients suffer largely from reminiscences’. Bergson, like Freud, estimates that the past psychic life does not disappear: our memories are conserved and form our conscious mind. Both think that the past continues to influence our present state of being. Bergson explains that only few reminiscences are retrieved from the past so that they do not flood us in our present existence.<sup>105</sup> (Bergson 1911 (1896))

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105 The connections between Bergson and Proust are discussed in the fourth chapter, *The Philosophy of time*.

The Oxford English Dictionary defines reminiscence as 'the action of recovering knowledge or fondly recalling memories by mental application'. (*OED*) Reminiscence is also the act of 'retrieving of a thing, at present forgotten, or but confusedly remembered'. (Simpson (1989, I: 590)) Hence, reminiscence is something that serves as a reminder of what is buried deep in our memory.

To conclude, ancient philosophers, such as Plato, believed that the soul or consciousness did not die and knowledge from our former existence could be regained through reminiscence. Like Plato, Bergson and Freud shared the idea that the memories from the past did not disappear and were preserved in our minds. If Plato hypothesized the immortality of the soul, Freud and Bergson alluded to the immortality of our past psychic life. Plato believed that knowledge did not die; Freud and Bergson thought that past experiences influenced our present existence. All these various theories suggest that reminiscences are conserved in our memory and when given a chance can be reactivated.

## 2.6 Colomb's associationism

Associations play a dynamic role in the production of various narrative threads within *CE* and *ET*. A wide range of recollections springs from memory with the subtle mechanism of the association at work. They emerge from some new elements which appear little by little in the text. In *CE*, these elements might be an object: '[Elise's lamp] swayed imperceptibly on the ceiling like a ship lamp. But only one lamp would sink into the ground without breaking, one of the frail Galeswinthe in the grove'. [*La lampe d'Elise se balançait imperceptiblement au plafond comme une lampe de navire. Mais une seule lampe s'enfoncerait dans le sol sans se briser, celle de la frêle Galeswinthe dans le bosquet.*] (*CE*: 778) The same object, a lamp, brings together two characters Galeswinthe and Elise, who are not related otherwise. It is used to create a new association. A single word, 'char', connects two long meals in *CE*: 'The Angenaisaz watched those moving dots on the lakeside road, Jâmes' little yellow chariot, Mr. and Mrs. Louis' groaning victoria, a carriage of the Cottens' old maid'. [*Les Angenaisaz regardaient ces points mouvants sur la route au bord du lac, le petit char jaune de Jâmes, la victoria gémissante de M. et Mme Louis, la calèche de la vieille demoiselle de Cottens.*] (*CE*: 794) The Angenaisaz were attending the christening banquet. As for Jâmes, Mr. and Mrs. Louis, and the Cottens' old maid, they were invited to the reception for the Shah. Using the word 'char' allows moving the reader's attention from the reception to the dinner: '[Clotilde] swaying her head as if pulled on a chariot. The christening chariot stood at the end of the terrace'. [*Clotilde oscillant de la tête, comme tirée sur un char. Le char du baptême, [était] arrêté au bout de la*

terrasse’.] (CE: 799) Clotilde, James’s wife, attended the reception for the Shah together with her husband.

In other cases, the connecting element might well be a character or a family tie: ‘Walter married [Liesel] for her beauty and immediately regretted it. [...] Liesel’s father, the rich miller, sometimes came from his chalet with a hundred windows to a grocer at Babeli who ran from her room at the back of the shop where she wrote to her son in Madagascar’. [*‘Walter épousa [Liesel] pour sa beauté et s’en repentit aussitôt. [...] Le père de Liesel, le riche meunier, s’en venait parfois de son chalet aux cent fenêtres chez Babeli l’épicière qui accourait de sa chambre au fond de la boutique où elle écrivait à son fils dans Madagascar.’*] (CE: 762) These sentences derive from the associations emerging from family ties: the reader learns that Walter married the miller’s daughter Liesel. The sentence that follows carries a new idea; it informs of a habitual activity of Liesel’s father. The new association leads the reader to discover the other family experience, namely, the mother-son relationship.

Some associations also stem from a comparison: ‘Emilie Févot could not blush, she had thick skin just like Mrs. Louis Laroche who was sitting in the middle of her sofa in the salon of the Graces right now’. [*‘Émilié Févot ne réussit pas à rougir, elle avait la peau épaisse comme Mme Louis Laroche, en ce moment assise bien au milieu de son canapé dans le salon des Grâces.’*] (CE: 789)

In *ET*, we see how a new idea might be brought in:

Et il baptisa le petit missionnaire Dogodela, car rien ne se perd, rien ne se crée, disait en 1910 le professeur qui ressemblait à Anatole France, rien ne se perd, pas même les noms des jeunes mortes qui tombent lentement à terre comme les volants d’autrefois, leurs plumes roses plantées dans un socle de velours et de cire maintenu par la petite soutache dorée qu’elle reclouait minutieusement avant de la relancer dans nos mains enfantines.<sup>106</sup> (*ET*: 963–964)

The phrase ‘rien ne se perd’ [Eng. ‘nothing gets lost’] evokes different associations: it refers to Benjamin’s purpose for baptizing the missionary Dogodela; the text further informs that the idea ‘rien ne se perd’ belongs to a certain professor who looked like Anatole France. This idea is doubted because we read

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106 Eng. ‘And he christened the little missionary with the name of Dogodela, for nothing gets lost, nothing gets created, as a professor who looked like Anatole France stated in 1910, nothing gets lost, not even the names of dead girls who slowly fall to the ground like those shuttlecocks from yesteryear, their pink feathers stuck in a wax and velvet disk held in place by the gold-braided fastener that she would meticulously tack back down before throwing the shuttlecock back into our infantile hands’. (*The Spirits*: 24)



that the names of the young dead might be forgotten. Bringing in a new idea or a phrase contributes to the progression of the narrative.

Associations invite new ideas in the text, ultimately leading to the development of a narrative in a new direction. Every time a new element appears, the previous idea is abandoned, interrupting the progression of narrative.

Il ouvrit les vitraux, montra les collines couvertes des habitations des poules pareilles à des séries d'armoires sur pilotis ; les poules se promenaient par bandes, seule la Fanchon se détachait et, rêveuse, picorait des choses invisibles dans la terre fraîchement remuée qui attendait un mort par minute et qui allait être frustrée d'Abraham qui tombe de la corniche à cet instant même, mais il pèse si peu que jeté par César qui la veille —la messagère le vit—enleva une pierre sous la fenêtre peinte...<sup>107</sup> (*ET*: 969–70)

In the first sentence, the words: 'hens' [Fr. '*poules*'], 'soil' [Fr. '*terre*'], 'the dead' [Fr. '*mort*'] and 'Abraham' play key role as they give birth to new associations. They link together possible sequences by association. The 'hens' are the reminders of 'soil'; the 'soil', in its turn, reminds of the 'dead'. The word 'dead', in its turn, is a reminder of Abraham. The link between the 'dead' and Abraham stems from the concrete experience: the text suggests that Abraham might be dead because he fell from the 'corniche'. In this example, the new association sprung from the privileged elements: 'hens', 'soil', 'dead', and Abraham, hinder the advancement of the narrative. The associations thus play two contradictory roles at once: they help the progression of narrative, but they also lead the story to a dead-lock, and thus to interruption.

As a consequence, if we have to define a logic behind the fragmentation of her texts, Colomb's experiments fall into two large categories: into the aesthetics of disjunction (disintegration) and the aesthetics of juxtaposition, i.e., the condition of two or more things being placed side by side (compression, wave-like flow, stream). Where there is a method of disintegration/disjunction used, gaps break up the narrative (loosely joined fragments). Such a method may be regarded as one of *cut-up*. There are all those disjointed pieces that fit together. The latter may be regarded as the one that seeks wholeness.

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107 Eng. 'He opened the stained-glass windows, pointed to the hills covered with henhouses resembling a series of wardrobe closets on piles; the hens were strolling about in groups, only Fanchon had broken away and was dreamily pecking about at invisible things in the freshly overturned earth that expected a corpse per minute and that was going to be frustrated with Abraham, falling from the cornice at this very instant, for he weighs so little that, dropping into the void because César, the evening before—the messenger had seen him—had removed a stone beneath the painted window...' (*The Spirits*: 32)

Associations produce 'digressions' in Colomb's texts. The 'digression' is a stylistic device used to delay the narration. It is 'a part of speech where the author moves away from the subject to narrate an anecdote, a memory, depict a landscape, an object of art, among many, and to give them an unexpected development. It's a story on the fringes of history'.<sup>108</sup> (Morier 1981: 365) More recently, in Randa Sabry's theoretical and historical study, the 'digression' is understood as a literary and rhetorical device. Although the digression delays the narration with its disconnections from the main topic that halt a rhetorical order, it becomes rhetoric in responding to the questions introduced in the text. (Sabry 1992) Colomb's narrative frequently includes the digression materials. While certain ideas might emerge with some quality in common, other incidents are often loosely tied. For instance, the episodes that *CE* (Jenny's death) and *ET* (anonymous voices accusing César of Abraham's fall from the tower of Fraidaigne) begin with do not turn into a complete story. These episodes are not even organically related to the other parts of the novels.

A wide range of digressions posits the primacy of the parts over the whole. New words (such as 'robe', 'char', 'mouchoir', 'poules') bring forward new ideas. The digressions might be different associations, which have some word in common: 'Frightened, César and his little brothers were sitting on their beds and listening to stones thudding down on the white roses which, the night before, were hesitating at the edge of the young coffin. "Tell us, César, are those dull sounds we're hearing, waves?" [*Effrayés, assis sur leurs lits, César et ses petits frères écoutaient alors les bruits sourds des pierres tombant sur les roses blanches qui, la veille, hésitaient au bord du jeune cercueil. « Ces coups qu'on entend, est-ce les vagues, dit César ? »*]' (*The Spirits*: 4; *ET*: 950) The synonym 'coups' replaces the 'bruits sourds' appearing in the first sentence. The words alter the direction of the narrative. The synonym of 'bruits sourds', which is 'coups' in the given case, starts to get used in a new context. We have to do with the associations emerging by the law of analogy. The synonyms 'bruits sourds' and 'coups' link two moments. The word 'coups' no longer refers to the sound of falling stones caused by demolishing a tower by Armand. It refers instead to César's hearing the sound of the waves' washing up on the banks of a lake. The reference to some other sound thus abandons the previous story (Armand's demolishing of a tower). This style creates the effect of time in its slow motion.

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108 Fr. 'Digression : partie du discours où l'auteur s'éloigne du sujet, pour narrer une anecdote, un souvenir, dépeindre un paysage, un objet d'art, etc., et leur donner un développement inattendu. C'est une histoire en marge de l'histoire'.

The other types of digressions consist in the analepsis and prolepsis included in the narrative as numerous characters attending the two-family meals emerge. A recourse to analepsis and prolepsis by Colomb, to introduce digressions, is also strongly anchored in Proust's narrative. The digressions allow to represent the passage of time and a kind of 'symmetry' between events in *À la Recherche*.<sup>109</sup> 'An analogical digression' links, for Geneviève Henrot, 'the Narrator's jealousy for his mother to all the other great jealousies of the novel: Swann's for Odette, the protagonist's for Albertine,' Charlus' for Morel, Saint-Loup's for Rachel, etc. (1991: 45)

Insignificant details gain more space in Colomb's texts than historical events. A few words sum up some historical or family events. No more than one line is devoted to the mentions of the wars: 'Germany suddenly allying with Russia and Japan hit Europe.' ['[L]Allemagne s'alliant soudain avec la Russie et le Japon déferla sur l'Europe.'] (CE: 756) and the Suez Canal construction: 'Uncle Alphonse going to build the Suez Canal with Lesseps.' ['[L]oncle Alphonse, allant construire avec Lesseps le canal de Suez...'] (CE: 758) While the negligible element—be it an object or a look—can appear and reappear in the text. When these details are recalled, they immediately suggest others to which they might be somehow related.

Associations can also stem from Colomb's uses of syllepsis—a figure of speech when a word is used to exemplify various connotative meanings it contains. (OED) In the instances, such as: '*Mélanie porta la main à ses seins houleux où voguait parfois un petit bateau*,'<sup>110</sup> [Eng. 'Mélanie brought her hand to her tumultuous breasts, where a little boat sometimes drifted.'] (ET: 1027; *The Spirits*: 111) she reinforces the rhetorical effect of the word 'houleux' [Eng. 'tumultuous' or 'billowy'] by using it for the definition of Mélanie's 'breasts' [Fr. 'seins'] and the sea. Furthermore, she compares the sunset, the end of a day with the light cut by the 'scissors' of the scissor-tailed swallow to capture reality by metaphors and add in the effect of surprise: '*L'air et le ciel au-dessus du dîner de baptême, coupés le jour par les vifs ciseaux de l'hirondelle*.' [Eng. 'The air and the sky above the christening banquet, the day cut by the sharp scissors of the swallow.'] (CE: 769) The syllepsis carries the story to a different path. 'Vague' may thus be regarded

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109 Proust's abundant uses of analepsis and prolepsis in 'Autour de Mme Swann,' for Vidotto, structurally binds the characters and events of *Within a Budding Grove* to the rest of the novel, see Vidotto (2019: 51–64). For the study of prolepsis and analepsis in *La Recherche*, see Gérard Genette, *Figures III*. (1972.) For the study of digression, see Bayard (1996).

110 The underlining is mine.

as digression material: *‘Benjamin admirait avec crainte Madame [...]. C’était un vague cousin, ce Benjamin ; remué de germains, et si frêle et si petit qu’il ne faisait pas plier la branche de l’arbre généalogique [...]. Benjamin cherchait dans le terrain vague qui jouxte leur jardin des casseroles pour en faire des tam-tams.’* [‘Benjamin stood in awe of Madame [...]. This Benjamin was a sort of distant cousin several times removed, and so small and frail that it wouldn’t be he who would make the branch of the genealogical tree sag [...]. In the vacant lot that ran alongside their garden, Benjamin would look for pots that he could use as tom-toms.’] (*ET*: 960; *The Spirits*: 19–20) In this example, the reader experiences the ‘syllectic’ effect of the word ‘vague’ [Eng. ‘distant’]: at first, it refers to distant biological ties between Madame and Benjamin; on a second occasion, it expresses ‘vacant’. The syllepsis contributes to inserting the digressions in the text. These insertions may sometimes be irrelevant. The absence of the insertion would not hinder reading comprehension. Besides, a variety of meanings that the words contain are not noticeably correlated. The link between the ‘vacant lot’ and the ‘distant cousin’ is not absolute. Yet, the word ‘distant’ stresses that the weak family ties have a deserted, sterile land as their effect.

It is remarkable that Colomb pointed at the similarity of words and objects. She compared the alignment of words in a sentence to the arrangement of objects in a moving house. ‘Starting a move into a new house is easy. The objects are arranged by categories. Then, like words looked for too long. They make a strange appearance.’ [*Le début d’un déménagement est simple ; les objets sont rangés par catégories ; puis, semblables à des mots considérés trop longtemps, ils prennent un aspect étrange...*] (*CE*: 887) At first, objects organized by category might look familiar to the eyesight. But after some time, they change into something new, just as the words would were they robbed of their original meaning. As Colomb tries to enrich the expressive value of the words by placing them in different contexts, the reflection on the arrangement of objects echoes her own experience of creating a literary text.

Recalling memories by association is the widely used process in *La Recherche* as well. However, the ways association of ideas develop in Proust and Colomb differ. In *La Recherche*, the associations are more coherent than in Colomb. Unlike in *CE* and *ET*, Proustian associations are also systematically based on the analogy, which is not a mere aesthetic principle but also the instrument of an artist’s vision. Using analogy establishes a relationship between ‘sensations’ and ‘memories’ located on different temporal planes: ‘What we call reality is a relation between those sensations and those memories which simultaneously encircle us.’ [*Ce que nous appelons la réalité est un certain rapport entre ces sensations et ces souvenirs qui nous entourent simultanément.*] (*Remembrance*

IV: 155; *La Recherche* IV: 468). The 'analogical' in Proust means 'ontological', Julia Kristeva suggests. (1994: 270–271) Connecting 'two different states of being together for ever in a phrase' [*enchaîner à jamais dans la phrase les deux termes différents*] (*Remembrance* IV: 155; *La Recherche* IV: 468) is needed to come close to the terms of art. Elstir's 'employing, for the little town, only marine terms, and urban terms for the sea' [*...n'employant pour la petite ville que des termes marins, et que des termes urbains pour la mer*] (*Remembrance* I: 894; *La Recherche* II: 192) in his seascapes has as its effect 'a sort of metamorphosis of the objects represented, analogous to what in poetry what we call metaphor'. [*(...) une sorte de métamorphose des choses représentées, analogue à celle qu'en poésie on nomme métaphore*.] (*Remembrance* I: 892; *La Recherche* II: 191)

Recognizing similar structures between two objects with different temporalities is the principle of '*liaison*' in Colomb and the process of analogy in Proust. Anne Simon does not think of the Proustian 'extra-temporality' as the absence of time, rather as a '*liaison* of meanings which make sense only in relation to each other'. (2011: 12) Only, if '*liaison*' in *CE* prevents the story from obtaining a finality (see 1.3.1 *The mechanism of 'liaison'*), the teleological development of narration in *La Recherche* leads to the discovery of involuntary memory as a principle of art and the Narrator's development of his vocation as a writer.<sup>111</sup> The Narrator of Combray discovers that 'what lay hidden behind the steeples of Martinville must be something analogous to a pretty phrase'. [*(...) ce qui était caché derrière les clochers de Martinville devait être quelque chose d'analogue à une jolie phrase*.] (*Remembrance* I: 197; *La Recherche* I: 179). At the end of the book, he learns that 'the truth will only begin to emerge from the moment that the writer takes two different objects, posits their relationship, the analogue in the world of art to the only relationship of causal law in the world of science and encloses it within the circle of fine style. In this, as in life, he fuses a quality common to two sensations, extracts their essence and in order to withdraw them from the contingencies of time, unites them in a metaphor, thus chaining them together with the indefinable bond of a verbal alliance'. [*[L]a vérité ne commencera qu'au moment où l'écrivain prendra deux objets différents, posera leur rapport, analogue dans le monde de l'art à celui qu'est le rapport unique de la loi causale dans le monde de la science, et les enfermera dans les anneaux*

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111 Anne Simon rightly suggests that Proust links the 'inability to feel to the absence of literary vocation'. (RTP, IV: 433–4434, 444) A series of reminiscences in *Time Regained* is essential to the Narrator's discovery of the true meaning of literature; see Simon (2011: 44).

*nécessaires d'un beau style, ou même, ainsi que la vie, quand, en rapprochant une qualité commune à deux sensations, il dégagera leur essence en les réunissant l'une et l'autre, pour les soustraire aux contingences du temps, dans une métaphore, et les enchaînera par le lien indescriptible d'une alliance de mots'.]* (*Remembrance* IV: 155; *La Recherche* IV: 468)

*La Recherche* structurally relies on a network of resemblances between different objects.<sup>112</sup> Proust's 'comparisons, through its formal characteristics' (Proust's sentences are marked by abundant uses of 'comme') and 'figurative functioning based on analogy', comes close to 'a metaphor.' (Vidotto 2020: 10) The analogy becomes a metaphor into the 'domain of style.' (Fraisse 1995: 77) *La Recherche* ends with the discoveries of 'analogical miracle' (*Remembrance* IV: 141) and the Narrator's discovery of his vocation as a writer. The analogy triggers and preserves, via metaphor, the fleeting experiences of involuntary memory.

## 2.7 Colomb's associations vs. Proust's reminiscences

This section examines Colomb's associations and Proustian reminiscences with focus on both differences and similarities. Proust defines the reminiscences as 'resurrections of memory'. (*Remembrance* IV: 146) A classic example of Proustian reminiscence is the madeleine experience represented in *Combray* (*Swann's Way*). Most of the reminiscences are exposed in the final volume, but they occur throughout the entire novel.<sup>113</sup> Proust seems to assign to reminiscence a vital role in recognizing the links between different selves morphing into different shapes across time. Immediately before this instance of involuntary memory, Proust's narrator alludes to the Celtic belief in metempsychosis that through some animal, plant or object we may enter into contact with the dead.<sup>114</sup>

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112 The structure of *À la Recherche*, for Luc Fraisse, 'is a conceptual structure, made of analogies, contradictions, resemblances, oppositions, succession, assimilations'; see Fraisse (2013: 403).

113 Samuel Beckett (1931) lists eleven reminiscences—'fetishes' (36) of involuntary memory. Howard Moss included 22 reminiscences in his study; see Moss (1966 (1962): 101–21.) This list is significantly improved by Geneviève Henrot (1991).

114 'Je trouve très raisonnable la croyance celtique que les âmes de ceux que nous avons perdus sont captives dans quelque être inférieur, dans une bête, un végétal, une chose inanimée, perdues en effet pour nous jusqu'au jour, qui pour beaucoup ne vient jamais, où nous nous trouvons passer près de l'arbre, entrer en possession de l'objet qui est leur prison.' (*La Recherche* I: 43–44) | 'I feel that there is much to be said for the Celtic belief that the souls of those whom we have lost are held captive in some inferior being, in an animal, in a plant, in some inanimate object, and thus effectively lost to

A multitude of objects and sensations of different temporal planes are the repositories of the past in *La Recherche*. The smell of a pavilion in the Champs-Élysées brings back the memory of Uncle Adolphe's room in Combray which bore, for the Narrator, a similar odor.<sup>115</sup> The uneven cobblestones give the 'unquestionably the same happiness as that which' the Narrator experienced when he 'tasted the madeleine soaked in tea.' (*La Recherche* IV: 445) Again, the starchiness of a napkin that the Narrator wipes against his mouth revives the starched towel at Balbec.<sup>116</sup> (*La Recherche* IV: 447) Recognition of the miraculous interconnectedness of memories gives to the Narrator a rare sensation to the Narrator of being 'free from the order of time.' (*Remembrance* IV: 142)

Proust's literary treatment of involuntary memory has been regarded as uniquely poetic. The Proustian 'reminiscence', for Henrot, encompasses several kinds of involuntary memories including the ones reactivated during sleep and awakening, dreaming and reverie. (2004b: 850–851) She distinguishes three large categories of 'reminiscence'. The first category includes 'diurnal' involuntary memories. The second comprises the spontaneous memories of falling asleep and awakening or the involuntary, 'unconscious thought' (Fraisie 2013: 361) of

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us until the day (which to many never comes) when we happen to pass by the tree or to obtain possession of the object which forms their prison.' (*Remembrance* I: 47)

115 However, the reason why this reminiscence brings so much joy to the Narrator is at once unknown: 'En rentrant, j'aperçus, je me rappelai brusquement l'image, cachée jusque-là, dont m'avait approché, sans me la laisser voir ni reconnaître, le frais, sentant presque la suie, du pavillon treillagé. Cette image était celle de la petite pièce de mon oncle Adolphe, à Combray, laquelle exhalait en effet le même parfum d'humidité. Mais je ne pus comprendre, et je remis à plus tard de chercher pourquoi le rappel d'une image si insignifiante m'avait donné une telle félicité.' | 'On my way home I perceived, I suddenly recalled the impression, concealed from me until then, of which, without letting me distinguish or recognise it, the cold and almost sooty smell of the trellised pavilion had reminded me. It was that of my uncle Adolphe's little sitting-room at Combray, which had indeed exhaled the same odour of humidity. But I could not understand, and I postponed until later the attempt to discover why the recollection of so trivial an impression had filled me with such happiness.' (*Remembrance* I: 533; *La Recherche* I: 485)

116 'The napkin upon which I was wiping my mouth had exactly the same kind of starchiness as that with which I had attempted with so much difficulty to dry myself before the window the first day of my arrival at Balbec and within the folds of which, now, in that library of the Guermantes mansion, a green-blue ocean spread its plumage.' (*Remembrance* IV: 138)

the awakened sleeper as we read, for instance, at the beginning of *La Recherche*.<sup>117</sup> Whereas the third embraces such primitive sources of memory as dreams, nocturnal memories. (2004b: 850–851) ‘Reminiscence is involuntary because, through an unexpected intention of the senses, it brings back to consciousness something that had been ‘forgotten’ (says Proust), ‘repressed’ (adds the psychoanalyst), which had not even reached clear consciousness.’ (Henrot 1991: 75)

Reminiscences are not the only memory events that produce *La Recherche*. They represent one of two types of memory events exposed in the book. If the reminiscences have a place in the involuntary memory, other memory events are reported as voluntary memory. These types of memory events have no similar effect to what the Narrator experiences in the madeleine episode, namely revisiting past events with his present awareness. Voluntary memory cannot help us discover ‘the past self’, according to Gilles Deleuze (1964: 51), while the involuntary memory ‘internalizes the context, it renders the old context inseparable from the present sensation’.<sup>118</sup> (*Ibid.*, 53) Voluntary memory cannot stop the flow of time. It does not grant us the qualities of time which are not yet researched using empirical evidence, while involuntary memory does. The involuntary memory can grant a moment that falls beyond the limits, rendering it possible to rediscover the experience in the current milieu—in a chain of memories.

Although reminiscences represent powerful impressions and are in the centre of attention in Proust’s novel, more space is granted to the deliberate retrieval of the past events with the help of voluntary memory. In contrast to involuntary memory, voluntary memory or ‘the memory of the intellect (...) preserves nothing of the past’ [*la mémoire de l’intelligence, (...) ne conservent rien du [passé].*] (*Remembrance I*: 47; *La Recherche I*: 43). ‘A man who searches for all possible combinations of chords will not make such and such a piece of Beethoven.’ [*Un homme qui cherchera toutes les combinaisons d’accords possibles ne fera tel morceau de Beethoven.*] (*La Recherche IV*: 860; *Esquisse XXVI*). ‘Voluntary memory’, for Proust, ‘mainly is the memory of the intellect’. [*La mémoire volontaire est surtout une mémoire de l’intelligence.*] (Proust, quoted by Dreyfus (1926: 287–289)) In *À la rencontre de mes personnages* [Eng. *Meeting with my Characters*], Colomb explains that her childhood memories appear ‘in the fog with a kind

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117 In chapter VI of *L’éclectisme philosophique de Marcel Proust*, Luc Fraisse suggests that the evocation of sleep and dream on the first five or six pages of *La Recherche* reveal ‘une pensée sans conscience’ (2013: 361) or ‘l’éveil de la conscience’ (2013: 362)—the question widely discussed by Proust’s professor of philosophy, Alphonse Darlu as well.

118 Fr. (1). ‘[L]’être en soi du passé.’ (2). ‘[I]ntériorise le contexte, elle rend l’ancien contexte inséparable de la sensation présente.’



of impenetrable forest in the background'. [ '[...] *dans le brouillard, tout au fond une sorte de forêt impénétrable*']. (Colomb (2019 (1962): 1372)) But they come flooding back while writing. Colomb's 'impenetrable forest' reminds of 'ideas veiled in shadow, unknown, impenetrable to the human mind' [*'idées voilées de ténèbres, inconnues, impénétrables à l'intelligence'*]. (*Remembrance I*: 380; *La Recherche I*: 343) The intelligence, for Proust, cannot recover the past: 'It is a labour in vain to attempt to recapture (our past), all the efforts of our intellect must prove futile'. [*C'est peine perdue que nous cherchions à (...) évoquer (notre passé), tous les efforts de notre intelligence sont inutiles*']. (*Remembrance I*: 47–48; *La Recherche I*: 44) Odette's and Albertine's bodies cover their multiple modes of existence, excluding the possibility for Swann and the Narrator, respectively, of attaining them in all their complexity whether through love or following the logic of reason. Swann's voluntary memories, 'his intelligence had not embodied in them anything of the past save fictitious extracts which preserved none of the reality' [*'son intelligence n'(...) avait enfermé du passé que de prétendus extraits qui n'en conservaient rien'*]. (*Remembrance I*: 376; *La Recherche II*: 340) The Narrator 'possessed in [his] memory only a series of Albertines, separate from one another, incomplete, a collection of profiles or snapshots' [*'(...) ne possédais dans (sa) mémoire que des séries d'Albertine séparées les unes des autres, incomplètes, des profils, des instantanés*']. (*La Recherche III*: 655) Swann cannot know a multiplicity of Odette's beings if not by jealousy, which, in Gilles Deleuze's terms, pushes to 'decipher' signs and ultimately, grants a view of an 'unknown world' that the beloved 'envelopes' or 'imprisons'. (1964: 14)

If reminiscences are not the only memory events in *La Recherche*, Colomb's novels are centrally dependent on associations. What brings the associations and reminiscences together is their nature to represent time as multi-layered.

Les mères, les sœurs, arrivaient trop tard au chevet d'être aimés. Un ingénieur comprit que des moyens de locomotion plus rapides s'imposaient ; c'était le frère du pasteur qui ne brûlait pendant le catéchisme que des rameaux de framboisier. « Là, disait-il en fermant bruyamment le portillon du poêle et en raffermissant sur son crâne un bonnet d'Écossais, là, voilà une bonne flambée. À toi ! criait-il d'une voix terrible ; qui a créé le monde ? » et il gardait pour lui les moules de bois qui lui donnait la commune ; son jeune frère l'ingénieur construisit une machine qui traînait une sorte d'omnibus, invita sa sœur et Émilie Févot, en séjour au village chez sa tante couverte de broches dont l'une, représentant deux colombes lui avait été octroyée par la reine Victoria, les fit monter dans le véhicule à roues de bois et les conduisit cahin-caha jusqu'à Divonne où il leur offrit du chocolat mousseux et des fruits. Émilie Févot portait une robe grise à fines raies rouges et petits dessins verts ; le poignet serré de la manche à gigot comprimait son bras blanc qui n'avait jamais senti le soleil. Au dîner du baptême elle portait cette même robe et de terribles bouclettes noires sur le front. Comme elle se promenait seule

et dédaigneuse sur la troisième terrasse, sa jupe grise entraînant de minuscules escargots pékinés de noir et blanc.<sup>119</sup> (*CE*: 748)

Et comme dans ce jeu où les Japonais s'amuse à tremper dans un bol de porcelaine rempli d'eau, de petits morceaux de papier jusque-là indistincts qui, à peine y sont-ils plongés s'étirent, se contournent, se colorent, se différencient, deviennent des fleurs, des maisons, des personnages consistants et reconnaissables, de même maintenant toutes les fleurs de notre jardin et celles du parc de M. Swann, et les nymphéas de la Vivonne, et les bonnes gens du village et leurs petits logis et l'église et tout Combray et ses environs, tout cela qui prend forme et solidité, est sorti, ville et jardins, de ma tasse de thé.<sup>120</sup> (*La Recherche* I: 47)

The readers of *CE* cannot survive a sense of vertigo because Colomb shrinks time in conjunction with the collapsed plot. With the term 'shrunked time', I describe the reduced intervals between different events, as well as the reduced size of the events that Colomb describes. With the term 'collapsed plot', I refer to several plots which intermingle tightly. Colomb often describes temporally distant experiences side by side as if they all had taken place at once. The text evolves

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119 Eng. 'Mothers and sisters arrived too late at the bedside of their loved ones. An engineer got that faster means of locomotion needed; he was a brother of the pastor who only burned raspberry twigs during catechism. 'There', he said, shutting the stove door loudly and firming up a Scottish bonnet over his head, 'there's a good fire. Yours!' he cried in a terrible voice; 'who created the world?' And he kept for himself the wooden molds which the commune gave him. His young brother, the engineer, built a machine that was dragging a sort of omnibus, invited his sister and Émilie Févot to the village, for a stay with his aunt who wore too many brooches, one of which, representing two doves, had been granted to her by Queen Victoria. He got them into the wooden-wheeled vehicle and drove them chugging along to Divonne, where he offered them a foamed chocolate and fruit. Émilie Févot wore a gray dress with thin red stripes and small green designs; the tight wrist of the gigot sleeve squeezed her white arm that had never felt the sun. At the christening banquet, she had the same dress on and terrible black curls on her forehead. As she walked alone and disdainfully on the third terrace, her gray skirt was dragging tiny black and white pekin snails.'

120 Eng. 'And as in the game wherein the Japanese amuse themselves by filling a porcelain bowl with water and steeping in it little pieces of paper which until then are without character or form, but, the moment they become wet, stretch and twist and take on colour and distinctive shape, become flowers or houses or people, solid and recognisable, so in that moment all the flowers in our garden and in M. Swann's park, and the water-lilies on the Vivonne and the good folk of the village and their little dwellings and the parish church and the whole of Combray and its surroundings, taking shape and solidity, sprang into being, town and gardens alike, from my cup of tea.' (*Remembrance* I: 51)

around some life events and habits of different characters, namely, unknown mothers and sisters, a pastor with the Scottish bonnet, the pastor's engineer brother, the engineer's sister, and aunt, Émilie Févot, and the guests at the christening banquet. We hear about late arrivals of 'mothers, sisters' to the funerals and the invention of fast 'means of locomotion.' To travel quickly, a random pastor's brother, an 'engineer, understood that faster means of locomotion were necessary'. [*Un ingénieur comprit que des moyens de locomotion plus rapides s'imposaient.*] (CE: 748) Ultimately, he invented 'a sort of omnibus'. The pace is accelerating with the pastor's awkward habit, the invitations of Émilie Févot to a village by the engineer, and to the christening banquet being told shortly after. All these events are described in one or two lines and placed one after another. We cannot tell at which specific time in the past they occurred or how much time passed between late arrivals of 'mothers, sisters' and the engineer's invention or between Émilie Févot's trip to Divonne and the christening banquet; because there is no distinction between disparate events regarding spatial and temporal supports. Placing together separate experiences evade expectations of narrative continuity. Abolishing temporal distances between various occurrences holds time in its suspense. Time is exposed through the images recalled and invented by memory. Yet, it is not the time that can be lived. Description of the characters is limited to physical appearances, gestures, and manias, appearing as in the memories.

Colomb fuses separate moments by association. The memories separated in time are linked to each other by some key words or ideas. The first two sentences develop by the principle of causality. They explain the need for such quick transport as an omnibus to arrive on time. From the second sentence, a familial bond constitutes a source of narrative progression. The narrative evolves around brief introductions of the characters who are related to one another by birth. The pastor with a 'Scottish bonnet' brings in his engineer brother. The engineer, in his turn, helps introduce his sister and aunt in the text. The engineer also brings in Émilie Févot, who, in her turn, introduces the guests attending the christening banquet. Another association emerges by law of analogy: two moments, namely, Émilie Févot in Divonne and at the christening banquet, are linked by having some word in common: a dress. Hence, there are three types of association in this fragment. The first type may be referred to as the association occasioned by interdependence (cause and effect), which, as Aristotle explained, represented one of five causes that provoke association.<sup>121</sup> The second type of association

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121 Aristotle's version of association is explained in the section: 'Definition of

emerges from family bonds. As for the third type, it derives from the object (dress) by law of similarity and analogy.

Hence, at first irrelevant words or fragments may set up connections between people, objects, and events, creating the narrative continuity in *CE*. Proust's reader, for Fraisse, should also look for such fragments releasing some 'secret, the hidden beauties' in *La Recherche*. (1995: 102) In the above-given example, Proust exhibits an analogous sensation that nourishes and brings back to the surface the richness of an original impression. The childhood experience of eating a madeleine is related to Combray in the Narrator's memory. The current madeleine experience slips the Narrator back to the past without the experience repeating itself in the Narrator's present milieu. 'There is not any likeness between the two sensations, the present and the past', as Deleuze explains, 'Combray comes back not in combination the past sensation but splendidly, with the "truth" which never had an equivalent in the real'.<sup>122</sup> (1964: 50) In other words, Proustian reminiscence allows to rediscover the past with the current awareness.

Colomb tends to record the original experience and its recollection all at once by association. Proust systematically distributes the first impression and its reminiscence on the opposite sides of his book to 'manage' the reader's memory and the Narrator's time of self-discovery.<sup>123</sup> (Henrot 2004b: 851) For instance, the tinkling of the garden gate bell at Combray repeats itself as a noise of the spoon knocking against a plate at the *matinée* Guermantes, towards the end of *Time Regained* '[T]he sound of my parents' footsteps and the metallic, shrill, fresh echo of the little bell which announced M. Swann's departure and the coming of my mother up the stairs; I heard it now, its very self'. *[C]e bruit des pas de mes parents reconduisant M. Swann, ce tintement rebondissant, ferrugineux, intarissable, criard et frais de la petite sonnette qui m'annonçait qu'enfin M. Swann était partie et que maman allait monter, je les entendis encore, je les entendis eux-mêmes.*] (*Remembrance* IV: 278; *La Recherche* IV: 624) The final sequence in *Time Regained* parallels the madeleine episode. At the beginning of the 'Perpetual Adoration', the uneven *cobblestones* in the courtyard of the Guermantes trigger involuntary recollection. The episode takes place as the Narrator attends a reception of the Prince and Princess de Guermantes in Paris:

Terms: Association.

- 122 Fr. 'Il n'y a pas simple ressemblance entre les deux sensations, présente et passée. 'Combray surgi[t], non pas tel qu'il fut vécu en contiguïté avec la sensation passée, mais dans une splendeur, avec une 'vérité' qui n'eût jamais d'équivalent dans le réel.
- 123 Henrot explains that 'each memory pattern has at least two textual attachment points (the time of impression and the time of remembering'. (2011: 255)

Je reculai assez pour buter malgré moi contre des pavés assez mal équarris derrière lesquels était une remise. Mais au moment où me remettant d'aplomb, je posai mon pied sur un pavé qui était un peu moins élevé que le précédent, tout mon découragement s'évanouit devant la même félicité qu'à diverses époques de ma vie m'avaient donnée la vue d'arbres que j'avais cru reconnaître dans une promenade en voiture autour de Balbec, la vue des clochers de Martinville, la saveur d'une madeleine trempée dans une infusion, tant d'autres sensations dont j'ai parlé et que les dernières œuvres de Vinteuil m'avaient paru synthétiser.<sup>124</sup> (*La Recherche* IV: 445)

The principle of involuntary memory excludes the possibility of an immediate return to the past. 'The distance between the memory which suddenly returns and our present personality as similarly between two memories of different years and places, is so great that it would suffice (...) to make comparison between them impossible.' [*Entre le souvenir qui nous revient brusquement et notre état actuel, de même qu'entre deux souvenirs d'années, de lieux, d'heures différentes, la distance est telle que cela suffirait (...) à les rendre incomparables les uns aux autres.*] (*Remembrance* IV: 140; *La Recherche* IV: 449) Proust gives time to his character for his spiritual and psychological growth, which makes the story suspenseful, and the reader intrigued. (Henrot 2004b: 850–851)

Both reminiscences and associations translate into virtual coexistence of different temporal levels. Henrot suggests that 'Proustian memory is much less a journey from the present to the past than the invincible intrusion of the past into the present.' (1991: 205) Poulet defines Proustian reminiscences as an experience when 'all the feelings of all times in the same life come together at any point in this life.'<sup>125</sup> (1968: 12) Such a possibility is never given in real life. Therefore, the madeleine experience is imagined, just as Colombian associations are. One word, a simple comparison is enough for two characters or events separated in time to meet. Gustave Roud labelled the invented reality as '*présence intégrale*'. According to Roud, the 'integral presences' manifested themselves by a character

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124 In stepping backwards I stumbled against some unevenly placed paving stones behind which there was a coach-house. As I recovered myself, one of my feet stepped on a flagstone lower than the one next to it. In that instant all my discouragement disappeared and I was possessed by the same felicity which at different moments of my life had given me the view of trees which seemed familiar to me during the drive round Balbec, the view of the belfries of Martinville, the savour of the madeleine dipped in my tea and so many other sensations of which I have spoken and which Vinteuil's last works had seemed to synthesize. (*Remembrance* IV: 136–7)

125 Fr. '[T]ous les sentiments de tous les temps d'une même vie confluent à n'importe quel moment de cette vie.'

or event which ‘appears every second as it is, as it was and will be.’<sup>126</sup> (Roud 1997 (1953): 58–62) Such a vision implies a symbolic introduction of time depth.

To sum up, both Proustian reminiscences and Colombian associations bind the present with the past. The reminiscences are not the only memory events in *La Recherche*. Proust’s novel also evidences forgetfulness, ‘*oublieuse mémoire*’. (Blanchot 1969: 459–464) Memory in Colomb’s novels, in *CE* in particular, constantly highlights the links between different times, but not the way it does in *La Recherche*. A Proustian reminiscence establishes the forgotten self. Colombian associations release a surviving element over time rather than the entire context that the reminiscences restore. Different experiences separated in time are brought close to each other at the expense of minimizing invention in Colomb. In Proust, the temporal distance is outlined by expanding a story and a moment. Proustian reminiscences incorporate the same experience with two temporalities, while Colombian associations consist in mingling separate experiences together in a single configuration. I suggest that these experiences—be it one and the same moment repeating itself (Proust) or separate moments blended (Colomb)—are lived mindfully, with integral awareness. Finally, both the reminiscences and associations are virtual experiences revealing new dimensions of time.

The present chapter showed that memories cannot shape a story in Colomb’s novels because they are forgotten in time. This question will be further developed in the succeeding chapter, where I compare Woolf’s and Colomb’s works.

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126 Fr. ‘[A]pparaît à chaque seconde telle qu’elle est, qu’elle fut et qu’elle sera.’

# III. The Aesthetics of time & The Poetics of perception in Colomb: in dialogue with Woolf

## 3.1 Introduction

According to Virginia Woolf, the traditional plot-based structure of a novel could not reflect 'life'. Rather than constructing the novel architecture by 'a series of gig lamps symmetrically arranged', (Woolf 1984 (1925): 150) she sought to propose a form of writing which mirrors better what she called the 'uncircumscribed spirit', (*ibid.*) i.e., unpolished, unsophisticated principles of life.<sup>127</sup> The study reveals how Catherine Colomb and Woolf experiment with both narrative structure and representations of time rather than adopting the plot structure of a novel developed following the linear time principles. We will see that some of Colomb's and Woolf's novels, namely, *CE*, *ET*, *MD*, and *TL*, do not carry the readers through a sequence of events leading up to a climax as in a classical novel. For a study of Colomb's and Woolf's forms of writing, this chapter explores the intersections between the themes of time and perception and the formal experiments in their works. It sheds light on the insight into time generated primarily by the formal devices to interpret Colomb's and Woolf's representations of time as an aesthetic achievement.

For this chapter, I have not changed the subject of study, other than to throw greater light on the centrality of such elements as consciousness, point-of-view narration, and spatially ordered narrative in Colomb's and Woolf's representations of time. This chapter provides original, new reading of Colomb's two novels *CE* and *ET* in light of Woolf's *TL* and *MD*. One may wonder why we have chosen to study these novels and what motivates us to bring them together. In response we suggest that these novels by Colomb and Woolf have in common the elements, such as shifts in point of view representation and explorations of time, which we dwell at considerable length in this chapter. In all these novels we find explorations of multiple points of view in conjunction with Colomb's and

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127 Virginia Woolf's essay 'Modern Fiction' was first published as 'Modern Novels' in The Times Literary Supplement in 1919 and as 'Modern Fiction' in *The Common Reader* (1925). Catherine Colomb read 'Modern Fiction' in 1927, i.e., earlier than her own novels were published, as we learn from her 1927 letter to Lady Ottoline Morrell (see Introduction of this thesis).

Woolf's experiments with time and temporality. In *TL* and *MD*, Woolf conveys the reality of time including, but not limited to epiphany of memory, 'moments of being' (see 'A Sketch of the Past'), i.e., wakeful moments in which the individuals such as Mrs. Ramsay and Mrs. Dalloway have an awareness of reality and existence, and the 'moments of non-being,' (*ibid.*) of reverie, as we see, for instance, Clarissa and Septimus in the midst of the traffic. *MD* has become synonymous of textual representation of a dialectic between the outer reality and the subjective consciousness.<sup>128</sup> When navigating between the interiority and the exterior world, this novel involves and articulates the experiences with time. *TL* has also long been known for taking time and consciousness as its key themes.<sup>129</sup> Woolf's method admits to 'multipersonal' representation of consciousness, in *TL* as opposed to 'unipersonal subjective method,' as Auerbach explains in his essay. (1974 (1946): 536) Like Virginia Woolf, Catherine Colomb represents time and consciousness. As a comparative study of Proust and Colomb in the previous chapter made explicit, the memory processes—the essences of consciousness offerings—are at the forefront in *CE* and *ET*. Yet, while Woolf develops the meaning of time by recording the character's train of thought, Colomb pronounces less the processes of different minds. We will see that her experiments with time and temporality have less to do with reproduction of what goes on in the characters' consciousness. Yet, *CE* and *ET*, just as *MD* and *TL*, explore the complex relations, connection and separation between past and present and the ways in which the present becomes the past and the past becomes the present. They tell us 'tales about time' (Mendilow, quoted in Ricoeur 1985 (1984): 101) in their explorations of the complexity of memory.<sup>130</sup> Given our focus on the

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128 Jean Guiguet (1965) suggests that *MD* is Woolf's Proustian novel; David Dowling (1981) offers a close reading of Woolf's characters, themes with a particular focus on Woolf's 'stream of consciousness' style; Makiko Minow-Pinkney (1987) qualifies the narratorial voice as the most interesting element in *MD*; James Naremore (1973) pays attention to the technical details.

129 The earlier critical works studied narrative point of view and characters' breaking into each other's stream of thought (Auerbach (1946)), and the 'multiple point of view' in *TL* (Leaska (1970)). These questions have gained new meaning in recent Woolf studies by Banfield. (See 3.2. Current state of research).

130 Ricoeur refers to Mendilow's distinction between 'tales of time' and 'tales about time'. While the first designates all fictional narratives, the second refers to those few where the 'the very experience of time [...] is at stake in th[e] structural transformations'; see Ricoeur (1985 (1984): 101) Remarkably, Ricoeur uses Woolf's *MD* and Proust's *La Recherche* as rare and brilliant examples of 'tales about time' in his analysis. (*Ibid.*, 61–99)



aesthetics of time and consciousness, this chapter shows the similarities and differences in Colomb's and Woolf's practices of conveying the reality of time in a novel. It compares their thinking of time as it is revealed from their search for new narrative forms. Therefore, they will work as important sources for studying Colomb's and Woolf's investigations into time.

This is the first substantial contribution to the comparative study of Catherine Colomb's and Virginia Woolf's work as well as to Colomb studies in general. The thesis shows that Catherine Colomb's *œuvre* dialogues both with the French and the English literary cultures. Colomb was a friend of Lady Ottoline Morrell, a Bloomsbury hostess and a major figure in British literary circle. Through her she came to know several intellectuals and writers who made up the Bloomsbury group, including Bertrand Russell, Lytton Strachey, Václav Nijinsky and Lloyd George. (Seylaz 1972: 173) Despite the mutual friend Ottoline Morrell, Catherine Colomb had not met Virginia Woolf. However, Colomb's letters to Morrell record that she read a few essays by Woolf including *The Common Reader* and *AROO* (1929) in the 1930s (see Introduction). Even if Colomb herself was not a member of the Bloomsbury group, my thesis will reveal that her *œuvre* signals previously unrecognized relations between Colomb and English modernism: how it embodies modernist aesthetics and philosophy. Reading Colomb and Woolf together undoubtedly adds to our knowledge about each of them separately. Colomb's emotional responses to claims about Woolf's influence on her work are informed by indifference and lack of appreciation coming from her contemporary critics for her experimentalism. She was almost offended by the opinions received from those who measured her novel against Woolf's originality and aesthetics.<sup>131</sup> These opinions and literary clichés are still lasting. Whereas our comparative study draws a distinction between Colomb's and Woolf's practices of conveying the reality of time in a novel. Even though Colomb's work has much in common with some of Woolf's novels, we will see that their projects are markedly

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131 'On a naturellement toujours dit que j'avais été influencée, que j'ai beaucoup lu Virginia Woolf. Je ne l'ai jamais lue, jamais lu aucun de ses romans. Je n'ai lu qu'une conférence qui s'appelle *A Room of One's Own*. Et maintenant je lis naturellement un *Journal intime* de Virginia Woolf, mais j'avais fini d'écrire mon livre. Je ne sais pas pourquoi on me donne toujours cette Virginia Woolf comme si j'avais subi son influence. Je ne crois pas que ça soit vrai'. (I.) | 'They say that I am influenced by Virginia Woolf. I've never read any of her novels. I have only read her lecture called *A Room of One's Own*. And now I am reading *The Diary of Virginia Woolf*, of course. Yet, I have finished writing my book. I do not know why I am constantly reminded of Virginia Woolf as if she has influenced me. I don't think so.'

different. In my reading of Woolf and Colomb, I compare Colomb's delicate reworking of spontaneous writing based on memory, which results in a 'stream' of interruptions, to Woolf's 'stream'—connections between single or multiple characters' impressions, past and present, the interiority and the exterior world for the study of concept of time. In the following pages, I attempt to uncover that there is no Woolfian 'stream of consciousness' in Colomb's novels even if they contain both 'stream' and 'consciousness'. Colomb's novels, like Woolf's, we will see, are not confined to a single consciousness. They consist of multiple streams, which give us a multifaceted perspective. Yet, transition from one mind to another is smooth in Woolf, which is not the case for Colomb. Sudden, unexpected shifts in point of view constantly interrupt and delay the movement of narrative in Colomb. As a result, Colomb's experimentalism in point of view is less accessible to a general audience than that of Woolf, because Colomb's reader cannot always identify with several points of view as this chapter reflects.

The hypothesis that there is no uninterrupted thread of thought—a 'stream of consciousness'—in Colomb as in Woolf's major novels leads me: (1) to explore those narrative techniques that interrupt a story flow and make consciousness cut up in bits in *CE* and *ET*; and (2) to explain how Colomb's formal experiments for representing time and consciousness, and the effects of these experiments correlate with and differ from Woolf's modernist aesthetics. The study of all these elements enables us to discover temporal ordering and its violations within Colomb's and Woolf's texts. Furthermore, they help us define what particular narrative effects are achieved *via* their aesthetic strategies. Below I study the elements of discontinuity within the narrative of *CE* and *ET* while using Woolf's writings as points of comparison and contrast. The following aspects are discussed to show how the narrative progression is halted in Colomb's novels:

1. Blurring temporalities, characters and objects.
2. Making images appear, vanish, and re-appear, resulting in the narrative constituted by a continuous chain of interruptions.
3. Peculiar transitions or absence of transitions between stories.
4. Mingling different characters' discourses.
5. Simultaneous introduction of multiple time frames.
6. Colomb's leitmotif & Woolf's 'moment'.<sup>132</sup>

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132 The first three questions are studied in 3.4 Interrupted consciousness vs. consciousness as a stream. See also 3.6 The '*roman poétique*' by Catherine Colomb. The 4<sup>th</sup> question is analysed 3.5 The aesthetics of enunciation. The section 3.7 Simultaneity

I proceed with the review of the current state of research and definition of the term ‘stream of consciousness’ prior to exploring the Colombian ‘stream’ and ‘consciousness’ – the alternatives to the Woolfian ‘stream of consciousness’.

### 3.2 Current state of research

Consciousness representation, point-of-view narration, privileging a spatial form for telling a story, and using ‘the leitmotif’, and ‘the moment’ as structuring elements—all adding to the meaning of time in Colomb, as in Woolf’s fiction—are what constitute our specific concern in this chapter. In relation to Virginia Woolf’s fiction, explorations of the nature of time and consciousness, and formal experiments in narrative structure, and narrative point of view have always been understood as central. In the following pages, I review the current state of research in the literary representations of time and subjectivity. In exploring contemporary critical and theoretical concerns, we point mainly to the scholarly works about Woolf, because the studies of Colomb reveal much less. We are indebted to critics of Colomb for noticing the exceptional qualities of her novels that have much to do with the expression of time (see 1.2 Review of studies on narrative and time in Colomb). But we continue thinking of her alone, in isolation from the literature of her time. How then might a new perspective on time be developed, recognized and explored in her fiction otherwise than by also directing our gaze towards those novels that represent time? If I read Catherine Colomb along with Virginia Woolf in this chapter, this is to shed light on the originality of her thought and style in the context of 20<sup>th</sup> century European *mainstream* literature, on the one hand, and add to the knowledge about representation of time in a novel, on the other hand. Reading Colomb along with Woolf not only (re)formulates Colomb’s thought and style against wider literary geographies, but it also sheds light both on similarities and differences in their conception and representation of time.

In recent studies, Woolf scholars mainly reflect on her intellectual ideas and conception of time in a broader sense than feminist and Marxist readings and re-readings of Woolf’s texts have sought to elucidate from as early as the 1930s to the 1980s. After the rediscovery of Woolf as feminist in the 1970s,<sup>133</sup> Woolf’s

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of multiple time frames studies the 5<sup>th</sup> question and the final topic is discussed in 3.8 A story within Colomb’s leitmotif & Woolf’s ‘moment’.

133 Such as by Michèle Barrett (1979) who introduces the ‘feminist’ Virginia Woolf or Elaine Showalter (1978) who calls attention to the role Woolf played in the development of feminist criticism.

feminist perceptions and activism have been placed in her contemporary historical context by Alex Zwerdling in his 1986 book *Virginia Woolf and the Real World*. If, in the 1980s, feminist readers relate the novelist's name to the discovery of the female 'voice' in fiction,<sup>134</sup> today Woolf's experimentations in temporality are not only understood as a response to the issues related to gender, but also to developments in technology, psychology, philosophy, and to important changes in her contemporary history. Certainly, gender remains an important question in current critical debates on Woolf. But there is a growing interest in a range of other intellectual issues too, namely science, technology, psychoanalysis, in particular, that critics search to understand from Woolf's fiction and non-fiction. Often departing from the question of gender, they reflect on the longer list of Woolf's concerns as a writer. Hermione Lee points at the transformation of 'the conversation Virginia Woolf has been having with her readers for nearly a hundred years.' (Lee 2000: 91) Laura Marcus (2004) reads Woolf's fiction in light of her non-fiction such as short stories, essays and autobiographical writings in her account of issues ranging from gender and identity to time, history, and narrative, while also including modernism and the city.

Woolf has often been thought as attentive, in her studies by contemporary scholars, to the new scientific theories of time and space to explore the complex workings of memory. The studies focus on Woolf's formal discoveries, which, for Michael Whitworth, are in line with the perspectives of modernism with respect to questions of time, place, subjectivity, and character. (2000: 146–163) There is ongoing interest towards representations of these elements in *MD* and *TL*. The former, with its formal techniques, representation of time, and synthetic exploration of inner lives, is qualified as a modern novel by Susan Dick. She estimates that *MD* challenges the whole idea of representational realism, while also showing how the latter is realized at its best in *TL*, where time is brought into play as a character itself. (2000: 50–71)

Today Woolf's conception of time is more often called 'Russelian' and 'Jamesian' rather than 'Bergsonian'. Early critics read Woolf's fiction through Bergson's conception of the temporal fluidity of consciousness. Contemporary critics disagree with the idea that Woolf was influenced by the philosophical current proposed by Bergson. Instead, Jeff Wallace holds that 'Woolf updates [Henry] James's impressionistic insistence on "catching... the strange irregular rhythm of life"'. (2007: 19) Likewise, Peter Brooker (2007: 32–47) suggests

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134 For instance, Virginia Blain (1983) insists that Woolf has always sought, even in her early writings, to express herself as a woman. (quoted in Raitt (2000: 30))

that Woolf adopts Henry James's vision when representing everyday life experience as 'a kind of huge spider web of the finest silken threads suspended in the chamber of consciousness.' (James 1968: 85) Woolf's thinking of the reality of time has been influenced by Russell's and Moore's formulation of the theory of knowledge, Banfield suggests.<sup>135</sup> As a consequence, Woolf proposes 'a dualist temporality', i.e., time conceptualized both as 'duration' and as a series of divisible moments in the novel. (Banfield 2007: 48–64) In this respect, Banfield holds that Woolf did not adopt Henri Bergson's vision of time as '*durée*' [Eng. 'duration'], where time is lived as a series of flowing moments in a linear sequence, rather Moore's and Russell's realism in interconnecting moments in the spatial order as on the 'Impressionist canvas.' (2003: 471–516) *TL*, just as *MD*, is 'the post-impressionist novel', for Andrew McNeillie as well. (2000: 18) With its multiple points of view, *TL* reminds him of Cézanne's aesthetic achievement: the synthesis of multiple perspectives in his paintings. (*Ibid.*, 19) Like Banfield, McNeillie provides an account of the Bloomsbury philosophy and aesthetics—influenced by Plato, Kant, and G.E. Moore with his *Principia Ethica* (1903)—as much as it concerns Woolf, while adding that Woolf was also curious about the Hellenistic tradition, Renaissance literature, works of the Russians (Dostoevsky, Chekhov), and of her contemporary Joyce. The question of influence of G.E. Moore's ideas about ethics, such as his definition of 'good', the principle of unity—well shared by 'Bloomsbury'—on Woolf's style is discussed in Sue Roe's article. (2000: 164–190) Roe searches to measure the extent to which Woolf, to give a vision of immediacy, coloured, assembled, connected images and impressions in fiction like the post-impressionist painters. Such a vision is called the aesthetics of 'the moment' in our chapter. Drawing our attention to Woolf's 'moment', we grasp hold of similar treatment of time and narrative in Colomb.

It follows that there are two trends in recent and contemporary readings of Woolf. Some critics are curious about Woolf's as a thinker's negotiations with the cultural climate of her age, while others draw attention to Woolf's thought through the analysis of formal properties of her novels. Combining these different practices in Woolf's reading, this and following chapters search to elucidate how Colomb's and Woolf's negotiations with the age (such as developments in philosophy and psychology) manifest themselves through the issues internal to their novels. This chapter focuses on Colomb's and Woolf's vision of time as it is worked out in the formal properties of their novels. Even such issues as gender and autobiographical elements in Colomb's and Woolf's fiction are studied as

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135 See Banfield (2000), (2000: 43–75), (2003: 471–516).

far as they are embodied in the formal properties: the structuring elements of Colomb's 'leitmotif' and Woolf's 'moment', shifting point of view and interrupted streams of consciousness.

Current critical and theoretical concerns colour my reading of Woolf and Colomb as I compare the Woolfian 'moment' to the Colombian 'leitmotif'. The significance of 'the moment' in Woolf's conception of time is a subject of several recent and contemporary Woolf studies. Laura Marcus, in her analysis of Woolf's diary entries, explains how Woolf shared the fascination of other modernist writers in recording the experiences of 'present time', of 'the privileged moment' (2004: 26) by 'saturat[ing] every atom' in order 'to eliminate all waste, deadness, superfluity: to give the moment whole'. (*Diary 3*: 209–210) Teresa Prudente (2009) uncovers the links between Woolf's perception of time and the act of writing. She explores, on the one hand, 'moments of being' stimulating a process of creation, and on the other hand, 'the creative transformation which fixes the experienced moment in a work of art'. (209: 10) Ann Banfield links a 'unit of experienced time', i.e., the Woolfian 'moment' to a literary impressionism (2003) and to Cambridge Philosophy in *The Phantom Table* (2000) and 'Tragic Time: The Problem of the Future in Cambridge Philosophy and *To the Lighthouse*' (2000). When offering a wide-ranging reading of Woolf's notion of the moment, she suggests that the Woolfian 'moment' is 'not simply equivalent to the present'. (*The Phantom Table* (2000: 118)) It is 'either earlier, later or simultaneous with other moments'. (*Ibid.*, 119) On Banfield's account, 'time remains suspended' (*Idem.*, 118) within the moment. Also, 'within', Woolf's moment is opposed to temporal 'existence' and thus, should be understood as a timeless presence. (*Idem.*, 117–118) My focus in this chapter is not only on the content of Woolf's 'moment', such as the smallest movements of thought, sensation and everyday life experiences that it conveys, but also on its structural properties and on the temporal complexities that result from the narrative development around 'the moment'. This way we may comprehend the significance of 'the moment' in Woolf and 'the leitmotif' in Colomb in the processes of creation. Banfield's well-known book *The Phantom Table* further studies Woolf's adoption of the Cambridge Apostles' philosophical principles in her aesthetics, namely of Russell, of Moore, and a few more male members of Bloomsbury. Consulting Banfield's definitions of the contours of Cambridge philosophy as Woolf understood it, will help us draw our attention to how Russell's theories reflect on Woolf's composition of 'moment' in *TL*. Russell formulates the idea of constructing the whole out of fragments in *The Problems of Philosophy*, Banfield explains. (Russell (1912: 20–21), quoted in Banfield (2000: 97–98)) Our study also focuses on Woolf's and Colomb's strategies of constructing the whole out of

the separated fragments. We think of 'the moment' and 'the leitmotif', which turn fragments into the ordered work of art, as an analogy of the domestic gesture of knitting and embroidery, representing feminine art. Remarkably, reflections about embroidery as writing are voiced in the articles of Schlossman (2006), Cossy (2019), Dupuis (2017) and in Christen's (2010) master paper. Christen considers embroidery to be a narrative technique, while Cossy and Schlossman interpret it as a synonym of writing. Yet, there is no systematic critical study of how Colomb's formal strategies mimic the process of embroidery. Just as the Woolfian 'moment' and the Colombian 'leitmotif', representation of consciousness in their novels can be taken as central icons for the narrative structure and thematic significance of *CE*, *ET*, *MD*, and *TL*. Our analysis of 'the moment' and 'the leitmotif', 'stream-of-consciousness' and 'stream-of-interruptions', and point-of-view narration explains how Colomb and Woolf challenge 'shredding and slicing, dividing and subdividing' (*MD*: 151) nature of time by questioning and finding shape to complex relationships between past and present, self and other, inner and outer.

Our focus on the innovations in the representation of time in this chapter is interrelated with the study of Woolf's and Colomb's complex thinking of consciousness, development of narrative structure and point-of-view narration. Banfield shows what consequences the representation of different conceptions of time may have on narrative structure and representation of subjectivity in Woolf's novels. (2007: 48–64) More specifically, she studies 'dualism of time and tense' in Woolf's representation of third person subjectivity. Other critics of Woolf, such as Paul K. Saint-Amour (2016: 79–94), place further emphasis on shifting points and the transition from the narrative present to the past memories in *MD*.

When discovering the works of contemporary critics about the complexity of narrative point of view and time in Woolf, we should not overlook the fact that these features were noticed much earlier. Questions about Woolf's method of organizing a story have been discussed by Woolf's earlier commentators, most remarkably, by Erich Auerbach (1946) and Mitchell Leaska (1970). Their reading of *TL* allows us to see, rather implicitly, that Woolf builds the structure of her novel around 'moments'. Leaska offers a reinterpretation of Auerbach's insight for the study of Woolf's 'multiple-point-of-view novel'. He conducts stylistic analysis of the novel by investigating narrative voices and shifts in angle of narration. Even if Leaska slightly belittles the role of narrator(s), his stylistic analysis relies on the statement that there are participating and observing narrators and even the omniscient narrator in *TL*. After Banfield's literary theory and more recently,

Sylvie Patron's comprehensive accounts on the 'death of the narrator',<sup>136</sup> affecting our understanding of Woolf's art, more exactly, leading us to estimate that there is no narrator in *TL*, the methodology that Leaska adopts in his analysis of *TL* seems quite dated. Leaska argues that 'the intellectual and moral and emotional qualities of the narrator, in the last analysis, will be more important in molding a reader's experience and judgement than the person of the voice', (1970: 41) while according to Banfield (1982), no narrator intervenes in the novel.

Relying on the non-communicational theories,<sup>137</sup> this chapter proposes that Colomb's and Woolf's narratives shift away from discursiveness to the non-discursive and the non-communicative patterns, as did many modernist narratives in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Just as Woolf's early critics, Catherine Colomb's readers in the 1970s and 1980s thought that there is a narrator in her novels. For instance, J.-F. Tappy holds that 'the narrator tells the story' in *ET*.<sup>138</sup> (1979: 77) Substitution of a linear sequence by the spatial form, discussed in this chapter, also adds to Colomb's modernist experiments. Philippe Geinoz (2019) studies how Colomb spells out a critique of photography in *CE*. His commentaries lead us to think that the ancestors' portraits kept in Madame Angenaisaz's album signifies lineage, a sequence of genealogies, rather than art. The inability to reach an essential character of an ancestor through a photograph and obtain any relevant traits beneath social elements are consistently articulated in Colomb. Photography is shown less efficient as a method in depicting character. A linear sequence needs to be broken to come close to the terms of art. These terms include consciousness representation, point-of-view narration and adoption of a spatial form for representing time as we learn from the following pages.

### 3.3 'Stream of consciousness' – definition of concept

The term 'stream of consciousness' originated in psychological works of William James (1980 (1950) I: 239) and Henri Bergson (1889),<sup>139</sup> at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup>

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136 See Patron (2018), (2015), (2009), (2011).

137 The non-communicational theories proposed by Banfield and Kuroda are developed by the linguistic analysis of French, English (Banfield) and Japanese fictional texts (Kuroda) contrary to the communicational theory of narrative which is not based on the linguistic analysis; see Patron (2015: 11–12).

138 Fr. 'La narratrice mène le récit'.

139 Shiv Kumar Kumar (1962) interprets Bergson's theory of 'durational flux' (1889) as what can be represented by the stream of consciousness medium.



century and was applied to literary texts by May Sinclair in 1918.<sup>140</sup> In a literary context, 'stream of consciousness' is defined either as a subject matter or the method devised to reveal thought processes. Some define Virginia Woolf's subjective narrative strategy using the term 'stream of consciousness', while others hold that she never wrote 'stream of consciousness' fiction. In *The World Without a Self. Virginia Woolf and the Novel*, James Naremore maintains that the term 'stream of consciousness' is not precise for defining Woolf's treatment of her characters' inner lives especially when there is no critical accord about what a 'stream-of-consciousness' method means. (1973: 60) Naremore shows the disparity between definitions of the terms 'stream of consciousness' and 'interior monologue' proposed by Robert Humphrey, Lawrence Bowling, Erwin Steinberg, Edouard Dujardin, among many, in relation to Woolf's and Joyce's fiction. However, despite some obvious disagreement on some points, the definitions of 'stream of consciousness' supplied by Bowling and Humphrey, conform best, for Naremore, to qualities of Woolf's work.

Bowling limits his definition of 'stream of consciousness' to the combination of interior monologue and pre-speech area of consciousness; whereas Humphrey introduces a broader description of the term, suggesting that several methods represent 'stream of consciousness'. 'The verbal area of the mind' represents interior monologue for Bowling, while images and sense data articulate the pre-speech area of consciousness. The combination of verbal elements and sensory impressions produces a 'stream of consciousness'. (Bowling (1950), quoted in Naremore (1973: 60–1)). For Humphrey 'stream of consciousness' is more a subject matter than a method. 'Stream of consciousness' differs from other literary texts with a psychological content including *La Recherche* (1913–1927). Humphrey makes a distinction between the terms 'consciousness', and 'memory' or 'intelligence'. (1951, 30: 435) According to him, *memory* and *intelligence* 'denote more limited mental activities.' (*Ibid.*) While many discuss *La Recherche* as one of those first novels using the 'stream of consciousness' technique, Humphrey insists that Proust 'is concerned only with the reminiscent aspect of consciousness', which means that he 'was deliberately recapturing the past for the purpose of communicating; hence he did not write a stream-of-consciousness novel. (Humphrey 1954: 4) Hereby, in contrast to the novels which use 'memory' as a method of composition, the stream of consciousness fiction is not only concerned with rationally ordered verbal communication,

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140 May Sinclair used the term 'stream of consciousness' in her review of Dorothy Richardson's novels; see Sinclair (1918: 57).

but also with other degrees of awareness. It may have a 'pre-speech' degree of consciousness as its subject matter. (Humphrey 1951: 436) Humphrey explains that the 'pre-speech levels of consciousness are not characterized by being censored, rationally controlled, or logically ordered.' (*Ibid.*) Thus, they are levels of consciousness that precede rational verbalization. On these grounds, Humphrey defines 'Consciousness' as 'the whole area of mental processes, including especially the pre-speech levels.' (*Idem.*) There are two levels of abstraction that the 'stream-of-consciousness' technique is concerned with, namely: (1) 'the ordinary object manufactured from the event by our lower nervous system,' and (2) 'the psychological centres.' (Korzybski 1948: 179) We will see that these are also the two levels of consciousness that Colomb uses and are exemplified by her presentation of means of perception.

Colomb's and Woolf's works conform to the definition of 'stream of consciousness' by Humphrey and Bowling. In spite of some disaccord between Humphrey and Bowling about what 'stream of consciousness' means, both suggest that all stream-of-consciousness writers quote mind and in doing so use free association and discontinuity as do Colomb and Woolf. Besides, Humphrey's and Bowling's definitions of 'consciousness' correspond to what Virginia Woolf defines as 'life' in the essay entitled 'Modern Fiction.' (1984 (1925): 150) If Humphrey and Bowling identify the pre-speech area of consciousness as an important ingredient of 'stream of consciousness' fiction, Woolf considers that the consciousness may include various levels of awareness which are not 'symmetrically arranged.' (*Ibid.*) 'Moment' and 'stream' discussed in this chapter may be thought as forms which represent reality as 'luminous' and enveloping whole. (*Idem.*) Using 'moment' and 'stream' as structural components, Woolf nets elusive reality of time into the ordered piece of artwork. She tries to find new forms and language for character presentation and question relationships between inner and outer, surfaces and depths.

Modern critics would no longer agree with Humphrey and Bowling on several points. Bowling calls interior monologue 'internal analysis: where "the author" stands as an interpreter between us and the character's mind and gives us his interpretation of what the character thinks.' (Bowling 1950: 343) As for Humphrey, he includes omniscient treatment in 'stream of consciousness' techniques. Contemporary critics maintain that 'the representation of consciousness and the complex "shifting of point of view" [is] possible only in narrative style, with the concomitant withdrawal of the author as a voice in the text.' (Banfield 1982: 10) As a result, 'in narrative, subjectivity or the expressive function of language emerges free of communication.' (*Ibid.*) Banfield uses 'point of view' as literary evidence and applies linguistic methods to her analysis of narrative style. With

respect to Banfield's and Kuroda's poetic or non-communicational theory of narrative, 'the author' or 'the narrator' cannot stand as a mediator between us and the character's mind. (Patron 2015: 11–2)

Contrary to those who call Virginia Woolf a stream-of-consciousness writer or a writer of interior monologue, contemporary critics define Woolf's style (in *MD* and *TL*) as the one known in French as '*le style indirect libre*' and in English as 'represented speech and thought'.<sup>141</sup> 'To show or represent character's thoughts, the natural mode is represented speech and thought'. (Banfield 1982: 69) Like Banfield, Barbara Hardy attributes Woolf's presenting of characters' consciousness in *MD* to the use of *style indirect libre*. With this technique Woolf 'tears her characters out of their affective privacy, showing how passion is checked and qualified, as it gathers momentum and material from external sensations and events.' (Hardy 1982: 206) Contemporary definitions, however, do not imply that Woolf never wrote 'stream-of-consciousness' fiction as opposed to the ones proposed by Woolf's earlier critics.<sup>142</sup> Some early commentators, such as William Troy, when explaining the difference between Woolf's and Joyce's methods of representing consciousness, even maintain that Woolf's method of character presentation is not as 'direct as that of Joyce or his followers'. (Troy 1937: 35) Consequently, 'presentation of character by Mrs. Woolf gets down finally to a problem of style, to the most beautiful arrangement of beautiful words and phrases' as she attempts 'to net the world of time and change with a phrase, to retrieve the chaos with words.' (*Ibid.*) Anne Fernihough explains that Woolf dislikes the 'stream-of-consciousness' technique of James Joyce and Dorothy Richardson for their tracking of the undifferentiated, unconstrained train of thoughts and sensations. Unlike Richardson and Joyce, Woolf explores 'multiple streams of consciousness rather than a single one'. (Fernihough 2007: 77) Woolf's techniques themselves for representing the characters' psyches differ from novel to novel. For instance, the characters' minds are reached by using different techniques in *The Waves* and *MD*. In *MD* the characters' perceptions of the inner consciousness and the outside world are strictly separated while they are interwoven in

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141 Banfield borrows the term from Jespersen ('represented speech'). Jespersen justifies the use of this term as follows: 'The writer does not experience or "live" (erleben) these thoughts or speeches, but represents them to us'. (Jespersen (1924: 291–292), quoted in Banfield (1982: 278))

142 Naremore suggests that it is misleading to think of Virginia Woolf as a 'stream of consciousness' writer, because Woolf 'opposed to any detailed or extended literary excursion into consciousness'. (1973: 63) Earlier, Hafley (1954) also maintained that Woolf did not write 'stream of consciousness' fiction.

*The Waves*. To represent the physical world, the latter blends what Woolf herself called 'soliloquies', i.e. the parts in which six characters' (Bernard's, Jinny's Neville's Rhoda's, Susan's and Louis') points of view are presented. Multiple streams in *MD* are defined as 'represented speech and thought' by Banfield. She explains:

It is primarily as a mode of representing consciousness that this style ['represented speech and thought'] has been exploited by novelists. This style captures something about the nature of consciousness which cannot be represented either by casting it into a form with a new referent of the first person or by paraphrasing it in a propositional form. It articulates the movements of the mind, the 'stream of consciousness', in a way which avoids suggesting that the processes of reflection occur as inner speech or that consciousness can be reduced to the logical content of any propositions it contains. (Banfield (1982:138))

Hence, 'stream of consciousness' may be projected via 'represented speech and thought' for Banfield. This style allows representing consciousness in fiction.

Moreover, contemporary critics think that consciousness in Woolf presents itself as the Jamesian 'stream' rather than as the Bergsonian 'snowball'. Banfield holds that the dualism of time and tense, of public and private or objective and subjective time built in Woolf's novel structure goes against Bergson's conception of time. For, to Bergson time is only experienced as 'duration,' indivisible in discrete moments, as opposed to the time measured by clocks that Woolf represents in *MD*. (Banfield 2007: 48–64) Rather, the stream-of-consciousness in Woolf corresponds to the one proposed in William James, as Anne Fernihough suggests. She discovers echoes of William James in Woolf's use of the term 'halo,' reminding that James defined consciousness using the same term to point at an indivisible quality of consciousness. (Fernihough 2007: 65–81)

Before studying Woolf's and Colomb's techniques for representing consciousness, a distinction needs to be made between the uses of the term 'stream of consciousness' in literature and psychology. In *the Principles of Psychology* William James stated that 'Consciousness [...] does not appear to itself chopped up in bits'. (James 1950 (1890), I: 239) He added that 'a "river" or "stream" are the metaphors by which it is more naturally described'. (*Ibid.*) James' definition primarily applies to psychologists' understanding of consciousness according to which the flow of consciousness does not interrupt. In literary contexts, the term is reserved to point at a 'psychological quality of a novel'. (Humphrey 1951: 435) As for the term 'stream,' it may figuratively describe the writing process of the modern text. According to Dowling, '[t]he stream is never simply a stream: it picks up and deposits material along its banks and sometimes carves new channels. (1991: 47) Thus, figuratively, making a 'stream' conveys the idea

of composition, of constructing sentences by fusing verbal and visual material. In this respect, a 'stream' is not a continuous, unstoppable chain of thought. Its nature and mechanism correspond to the uninterrupted flow of the narrative as well as the narrative, which is delayed, broken (like a river) into different branches or altering its direction by adding in verbal or visual material.

### 3.4 Interrupted consciousness vs. consciousness as a stream

In the essay 'Modern Fiction' (1919), Woolf explains: 'The mind receives a myriad impressions – trivial, fantastic, evanescent, or engraved with the sharpness of steel'. (1988 (1919): 160) This statement in a way explains Woolf's 'stream-of-consciousness' technique and precedes her exploration of human consciousness. Six years later Woolf captured 'the mind receiv[ing] a myriad impressions' in *MD*. In Jamesian terms, a mental state in which the consciousness receives sense data is 'mind-wandering'. (1950 (1890), I: 417, 447) The term 'mind-wondering' is particularly relevant to describe Woolf's narrative technique in *MD*. What James calls 'mind-wandering', Woolf phrases 'tunnelling process, by which [she told] the past by instalments'. (*Diary 2*: 272)<sup>143</sup> Through Woolf's technique of 'tunnelling', the readers of *MD* simultaneously learn about the characters' present and past experiences. Having a privileged insight into the characters' minds, the readers can rapidly travel in time, drifting from the fictive present towards the remembered past. They move forwards and backwards in time as they follow the characters' thoughts, who, in their turn, apprehend the present in retrospect with their memories.

In coherence with her theory about the working of the mind, Woolf avoids conveying time in its linear sequence. In *MD*, Woolf constructs the structure of the one-day novel. The characters' recollections of some incidents in their past run parallel to their present life. As they walk in the streets of London, Woolf's characters find their minds wandering back and forth in time. They wander both physically and mentally. Memories and predictions compete with current observations and experiences, resulting in shifts in time. As Clarissa Dalloway walks in the streets of London on a summer day in 1923 to buy 'the flowers herself' (*MD*: 5) for a party she intends to give in the evening, she compares her past at Bourton to her imperfect life at present: the identity crisis she has fallen into for marrying Richard Dalloway, and the tension and anxiety she is

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143 Woolf wrote: 'It took me a year's groping to discover what I call a tunnelling process, by which I tell the past by instalments' (*Diary 2*: 272).

experiencing in her relationship with her daughter Elizabeth. What Clarissa hears in the streets trigger a memory of her youth at Bourton. The sound of the window opening—‘a little squeak of the hinges, which she could hear now’ (*MD*: 5)—is reminiscent of how she ‘had burst open the French windows’ (*Ibid.*) when she was 18 years old. This sound ‘plunge(s her) at Bourton’ (*Idem.*) thirty years before. It is a reminder of her youth, of the time when she was in love with Peter Walsh and of their painful separation followed by her marriage to Richard Dalloway. Apprehending reality *via* the character’s mind makes the reader travel constantly back and forth in time. Different temporal experiences (Clarissa at Bourton at the age of 18 and in London in her fifties) become like a single experience, like one moment. There is also Peter Walsh returning from India likewise walking in the streets of London and remembering his talks and experiences with Clarissa at Bourton. The traumatic experiences of World War I veteran Septimus Smith are also told as he spends the day with his wife Rezia Smith in Regent’s Park. Septimus is haunted by hallucinations of his friend Evans and cannot recover from the shock of the war on the same day as Peter Walsh and Clarissa Dalloway walk in the streets of London and recall their past. Immersion into various characters’ streams of consciousness leads to the disruption of linear sequence. Shifts of time and perspective result from Woolf’s inter-twisting of stories of several characters.

Besides, as Woolf charts individual consciousness, the flow of thought is sometimes broken by what the characters see or hear in the city streets. When Clarissa walks to the florist in Bond street, she comes across her old friend Hugh Whitbread unexpectedly. The meeting interrupts her interior monologue: memories of Peter Walsh and her past. Her thread of thought is also broken by the sound of the traffic or the sight of gloves, hats, pearls, salmon, and flowers in the shops of Bond Street.

The phenomenon of time is further made complex by moving from the clock time to the characters’ minds in *MD*. For the clocks and minds do not measure time on the same scale. In the scene when Peter Walsh makes an unexpected visit to Clarissa, it is eleven o’clock or at least it is told so. For, at ‘hearing a step on the stairs’, Clarissa ‘think[s] it [is] outrageous to be interrupted at eleven o’clock on the morning of the day she was giving a party.’ (*MD*: 59) The meeting is interrupted by the Big Ben strike at eleven-thirty. This scene does not take so much place in Clarissa’s and Peter’s conversation as in their minds. Whereas their meeting lasts for no longer than half an hour and the reader does not hear long dialogues, their mental voyaging fills the pages.

Yet, walking in the city of London only slightly disturbs and fragments the character’s thread of thought. What Clarissa hears in the city streets not only

fragments her stream of thought, but it also provokes reminiscences and ruminations. The story runs smoothly in *MD*, without breaking a lot the rules of 'grammar or logic', as does the stream-of-consciousness technique in general. (Baldick 2009: 212) Despite multiple shifts of time and perspective, the transitions between scenes and characters' streams are smooth. The main storyline unfolds over the course of one day. It means that the temporal frames of the novel are spelled out. Not all the events develop within one day in *MD*. However, the timeframe to report them is more or less well defined. Clarissa, Peter, Richard, and Sally Seton are mostly presented in two moments: a day in June 1923 and sometime in the 1890s. As they walk in the streets of London, both Peter and Clarissa recall one summer day in Bourton about thirty years before. The events which develop within a day are also told in a chronological order. In the beginning, Clarissa Dalloway decides to buy the flowers for the party. The novel ends with the party that she gives in the evening. On the first page of the novel Clarissa remembers Peter Walsh. The novel reaches its end when Peter catches sight of Clarissa among her guests. The last line, 'there she was' (*MD*: 287), does not quite tie up loose narrative ends. Yet, it does not introduce a plot twist either. There is no radical change in the story direction. Even the suicide of Septimus Warren Smith is predictable from the beginning of the novel. 'And it was cowardly for a man to say he would kill himself, but Septimus had fought; he was brave; he was not Septimus now,' (*MD*: 34.) thinks Rezia when the Smiths first appear in the novel.

Colomb also binds together now and then, yet, without necessarily sinking into the characters' minds. By way of '*liaison*', an object, an event, a place or person awakens the memory of another moment in the past.<sup>144</sup> Some objects are used as transitional elements to connect experiences separated by time: 'Old Angenaisaz gave the bride a silver-plated colander which she bought from the watchmaker and jeweler in rue de la Plaine, in the village'. [*La vieille Angenaisaz offrit à la mariée une passoire en métal argenté qu'elle acheta chez l'horloger-bijoutier de la rue de la Plaine, dans le bourg.*] (*CE*: 832) Again, 'The Angenaisaz, embarrassed, looked at their thin and young fingers, or the ones wrinkled and thickened with age. They had laid them on the edge of the tablecloth as they had been taught in their childhood to lay them on those tablecloths passed to them by their great-grandmothers.' [*[L]es Angenaisaz, gênés, regardaient leurs doigts fins et jeunes, ou ridés et épais par l'âge, posés sur le bord de la nappe comme on leur avait appris dans leur enfance à les poser sur ces mêmes nappes qu'avaient filées*

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144 We analysed the technique of *liaison* in Chapter 1.

*leurs arrière-grands-mères.*] (CE: 800) Colomb uses here objects which are more protected from the workings of time and enduring than the human (such as: ‘a silver-plated colander’, and ‘the tablecloth’) as transitional mediums. She blurs temporal distinction between separate incidents when presenting them simultaneously. As characters in Colomb’s fiction are mostly enchained to the past, Colomb makes an abundant use of the technique of *‘liaison’*. The time adverb ‘plus tard’ works as a linking device in this passage:

Cousin Walter, le juge qui avait fait ce singulier mariage avec l’humble fille de l’Emmental, si jolie, des tresses brunes, des narines transparentes, touchait machinalement tous les fruits, penchait sur eux son grand nez busqué trop rose qui, **plus tard**, au moment de la guerre des Boers, commencerait à se strier de veinules violettes ; **plus tard encore**, pendant la guerre russo-japonaise, des larmes involontaires dégringoleraient à tout instant le long de ce nez et une étrange odeur de fourmis monterait dans les chambres closes à ses narines poilues. [...] Mais soudain l’odeur de fourmis montait de nouveau à ses narines ; c’était à l’angle du chemin qui prend dans le Bois-de-Chênes et va vers Genolier qu’enfant il fourrageait de son bâton dans la grande fourmilière.<sup>145</sup> (CE: 760–61)

The ‘later’ relates different temporal perspectives in a spiral structure. This time adverb generally divides events into an earlier and a later; a before and an after. But Colomb makes all separate events join. This passage presents the character’s childhood, adolescence, middle age and older age on the same timeline. We read the story of ‘Cousin Walter’ through what is happening to his ‘transparent nostril’ at different times. These happenings coincide with the important moments in the history of the world such as the South African War between the British and the Dutch colonists at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and the Russo-Japanese war at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Events separated in time are brought close by some odours which ‘Cousin Walter’ breathes through his nostrils. Colomb is engaged in parodying both the existence of Cousin Walter’ and the most serious historical events. Whereas Woolf captures parallel experiences, Colomb binds together different temporal layers. Thereby, the present can only be apprehended

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145 Eng. ‘Cousin Walter, the judge who had made this singular marriage with the humble girl from Emmental, so pretty, brown braids, transparent nostril that mechanically touched all the fruits, was bending over them his big, too pink, hooked nose which, **later**, at the time of the Boer War, would begin to streak with purple veins. **Still later**, during the Russo-Japanese War, involuntary tears would fall down his nose all the time, and a strange smell of ants would rise in the rooms closed to his hairy nostrils. [...] But suddenly, the smell of ants rose to his nostrils again. It was at the corner of the path which takes in the Bois-de-Chênes and goes towards Genolier, where, as a child, he was foraging with a stick in a large anthill.’ (The highlights are mine.)



through the prism of the past in Colomb's novel. More exactly, the characters' current state of being is only accounted for through the experiences they had previously encountered.

Woolf chooses specific moments to represent a human life. Apart from respecting a few rules of chronology, the events occurring in the course of one day also unfold in clock-time—in parallel to Big Ben strikes. Woolf mostly uses the clock and some other sounds as the moments of departure. Sounds may simultaneously interrupt and connect separate characters' streams of consciousness. The clock sounds reach every Londoner and bind them together. However, it may disturb privacy and fragment a flow of the characters' consciousness as well. The striking of the clock interrupts Clarissa's and Peter's meeting and separates them. 'The sound of Big Ben striking the half-hour struck out between them with extraordinary vigour', writes Woolf, 'as if a young man, strong, indifferent, inconsiderate, were swinging dumb-bells this way and that.' (*MD*: 48) The clocks control Clarissa's, Peter Walsh's, and the Smiths' lives. They lead Septimus Smith to commit suicide. Septimus has no 'sense of proportion' (*MD*: 96) of linear time. But, by the Bradshaws and the Holmeses, Big Ben turns into a killing machine which is 'shredding and slicing, dividing and subdividing' (*MD*: 151) life. Yet, sound may as well connect together separate characters' streams of consciousness. Sound marks the transition from one character's mind to another. With the sound of an airplane Clarissa's stream of thought is interrupted and the narrative focuses on Septimus's own. Clarissa and Septimus are connected through the clock and the airplane sounds. The sound becomes a common element which sets up bonds between a set of consciousness. Even the loneliest character Septimus is connected with the crowd's consciousness at some point. As many other Londoners he looks up at the sky to spell the letters written by the airplane. Clarissa has not seen the airplane writing the letters. Yet, her question: 'What they are looking at?' (*MD*: 43) connects her to Septimus and keeps the story continuous. In another case, the old woman's 'ancient song' (*MD*: 119–22) connects Peter Walsh to Septimus and Rezia Smiths. Peter hears the song at Regent's Park tube station as he leaves the park. Later, Rezia says 'Poor old woman,' (*MD*: 122) as if she refers to the song to which Peter is listening. Rather than fusing several characters and scenes, Woolf attempts to link characters' streams of consciousness via some common element. Her method thus admits not only to 'multipersonal' representation of consciousness, (Auerbach (1974 (1946): 536)) but also to turn different characters' streams into a single consciousness. The airplane links Septimus Smith with the Londoners just as the old woman's song connects Peter Walsh with the Smiths.

If Woolf represents Big Ben's strikes for ordering the element of time in *MD*, Colomb draws the readers' attention away from the clock-time sense in fiction. Whereas Woolf bounds different scenes and characters together by the strikes of Big Ben, in *CE*, various acts are presented simultaneously without temporal relations being regulated between them by clock-time. The transitions between the scenes are also smooth in *MD*, while they interrupt the narrative flow in *CE*. Colomb's design involves moving in time; whereas disparate events occurring on a map of the city are represented as being simultaneous and measured by the chiming clock in *MD*. For instance, in one of the first episodes, the continual perspective tied to Clarissa is cut and shifts to Rezia and Septimus Warren Smith using the sound of 'the motor car' (*MD*: 24). As the car 'with its blinds drawn and an air of inscrutable reserve' (*Ibid.*) moves forward on the map of London, people, including Clarissa who is walking out of 'Mulberry's with her flowers' (*MD*: 25) knows that Royalty is passing. As the car drives towards Piccadilly, passing Bond Street, turning to St. James's street, and arriving at Buckingham Palace, the focus shifts from Clarissa to 'tall men,' (*MD*: 27.) 'a small crowd' who, 'meanwhile had gathered at the gates of Buckingham Palace,' (*MD*: 28.) 'poor women waiting to see the Queen go past' (*MD*: 29) and more importantly, to the couple Lucrezia and Septimus Warren Smith. Yet, if Clarissa, the 'tall men,' and the crowd see the car passing, Rezia and Septimus Smith do not. They are sitting in Regent's Park shortly after the car arrives at the palace. Before the car arrives, the gazers' looks are directed towards the aeroplane writing letters in the sky. The sound of the plane makes Mrs. Coates, Mrs. Bletchley, and Mr. Bowley look up at the sky. The sound reaches the ears of Lucrezia Warren Smith in Regent's Park who tells her husband: 'Look, look, Septimus!', to the plane. These two scenes—the car and aeroplane passing—are told as if they occur simultaneously. Clarissa only attends the car passing. She is already at home when people, including the Smith, see the plane flying over London. The Smiths see only the plane, not the car. Hence, Clarissa and her 'double' (*MD*: 198) do not see the same things. Yet, these two scenes are so described as if they are happening simultaneously. Likewise, when Septimus commits a suicide, Peter hears the sound of the ambulance while he reflects on the 'triumphs of civilization' and privacy, on the 'privilege of loneliness': 'And yet, thought Peter Walsh, as the ambulance turned the corner though the light high bell could be heard down the next street and still farther as it crossed the Tottenham Court Road, chiming constantly, it is the privilege of loneliness; in privacy one may do as one chooses.' (*MD*: 223) When the news of Septimus' death reaches to Clarissa, she reflects that 'she did not pity him; with the clock striking the hour, one, two, three.' (*MD*: 274)

Like Woolf, Colomb creates the impression of separate events occurring simultaneously, but these events are separated by years and centuries rather than by minutes and hours from each other. The readers of *MD* follow the routes of several characters in the streets and parks of London. Whereas they move to and fro in time on the paths of memory in *CE*. The passages below exemplify moving in time and space. They show how the novelists manage to represent spatially (Woolf) and temporally (Colomb) disparate events as being simultaneous.

- (1) Renversé dans son fauteuil, une jambe croisée haut sur l'autre, le soulier verni presque posé sur le genou, [Jâmes] tapait ses dents verdâtres à petits coups d'un coupe-papier ; puis il le jeta sur la table et se penchant à la suite atteignit un dossier qu'il feuilleta fiévreusement, le sourcil froncé. Alors son visage semblable à un bouton d'os s'éclaira vaguement d'un sourire, pour la première fois depuis ce jour où le Temps avait figé son expression inquiète, chagrine et dure, ce jour d'hiver où Carmen Sylva le regardait si froidement à travers son face-à-main suspendu à la longue chaîne de lapis-lazuli.<sup>146</sup> (*CE*: 827)
- (2) It was silly to have other reasons for doing things. Much rather would she have been one of those people like Richard who did things for themselves, whereas, she thought, waiting to cross, half the time she did things not simply, not for themselves; but to make people think this or that; perfect idiocy she knew (and now the policeman held up his hand) for no one was ever for a second taken in. Oh if she could have had her life over again! (*MD*: 15)

In Colomb's narrative, the focus repeatedly shifts in time and without sinking into the character's mind. It is said that much time passes since Jâmes would smile once again after his meeting with certain Carmen Sylva. Whereas in Woolf's narrative the focus continually shifts in space: from the streets and landmarks of London to Clarissa's mind. As a result, the narrative sequence is more fragmented and choppier in *CE* than in *MD*.

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146 Eng. 'Leaning back in his chair with one leg crossed over the other and the patent leather shoes almost resting on his knee, [Jâmes] tapped a letter opener on his greenish teeth with small blows. Then he threw it on the table and, leaning over, reached for a file which he leafed feverishly through the pages, frowned. Then his face like a bone button lighted vaguely with a laugh, for the first time since that day when the Time had frozen his worried, sorrowed, and rigid look, that winter day when Carmen Sylva stared so coldly through her hand-held hanging on the long chain of lapis lazuli.'

Woolf represents the city road, space as labyrinth; as for Colomb she represents time as labyrinth. Colomb's characters come out of their time frames and join each other in a way Woolf's characters do in the labyrinthine city of London. Their characters can only survive by following a non-linear route and time. Clarissa even thinks that 'somehow in the streets of London, on the ebb and flow of things, here, there, she survived'. (*MD*: 9)

- (1) [E]lle racontait maintenant l'aventure de Charles, et la vie de Louise et celle, lamentable, de Dorothee, comment elle avait été chassée de l'institution des Frères moraves où les jeunes filles mangeaient des choux et le dimanche pour souper trois boules de Berlin « *pro Mann* », disait l'Allemande Erika, tandis que le directeur avalait une coupe de champagne et souriait à sa femme.<sup>147</sup> (*CE*: 856)
- (2) Always her body went through it first, when she was told, suddenly, of an accident; her dress flamed, her body burnt. He had thrown himself from a window. Up had flashed the ground; through him, blundering, bruising, went the rusty spikes. There he lay with a thud, thud in his brain, and then a suffocation of blackness. (*MD*: 271)

When Dorothee's adventures in Germany are told, one also reads about how she was thrown out of Bohemian Brethren. Her story reminds of the food the girls ate at school while their school director drank champagne in company of his wife. In Colomb, several experiences separated in time are rendered simultaneous. One sees through more than one set of eyes and out of the conventional timeframe as one character's experience is seen through the eyes of another who encountered a similar experience but in a different time. The effect is not merely the repetition of experiences, rather the re-creation of one character's experience by another, and ultimately, production of a fictional world within a fictional world. Whereas in *MD*, the experiences of two characters, Clarissa Dalloway and Septimus Smith, converge. Clarissa has vivid imaginative experience of Septimus's death as the above passage shows.

In her representation of time, Woolf chooses specific moments from which past experiences are observed. Since moments of departure are relatively few, experiments with time and temporality are more or less clearly defined in *MD*.

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147 Eng. 'She was now telling Charles' adventure and Louise's life and Dorothea's lamentable life, how she had been chased from the institution of the Moravian Brothers where the young girls ate cabbages, and on Sundays for supper, three balls of Berlin 'pro Mann', said the German Erika, while the director swallowed a glass of champagne and smiled at his wife'.

Ultimately, shifts in time do not result in important narrative breaks in Woolf's novel. Colomb is not as selective as Woolf in her moments of departure. The number of anterior and posterior events is quite large even if they are organized around the christening banquet, the reception for the Shah, Laroche's visit at Walter Angenaisaz's, an invitation of Emilie Févot by the 'engineer', and a few more in *CE*. It is not possible to locate numerous characters and events in time within *CE*. Description of numerous events without temporal chronology and organization result in frequent temporal shifts. Due to the abundance of departing moments, the narrative structure is more labyrinthine in Colomb than in Woolf. Whereas the latter seeks to make the transitions between events, objects, and characters as smooth as possible, the former makes the narrative within her novels out of a continuous chain of interruptions as these paragraphs retrieved from (1) Woolf's and (2) Colomb's novels show:

- (1) The clock began striking. The young man had killed himself; but she did not pity him; with the clock striking the hour, one, two, three, she did not pity him, with all this going on. There! The old lady had put out her light! The whole house was dark now with this going on, she repeated, and the words came to her, Fear no more the heat of the sun. She must go back to them. But what an extraordinary night! She felt glad he had done it; thrown it away... But she must go back. She must assemble. She must find Peter and Sally. And she came in from the little room. (*MD*: 274–5)
- (2) [II] prit son canot, rama dans la direction d'Yvoire et jeta [les objets du culte] au fond de l'eau, à peu près le même soir où se noya la fille du fabricant de cigares, ruiné, parce que Jâmes Laroche avait rompu ses fiançailles avec elle. Elle avait des dents de lapin qui avançaient sur sa lèvre inférieure, mais pour l'époque elle était jolie avec ses cheveux roulés sur le front [...] ; ses jambes dissimulées depuis des siècles sous ses jupes bleu marine, étaient blanches et molles.<sup>148</sup> (*CE*: 865)

(1) paragraph represents both the mental time and the clock time. As Woolf's sentence is given in *style indirect libre*, its present time deictic –'now' (which expresses Clarissa Dalloway's point of view)—given with the past tense: 'was dark,'

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148 Eng. 'He took his canoe, rowed in the direction of Yvoire, and threw [the objects of worship] to the bottom of the water, on about the same evening that the ruined cigar maker's daughter drowned because Jâmes Laroche had broken off his engagement with her. She had rabbit teeth protruding from her lower lip, but for the time she was pretty with her hair rolled over her forehead [...] ; her legs hidden for centuries under her navy-blue skirts, were white and soft.'

is not contemporaneous with the present tense. No matter how freely characters' thoughts and memories move in time, Big Ben strikes still set limits to Woolf's temporal experiments. All important events occur within the confines of a day and in parallel to Big Ben strikes. Even if Clarissa's 'stream of consciousness' cannot be regulated by measurable units of clock-time, her life is still controlled by Big Ben. Awareness of time passing makes Clarissa abandon her thoughts and go back to her guests. Big Ben 'striking the hour, one, two, three,' cuts her flow of thought and reminds her of her duties: 'she must assemble. She must find Peter and Sally'. (*MD*: 205) Temporal continuity is disturbed when Clarissa's consciousness is interrupted by the Big Ben strikes. Yet, the flow of thought is less broken in Woolf than in Colomb whose novel embodies the continually interrupted flow of consciousness. Weaving a tight network out of connections between some apparently unimportant details, the past and present may coexist in Colomb's novel. The past is all-pervasive in the present as Colomb blurs temporalities, presenting the most remote past and the most recent events simultaneously. For instance, in (2), 'her legs hidden for centuries under her navy-blue skirts, were white and soft' emphasize the link between the daughter of a certain cigar maker and her female ancestors. Through physical traits ('rabbit teeth'), she is at first related to animals—to the earliest steps on the humans' evolutionary path. (Darwin 1987 (1859)) Later, (with her 'legs hidden for centuries') she becomes related to a long chain of her human ancestors receding into the remote past. Colomb blurs temporalities as she confuses characters from different times into the same timeline. Her multidimensional moment may simultaneously enclose the past and the present. She does not construct a narrative by way of a series of independent moments. She rather portrays enduring experiences, a permanent state of things—explained by her extensive use of the *imparfait* ('*Elle avait des dents de lapin qui avançaient sur sa lèvre inférieure*')—, or moments that survive only in relation to other moments. In (2), the readers are told that the daughter of a certain cigar maker is dead before they actually find out who she is. It is also told that she drowned herself in the same water where a certain man was canoeing, and on the same evening when the man threw his objects of worship in it. Various events are brought close by their simultaneity. Memories of these events survive only in connection with one another.

The binding words themselves reveal the nature of time. Rather than using, for instance, the conventional logical elements constituting family history, in this case, the binding element is lake water. In terms of a structuring element of narration and meaning, lake water is rather static and enduring by nature as opposed to chronological time measurements by Big Ben. Colomb never discloses the clock time. Whereas the sounds of clocks and public transport, such as a 'motor

car,' ambulance car,' an 'aeroplane' are used as structuring elements of narration in *MD* to bind disparate minds. Representation of the urban environment by Woolf is contrasted by the references to Swiss lakes and mountains in Colomb's book. Cities like London are living organisms, as Virginia Woolf teaches us with her fiction and non-fiction, moving and reproducing themselves in response to a variety of cultural, social, and technological politics among many. (Barbakadze 2019) By contrast, the Swiss culture has formed itself in a small country. Colomb's landing her stories in the age of big houses with three terraces amid the rows of vines, her passion for family histories and ancient objects provide a convenient surface to begin, what Woolf calls, our 'excursion into the literature of foreign country'. (*American Fiction*, 94) Their 'centre is an old house with many rooms each crammed with objects and crowded with people who know each other intimately'. (*Ibid.*, 103) Time passes differently within the metropolis and the countryside. New modes of transportation (airplane, car, ambulance, and other fast-moving machines) in *MD* affect the daily rhythm and urban consciousness of Londoners. Woolf's use of Big Ben and city transport as binding elements reflect the flow of life, creating the sense of motion and time passing. The country house in *CE* marks the continuity between generations. The present incorporates the past as in Bergson's 'durée'. Time may seem to slow down in the country house. Time measured by the clock moves ahead in *MD* as opposed to constant moving back and forward in time in *CE*. Objects, places and body parts (such as 'legs' in the above passage) that Colomb uses as binding elements are not only expressing the stillness of time (time seems suspended in the above passage), but they are also, in most cases, well-protected from the workings of time. Woolf's representation of metropolis and modern life in the technological age in *MD* is contrasted by Colomb's preferences and references to all what has stood the test of time. Colomb tell us stories about the past and ancestors. If narratives are both choppy and fragmented in *MD* and *CE*, it is because the human mind constantly receives disconnected impressions in Woolf's modern city, and searches to hold vanishing recollections brought by memory—as in Colomb's novel.

With a stream repeatedly broken, Colomb and Woolf appear to take note of a woman's way of life in a patriarchal society, whose daily life is full of distractions and interruptions and whose freedom of thought and speech is also broken. The stream of interrupted consciousness is a form by which they record 'words and gestures of our reasoning' [*mots et gestes de notre démarche*], and mirror 'the thoughts and work of our body and hands' [*les pensées et le travail de notre corps et de nos mains*]'—to define it in Alice Rivaz's words (where 'our' refers the experiences of all women). (1945: 69) Like Rivaz, Colomb belongs to the generation of writers in the Swiss-French part of Switzerland who were the first to

voice women's experiences from a woman's perspective in writing. Colomb's and Woolf's writings show that they have found 'verbal, literary, written expressions of their femininity'. [*les formes verbales, littéraires, les expressions écrites de leur fémininité*] (*Ibid.*) Woolf adds that women should express their mind by modeling a different kind of fiction because 'the weight, the pace, the stride of a man's mind are too unlike her own for her to lift anything substantial from him successfully'. (*AROO*: 79) Woolf's representation of 'an ordinary life on an ordinary day' suggests blurring the dividing line between mental life and daily experience. The narrative of breaks accounts for the broken freedom of thought and action of women in a patriarchal society. Woolf points at the differences between 'masculine' and 'feminine' writing, and lack of women's literary tradition in her reviews and essays. She focuses on the social environment and education as necessary conditions for women's intellectual growth. Woolf highlights the importance of private space and money to respond to the discussion on the topic of 'women and fiction' in *AROO*. Material conditions, Woolf shows, are not separate from creative life. In another essay, *Three Guineas*, the narrator attacks such organizations as 'Arthur's Education Fund' which has only helped the sons since the 13<sup>th</sup> century, whereas an important moment in the history of women's intellectual life is yet to come. Woolf is critical towards a 'formal railway line of sentence' (*The Letters of Virginia Woolf*, III: 28, 135) that she discovers in the writings of 'Bennett' and 'Galsworthy', whereas she appreciates breaking the sequence by Mary Carmichael. (*AROO*: 81)

In coherence with these theories, separate ideas follow each other more by association than by any other logic in *CE*. Rather than the clock-time, memory orders the representation of time. As the organization of events in the text is based on memory, the narrative is, in Barthes' words, constantly 'inseminated with an element which never comes to maturity'. (Barthes 1975: 244) Consciousness does not turn into a stream in Colomb because the narrative is continually broken by a new element that changes its direction. Yet, with its constant breaks, the narrative continues to flow in *CE*. Interruption—ceasing of consciousness—is followed by a return to the flow of the conscious mind. The narrative builds on a continuous chain of breaks, interruptions. Between the narrative breaks, the consciousness is lost and regained, death is followed by rebirth.

Both Woolf's and Colomb's works reflect consciousness. Yet, Colomb's novels do not imprint a stream, characterizing Woolf's writings. Woolf's use of 'stream of consciousness' consists of diving into the character's consciousness. Whereas Colomb does not follow the processes of different minds. (1) Woolf interconnects the mindsets and experiences of different characters. Her characters are linked through verbal recollections: Clarissa is connected to Septimus by thought. Time



(a day in June 1923), and place (London) are used as major supports for connecting mindsets and experiences of Clarissa Dalloway and Septimus Smith. The two never meet. Yet, Clarissa—the wife of a politician, and Septimus—a war-veteran—appear to have similar doubts, traumas, and thoughts. Woolf uses the same time and place to navigate between their mindsets and experiences. (2) Colomb also brings close people who have never met each other. Yet, her characters are connected through visual rather than verbal reminiscences. Colomb does not enrich the meaning of time by reading characters' minds like Woolf. Instead, she represents time *via* perception. In contrast to the traditional narrative movement, Colomb uses any object, event, character, train, gesture as a moment of departure. The method allows her to reveal thought processes—'the multitudinous thoughts and feelings that pass through the mind' (Cuddon (1979: 660–1))—known as the narrative method of 'stream of consciousness' in a literary context. Several images, objects, and characters gradually add to the narrative as it moves forward. They do not seem to be arranged in any other logic than by law of association, as defined in the previous chapter. (2) She displays the elements that bind together people from different times. Her human characters emerge from the fog, from a forest where they were until then birds and animals.<sup>149</sup> (Colomb 2019 (1962): 1372) The creation of human characters out of animals symbolizes the beginning of human life as well as the emergence of thought out of the unconscious and instinct. Colomb's fiction has lower degrees of consciousness as its subject matter. Her fiction falls under the category of the 'stream-of-consciousness novel' if we examine it in coherence with Humphrey's theory. (1951: 436) In *CE*, some negligible details such as objects, names, physical traits, gestures, or manias may help initiate a thought process. Connecting elements tie separate characters, events and objects to one another. For instance, this passage explains that Eugénie got a goose by exchanging it into the horse somewhere between Heidelberg and Stuttgart: *'Eugénie époussette l'oie grandeur naturelle placée près du jet d'eau par le conservateur qui l'amena d'Allemagne sous son bras après l'avoir obtenue pour un cheval entre Heidelberg et Stuttgart ; maintenant le cheval mène le Junker à son usine dans le brouillard du matin, les sabots lancent des étincelles, le sable est jaune comme s'il y avait du soleil, des voiles glissent à fleur de terre.'* [*Eugénie is dusting off the life-size goose placed near the water spurting up from the fountain by the curator who had brought it back under his arm from Germany, after having exchanged it for a horse between Heidelberg*

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149 Colomb explained the process of the birth of her characters in her letter to the jury of 'Prix Rambert' which she was awarded in 1962.

and Stuttgart; now the horse leads the *Junker* to his factory through the morning fog, sparks flying from its hooves, the sand is yellow as if the sun were shining on it, the sails are sliding along the ground.] (*ET*: 1013–4; *The Spirits*: 92–3) The narrative continues by recording the current story of the horse, i.e., by law of association. Colomb uses the stream-of-consciousness technique as she captures ‘ordinary object(s) manufactured from the event by our lower nervous system’, and ‘the psychological centres’, (Korzybski 1948: 179) i.e., images of perception.

It follows that Colomb’s experimentations with temporality—discontinuity—consists (a) of different brief memories brought together notwithstanding temporal distance; and (b) of a series of episodes cut short by associations that spring from them. The question then arises: is Colomb’s representation of consciousness another form of ‘stream of consciousness’ writing, or does her treatment of the phenomenon of memory places her texts outside the ‘stream of consciousness’ category?

Colomb’s texts are not examples of classic ‘stream of consciousness’ novels if we rely on James’ definition of consciousness as a ‘stream’ or a ‘river’; firstly, because there is a deficit of characters whose psyche would be read. Colomb’s characters look unreal, resembling more phantoms than the persons made of flesh. The reader has access to tiny bits of their thoughts only, mostly with comic images, abrupt, and clumsy gestures set to the fore.<sup>150</sup>

The second obstacle impeding us to place Colomb’s texts within the ‘stream of consciousness’ category consists of the narrative which does not run on as a stream and is instead ‘chopped up in bits’, to put it in William James’ own words. (1950 (1890), I: 239) It is constantly interrupted, delayed, and alters its direction. As a result, there tend to be multiple breaks within the main storyline. The introduction of a new element ebbs the narrative flow in *CE*. However, these interruptions do not lead the narrative to a final deadlock: a new element appearing in the text may simultaneously interrupt and continue the narrative.<sup>151</sup> Relying on Dowling’s interpretation of ‘stream’ as a continuous chain as well as the narrative which alters its direction, (1991: 47) *CE* may still be thought of as a novel that fits into the ‘stream of consciousness novel’ category. Yet, it does not offer the Woolfian ‘stream of consciousness’. We have rather to do with a ‘stream’ made out of interrupted consciousness.

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150 See Chapter 1 & Chapter 2.

151 The previous chapter explained that a new association stems at the expense of abandoning the previous one.

### 3.5 The aesthetics of enunciation

#### 3.5.1 *Style indirect libre* – definition of concept

In the introduction of her work *Le Narrateur : introduction à la théorie narrative*, Sylvie Patron writes that the traditional conception of the narrator goes hand in hand with an equally traditional conception of narration in the novel in the third person. (2009: 14) A few pages later Patron explains that the narrator is not a necessary criterion for defining the novel as opposed to drama because the narrator may only be found in a certain type of novel. (2009: 17–18) Her book is precisely devoted to the study of ‘stories without a narrator’ as opposed to a ‘communication model of narrative fiction’ according to which a fictional work bears marks of a speaker who addresses a hearer. Patron queries Genette’s, Barthes’s, Doležel’s, Chatman’s models among many who consider that every text has a narrator and see a fictional text as a discourse between a speaker and an audience. Instead, she speaks in favour of Banfield’s ‘non-communication model’ introduced in *Unspeakable Sentences*.

According to Banfield, ‘every text cannot be said to have a narrator’. (1982: 11) She explains that currently there are ‘two possible alternative theories of narrative style, one which is subsumed under communication theory where every sentence has a speaker and every text a narrator and hence every sentence is subjective, and another which divides the sentences of narrative in those with a subject and those without’. (*Ibid.*) ‘The author’s disappearance from the text’ in the Anglo-American scholars’ works is in charge of, for Banfield, ‘introducing into the critical vocabulary the notion of the narrator as a created *persona* distinct from the author alongside the notion of point of view, whether that of the narrator or that of a represented SELF’. (*Ibid.*, 184–5) To the debate about the question of whether to eliminate an author from the text or not Banfield responds that some fictional narratives have no speaker at all. ‘Whereas a nineteenth century criticism only had the one term “author”’, according to Banfield, ‘this version of the author’s disappearance from the text really has only the term “narrator”’. (*Ibid.*, 183) As in her 1973 study ‘Narrative style and the grammar of direct and indirect speech’, in *Unspeakable Sentences*, Banfield suggests that not every text ‘conforms to the communication model’. (*Ibid.*, 12) Banfield argues that the concept of a ‘narrator’ makes a room for authorial control even if we eliminate an author from the text. The substitution of the term ‘narrator’ for the term ‘author’ is, for Banfield, ‘revisionist’. (*Ibid.*, 185) Banfield gives various examples to illustrate that some sentences do not bear the marks of a speaker and a hearer, and are, what she calls, ‘unspeakable’. Fictional narrative may be made

of 'two exclusive kinds of sentences, optionally narratorless sentences of pure narration and sentences of represented speech and thought'. (*Idem.*) She argues that no narrator intervenes in the sentences of 'represented speech and thought' as she counts them in her list of the speakerless sentences. The term 'represented thought' was adopted from Jespersen (1924) and was revised to 'represented speech and thought' by Ann Banfield (1982). Banfield justifies the use of the term as such: 'We can be told what a character does or thinks in a novel, or we can be 'shown' it. And to show or represent a character's thoughts, the natural mode is represented speech and thought'. (1982: 69) This and several other terms have been used to name indirect discourse of this type. For instance, *style indirect libre* was first used in Bally (1912). (Philippe, Zufferey (2018: 15)) Lorck (1921) used the term *erlebte Rede* ('experienced speech'). Kalepsky (1899) called it *verschleirte Rede* ('veiled speech'). (*Ibid.*, 16–19) The second type of 'unspeakable sentence', what Banfield calls the 'sentence of narrative *per se*', (1982: 164) are also found in fiction as well as in historical writing. In the 'narrative *per se*', Banfield quotes Benveniste, 'the events are set forth chronologically as they occurred. No one speaks here. The events seem to tell themselves'. (*Ibid.*)

Formal innovations regarding point of view have been taken further in the modern novel, and more specifically by Henry James in his work *The Turn of the Screw*.<sup>152</sup> Modernists sought to include as many diverse points of view when narrating the story as possible to mirror the consciousness—the complexity of workings of the mind—, and diversity of perspectives. Multiplying the angles of narration, they could also conduct experiments with time and temporality. The section *Point of view* in Chapter 1 made explicit that point of view represents one of those textual ingredients which gives temporal depth to the narrative in *CE*. Ann Banfield notes that the modernist 'novel as a genre increasingly exploited represented thought to slow down experienced time by magnifying its smallest units: the day, the moment'. (2007: 55) The style is used to reflect 'a character's thoughts and speech in the authorial past tense and third person but also in the character's own emotive language'. (Brinton 1980: 363) From a grammatical point of view, it is characterized by 'absence of reporting verb of saying/thinking, backshift of tenses, conversion of personal and possessive pronouns.' (Mchale 1978: 264) The modernists helped the readers observe things from a character's perspective and often, without commenting on it. (Leaska 1970: 31) For instance, Joyce reveals the character's thoughts without the narrator's interference. To see

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152 Henry James' theories about narrative presentation are provided in *The Art of the Novel* (1934).

through the character's eyes sometimes means to be told the story through the character's 'stream of consciousness' rather than through omniscient narration. The term 'stream of consciousness' refers to the presentation of characters' thoughts and feelings without comment by the author.

### 3.5.2 The aesthetics of enunciation in Colomb and Woolf

The readers of *TL* and *ET* are in many ways challenged by Woolf's and Colomb's non-traditional practices of approaching an event or telling a story. In *TL* and *ET*, the characters' thoughts are generally reported without any intermediary. What Woolf and Colomb have also in common is their practice of telling a story from multiple perspectives. *ET* and *TL* use a large number of points of view. The shifts in point of view are not clearly marked. In both novels, the sharp line between characters' discourses is also dissolved. Readers cannot easily identify whose perspective they read a story from. The tones applied for reporting several characters' voices are almost inseparable from one another. The manipulation of points of view in Colomb and Woolf demands the reader's attention, a sort of quest, to make sense of what he observes through the eyes of a character who may be observing through other sets of eyes.

This section is devoted to unravelling the complexity of determining the angle of narration in *ET* and *TL* and explaining the effects of blurring the dividing line between discourses of several characters. It explores temporal complexity as a consequence of quick transitions between characters' discourses. The section shows how Colomb's and Woolf's divergent practices of representing perspectives make a 'stream of consciousness' novel available as it uncovers the differences between the different kinds of consciousness novel each one produces.

What *TL* and *ET* have in common is their opening up to more than one reading and interpretation. Both Woolf and Colomb create a sense of uncertainty in their writings. The incertitude attaches to the fact that the narrative voice is disappearing from their texts. Their novels are set up on binary oppositions. Colomb's and Woolf's resolutions to represent the world in a crisis of confidence give their texts peculiar quality. In *ET*, the uncertainty deriving from the lack of omniscient narration is balanced by sharp observations revealing characters' point of view. For instance, some unidentified characters notice a tomb of thirteen-years-old child killed by horses during the funeral of Ulysse's father: '*Ils voyaient à côté d'eux le jeune mort d'autrefois, l'enfant de treize ans tué par les chevaux sur la colline, il se tenait debout, sa petite poitrine couverte de terre, ses mains épaisses gercées par les premiers froids.*' [Eng. 'They noticed, alongside, that dead boy from long ago, that thirteen-year-old child killed by the

horses on the hill, now he was standing there, his little chest covered with dirt, his thick hands chapped with the first cold spells.’ (ET: 956–957; *The Spirits*: 14) The narrative is thus swollen by some seemingly insignificant details: all that the characters see. Such insertions and detours shift the focus and derail the thoughts and emotions that the sentences preceding or following the insertions contain. Woolf also represents reality from the point of view of incertitude. She surprises us by her capacity to access the depths of the human mind while simultaneously leaving much unsaid, unanswered. When Woolf was writing *TL*, she was intending to create ‘the sense of reading two things at the same time’ with the use of brackets (*Diary 2*: 106, 5 September 1926) Parenthetical asides are found in the middle section of *TL*. They tell a number of deaths including the death of Mrs. Ramsay: ‘[Mr. Ramsay stumbling along a passage stretched his arms out one dark morning, but, Mrs. Ramsay having died rather suddenly the night before, he stretched his arms out. They remained empty.]’ (*TL*: 147) Mentioning Mrs. Ramsay’s death as a random occurrence is completely unexpected to the reader of *TL*. In the ‘Time Passes’ section the focus is no more on the human inhabitants of the Ramsays’ summerhouse as in the previous and last parts of the novel. What is now in focus is the empty house invaded by wild creatures and forces of nature, whereas multiple deaths in the Ramsay’s house are briefly enclosed in parenthesis. Woolf is trying to suggest life and time as they go on regardless of human life or the human psyche.

If Woolf intends to play with different meanings of the information she places within brackets, Colomb also suspends us in incertitude. Woolf brings the thoughts of her principal characters (such as Mrs. Ramsay and Lily Briscoe) more in focus than Colomb. Much of the information that Colomb gives does not bring anything (events, objects) or anyone (characters) in focus. Besides, she continually creates a sense of uncertainty by leaving most of the readers’ doubts unanswered. The questions left unresponded unsettle the omniscience of a narrator: ‘*Et voulait-il [César] vraiment arriver avant Adolphe ? Et autrefois avant Eugène auprès de la jeune fille aux yeux de mouche, ses gants blancs pleins de sable mouillé ?*’ [‘And did [César] really want to arrive before Adolphe? And, in the past, to arrive before Eugène had proposed to that young fly-eyed girl, her white gloves full of wet sand?’] (ET: 1036–7; *The Spirits*: 125) Woolf also provides examples of uncertainty, such as by asking questions. In *TL*, Mrs. Ramsay asks Prue ‘Did Nancy go with them?’ (*TL*: 83) The question is however answered after many pages (“Yes,” said Prue, in her considering way, answering her mother’s question, “I think Nancy did go with them”.) (*TL*: 90) This question is made in Chapter XIII and answered in Chapter XV in ‘The Window’. If Woolf encloses in parentheses important events that happened to the main characters, Colomb

mentions important historical facts very briefly (in a sentence or less) and only in relation to character experiences. Hence, neither Woolf nor Colomb brings into focus what is commonly found important.

Colomb and Woolf create a sense of confusion to reflect a turn of consciousness in their contemporary world. If there is no omniscient narrator who would keep the trace of events and characters, it is because, according to them, nothing is certain in their contemporary reality. Colomb wrote: *'tout est changé, bouleversé... Est-ce que vous vous rendez compte que tout est à reprendre, à apprendre, à prendre, à comprendre ? La grammaire, Dieu, les cantiques, l'amour conjugal, l'arithmétique. Deux plus deux n'égalent plus quatre'*. [Eng. '[E]verything is changed, upset ... Do you realize that everything has to be taken back, to be learned, to be taken, to be understood? Grammar, God, canticles, marital love, arithmetic. Two plus two is no longer four.'] (*Les Malfilâtre*, 1620.) Colomb's remark on the radical change of the century consciousness comes close to Woolf's observation made in the essay 'Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown', (1924) according to which 'in or about December 1910, human character changed' (Woolf (1966 (1924): 320)) and she continues to argue that the novel must change, creating 'real, true, and convincing' characters from now on. This change was not to be reflected by accumulating accurate factual details as did for instance the writers in Victorian England (e.g., Charles Dickens) and 19<sup>th</sup> century France (Balzac, Victor Hugo, etc.). The real-world events are only introduced indirectly, with no date and their effects symbolized in Woolf's and Colomb's fictional writings.

By providing room for multiple interpretations, Colomb's novel comes close to the experimental prose of the Modernists, as Gilles Philippe has also suggested. (2017: 55) The sense of uncertainty dominates the modernist novel. The uncertainty is also due to the fact that these novels use, in Banfield's words, 'represented speech and thought'—a style rarely used before 19<sup>th</sup>-century prose—, such as in Flaubert and Jane Austen.

In *ET* and *TL*, the reader does not observe characters and events through the eyes of a narrator. Instead, he reads the story from different angles and has often unrestricted access to the mental experiences of characters. The sense of incertitude results from presenting the key scenes from different points of view using a monologue, or dialogue, and a symbolized object in *ET*. For instance, time passing is represented by replacing a doll that Isabelle used to play with in her childhood ('—Où est ma poupée?' ([Eng. '“Where is my doll?”']]) (*ET*: 1085; *The Spirits*: 195)) with an embroidery lace, which implies the passage from childhood to adulthood. In a similar manner, the reason for the death of Blanche, César's wife, is not disclosed. The reader finds out about her death not through the speech or thought of César who attended Blanche's death, but through Eugène's

and Madame's brief dialogue. In relation to this particularity, José-Flore Tappy suggests that the scenes in the text are 'remote and ungraspable' (1993: 14), which further intensifies the sense of doubt and uncertainty. In the absence of a narrator's sharp look, the reader is not able to tell if César really killed his nephew Abraham or not; whether Abraham is alive or dead in *ET*.

In other cases, the sense of uncertainty and the aesthetics of time are created by approaching the event from different angles and at different times. The reader hears different versions of the same story as it gets described from several perspectives. Among many, a story of Abraham's fall from the tower of Fraidaigue is told by several characters. On the first page of the novel, various voices discuss the event as in a Greek *Chorus*. There is a doubt that César might be guilty of Abraham's fall from the tower. Sometime later, the sister-in-law Sémiramis (the so-called 'Madame') also blames César for Abraham's injury. Again, at some different moment in the novel, Rim—sheltered in Madame's pigsty—also claims to have seen Abraham fall from the tower, but he could not tell whether he fell by chance or César pushed him. Thus, the experience is told from multiple (rather than from a single) perspectives and at different times (rather than at once). It is left to the reader to supplement the story.

Colomb's and Woolf's fiction is enriched with additional meaning when the contents of characters' consciousness are represented, using *style indirect libre*. In *TL* and *ET*, the temporal depth is given to the narrative as the passages below exemplify:

There was Rose gazing at her father, there was Roger gazing at his father; both would be off in spasms of laughter in another second, she knew, and so she said promptly (indeed it was time): 'Light the candles,' and they jumped up instantly and went and fumbled at the sideboard. (*TL*: 109)

Hélas ! Mme Scaramache emmena soudain son fils. La dernière vision qu'Isabelle eut de lui, au détour du mur où pousse l'inutile capillaire, ce fut son joli derrière pointu sous la tunique bleue. « Il m'aurait bien voulue », répétait-elle doucement au salon.<sup>153</sup> (*ET*: 984)

Est-ce qu'il regrettait son équipée ? Est-ce qu'on regrette de s'enfoncer la tête la première dans les jardins noirs de Sémiramis ? Est-ce que le renard regrette l'air et le ciel ? Ne

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153 Eng. 'Alas, Mme Scaramache suddenly dragged her son away! The last glimpse that Isabelle caught of him, at that ben in the wall where the useless maidenhair fern grows, was his handsome pointed derrière sticking out below his blue tunic. 'He's have liked to marry me', she kept softly saying in the parlour'. (*The Spirits*: 51–52)



croyez pas cependant qu'il n'y ait plus de saisons pour le nomade qui a enfin trouvé sa demeure. Autrefois ses départs et ses retours marquaient les équinoxes.<sup>154</sup> (*ET*: 1107)

The style used in the passages is the one known as the *style indirect libre* or what Banfield qualifies as 'represented speech and thought'. There is a split between a 'speaker' and 'self', in these sentences of 'represented speech and thought', as much as the speaker does not always express his own perspective. As Banfield puts it, 'the notion of point of view or subjectivity is not by definition tied to the speaker'. (1982: 93) A point of view cannot be assigned to a 'speaker', rather to a 'self' in the given lines. The passages chosen from *ET* contain exclamation point and question mark, and the one in *TL* have parenthesis (e.g. ("Light the candles")), i.e., linguistic markers of direct speech. Neither the exclamation nor the questions can be attributed to someone speaking in the first person. The exclamatory sentence is not Isabelle's direct speech. Rather, the exclamation, 'hélas', cannot be indirectly quoted. Also, there are no present tense and first-person pronouns generally found in direct speech. It is rather the 'third person narration'. (Tamir (1976: 415), quoted in Banfield (1982: 69)) The exclamatory and interrogative sentences express the point of view of third persons, Isabelle and César, just as the evolutive adverb 'indeed' ('(indeed it was time)') does in Woolf's passage. The evolutive adverb 'indeed' in the casual spoken language is pronounced in the present tense and does not normally co-occur with the verb in the past tense. Yet, unlike spoken language, a character's perspective is read in the past tense when represented in the *style indirect libre*. As a result, the sentence combines two tenses: the present ('indeed') and the simple past ('was time'). That moment in the past, Mrs. Ramsay knew what would have happened if she had not asked to light the candles. She felt that the children were seconds from bursting into laughter. These sentences convey the characters' voice. A sequence of the words 'useless maidenhair fern', [Fr. '*l'inutile capillaire*'] 'Sémiramis' black gardens', [Fr. '*les jardins noirs de Sémiramis*'] and 'indeed' deliver evaluations and express subjectivity. They convey Isabelle's, César's, and Mrs. Ramsay's points of view which are 'independent of the speaker's role in communication'. (Banfield 1982: 70) What they think is not presented in the 'first person narration'. Nor is it represented with the mediation of a narrator. Sentences written in *style indirect libre* in English or in French expressing the 'third person point of view' in

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154 Eng. 'Did he regret his escape? Does one regret sinking headfirst into Semiramis' black gardens? Does the fox regret the air and the sky? Don't believe, however, that there are no more seasons for this nomad who has at last found his home. In the past, his departures and returns would take place at the equinoxes.' (*The Spirits*: 226)

the past tense are *narratorless*. (*Ibid.*, 88–98) Free indirect style ‘strips the social mask from the self’, i.e., from the one whose point of view is represented, ‘and shows behind the speaking *I*, the silent, shifting point of consciousness which is the *I*’s special reference’. (*Ibid.*, 97) The parentheticals in Colomb’s first passage such as: ‘she kept *softly* saying in the parlour’, which convey the evaluation—the evaluative adjective ‘softly’—express a character’s rather than a narrator’s point of view and thus, provide the evidence against the ‘dual voice’ claim, i.e., ‘a blending of two points of view or “voices”, the character’s, whose consciousness is linguistically represented, and the narrator’s who adopts the character’s point of view’, (*Ibid.*, 185) and conform to Banfield’s theory about the absence of narrator/speaker.<sup>155</sup> Colomb’s ‘speakerless’ sentences show that, supposedly, Isabelle and César would never utter aloud their thoughts. Isabelle’s direct statement, ‘He’s have liked to marry me’, also confirms this idea, showing her arrogance.

The content of Isabelle’s and Mrs. Ramsay’s minds is presented by relying on *style indirect libre* and direct discourse. The mingling of these two styles interrupts the character’s train of thought. The stream is also cut by shifts in verbal tenses. For instance, in Colomb’s first passage, the verbs ‘*emmena*’, ‘*eut*’, ‘*fut*’ in *passé simple*, expressing anteriority, change to *conditionnel passé* (‘*aurait voulu*’) and *imparfait* (‘*répétait*’) which expresses an action simultaneous with another action (i.e., with Isabelle’s speech) in the past and indicates that Isabelle has more than once thus spoken. The verbal tense changes as the sentences of direct speech and of ‘represented speech and thought’ replace the ones of ‘pure narration’ in Woolf’s text. In the first sentence of ‘pure narration’, Rose’s and Roger’s gazing at their father is described in the past continuous tense. The verbal tense changes to the future in the past (‘both would be off in spasms of laughter in another second’) and the past tenses when importing Mrs. Ramsay’s thoughts and speech. The cuts in the character’s stream of thought in Colomb further reflects that time passes between the moments when Isabelle saw Mme Scaramache’s son for the last time and when she utters her thoughts in the ‘parlour’. It is not certain how much time has passed between the experiences. It may even be that ‘he’ (‘“He’s have liked to marry me”’) no more refers to Mme Scaramache’s son, but to some other potential suitor that Isabelle has now in mind.

The parenthetical ‘she kept softly saying in the parlour’ [Fr. ‘*répétait-elle doucement au salon*’] makes it clear that we read Isabelle’s mind. Only very rarely are there parentheticals that explain who sees, speaks or thinks in *ET*. Unlike Colomb, Woolf frequently uses the parentheticals in *TL*, which help the readers

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155 For the theory against the dual voice claim, see Banfield. (1982: 185–96)

guess who says what. The parentheticals like ‘said Mrs Ramsay’, (3.) ‘Lily added’, (3.) ‘said Charles Tansley’, (9.), ‘Charles Tansley thought’, (42.) ‘Mr. Bankes suggested’, (52.) ‘she knew that’, (73.) and many more clarify whose point of view is represented in Woolf’s narrative.

As in the above passages, it is also clear whose point of view is represented in the following lines; they show (1) what César thinks about Madame and (2) what Gwen thinks about César and herself:

- (1) César eut soudain pitié d’elle ; la pauvre, c’est raté, elle le sent, fini le truc des regards fixes. Il semblait même qu’elle allait sourire, qu’on apercevait déjà une ou deux dents de scaphandrier.<sup>156</sup> (*ET*: 1074)
- (2) Elle partait avec Fritz *vraiment* cette fois corseté de frais, des camarades tenaient leurs épées croisées au-dessus de leurs têtes, sa boucle blonde fleurissait sur l’épaule, où était César ?<sup>157</sup> (*ET*: 924)

But, in many cases, we cannot tell who is ‘speaker’, and who is ‘self’, i.e., whose point of view gets represented as, for instance, in the following lines:

Il évitait la place où s’élevait autrefois la tour, place que Valà-Valà foula sans aucune crainte, *ce qui le tua sous les pieds des chevaux quelque trois ans plus tard*, et où marchait Madame sur ses gros pieds bosselés d’oignons, *ce qui pourrait bien causer sa mort affreuse dans la barque*.<sup>158</sup> (*ET*: 1067)

The point of view cannot be assigned to any particular character in these passages. The italicized lines anticipate and explain the causes of Madame’s and Valà-Valà’s deaths. They further contain the evaluative adjective ‘*affreuse*’ [Eng. ‘dreadful’] expressing a point of view which is unidentified, but still belonging to a character within the novel.

The novels, *TL* and *ET*, contain multiple points of view. The events are mostly approached and told from the characters’ point of view in the first and last parts in *TL*. Lily asks ‘What is the meaning of life? That was all—a simple question.’

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156 Eng. ‘César suddenly felt pity for her; the poor woman, she’s failed and she feels it; the staring trick is over. It even seemed that she might smile, that one or two of her deep-sea-diver teeth could already be glimpsed.’ (*The Spirits*: 179)

157 Eng. ‘She [...] was leaving with Fritz who had *really* donned his corset this time, comrades were holding their swords crossed above their heads, her blond curl was flowering on her shoulder, *where was César?*’ (*The Spirits*: 165) (The italics are mine.)

158 Eng. ‘He would avoid the ground where the tower formerly rose, ground across which Well-Well trod fearlessly and *on which he would be killed beneath horses’ hooves some three years later*, and across which Madame herself walked on her big feet bunion-bumpy feet, *an act that could indeed cause her atrocious death in a rowboat*.’ (*The Spirits*: 168) (The italics are mine.)

(*TL*: 183) Mr. Ramsay thinks that through 'a splendid mind' (*TL*: 37) any question may be resolved. 'If thought is like the keyboard of a piano, divided into so many notes, or like the alphabet is ranged in twenty-six letters all in order, then his splendid mind had no sort of difficulty in running over those letters one by one, firmly and accurately.' (*Ibid.*) But the 'splendid mind' could not help Charles Tansley in the solution of the problem: 'now, at this moment, sitting stuck there with an empty seat beside him nothing had shaped itself at all. It was all in scraps and fragments. He felt extremely, even physically, uncomfortable.' (*TL*: 103) The insight of Mrs. Ramsay is that: 'our apparitions, the things you know us by, are simply childish. Beneath it is all dark, it is all spreading, it is unfathomably deep; but now and again we rise to the surface and that is what you see us by.' (*TL*: 71)

Characters' perspectives often shift and mingle, adding the temporal significance to the narrative as in this example:

À Venise, Mathilde écoutait, les yeux brillants, les lèvres entrouvertes, la médiocre sérénade sur le canal. Ils logeaient au Danieli. « Pauvre tante Emma, murmurait parfois Julien, morte à Venise, chavirée, noyée. » Il rencontra sur le Lido Madame qui contemplait la mer, et Eugène debout derrière elle qui se balançait sur les talons et les pointes des pieds. Mon attaché d'ambassade, songeait Madame, le retrouverai-je demain, après tant d'années, à Torcello ? Ils secouèrent la main molle de Julien qui logeait, leur dit-il, au Danieli. Mathilde se reposait dans sa chambre, il lui évitait toute surexcitation ; ils avaient un appartement au Danieli.<sup>159</sup> (*ET*: 972–3)

This passage explains Colomb's technique for making a story. There are quick and unpredictable transitions from one character to another, from interiority to exteriority, from direct speech to the sentences of 'represented speech and thought' and the ones of 'pure narration'. Memory plays a large part in the narrative. The reader hears the characters' points of view of different temporalities. Mathilde's stay at the hotel Danieli in Venice is reminiscent of Julien, one of Isabelle's former suitors who later marries Mathilde. The passage thus tells that Mathilde and Julien have stayed at the same hotel long before they would know each other. During his

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159 Eng. 'In Venice on the canal, Mathilde, her eyes gleaming, her lips half-parted, was listening to the mediocre serenade. They were staying at the Danieli. 'Poor aunt Emma', Julien sometimes murmured, 'dying in Venice, drowning when that boat capsized'. On the Lido, he ran into Madame, who was gazing at the sea, and Eugène, standing behind her, rocking back and forth between the heels and tiptoes of his shoes. Will I find my embassy attaché tomorrow in Torcello, Madame was musing, after all these years? They each shook Julien's limp hand. He said he was staying at the Danieli. Mathilde was resting in her room; he kept her away from any overexcitement; they had a suite at the Danieli. (*The Spirits*: 35–6)

stay, Julien has once met Madame and Eugène by chance. All these experiences are compressed into a few lines, inserting Julien's, Madame's, and Eugène's stories within Mathilde's theme. The passage includes Julien's direct speech, which is soon followed by Madame's and Eugène's Venetian story. There are also sentences of *style indirect libre*. Insertions of these experiences and different styles as well as shifts in time and perspective interrupt a linear narrative. More importantly, what is in focus is the place, Venice, rather than characters' experiences. The experiences of Mathilde, Julien, Madame, and Eugène are all ordered around the city. A story of these seemingly temporally distant experiences is united by using the place, hotel Danieli, as a binding element.

Exploring the aesthetics of multiple point of view representation allows us to take note of transitions between various viewpoints, of Colomb's and Woolf's techniques of relating multiple viewpoints: how one observing and interpreting mind continues into another, which brings forward, in its turn, again another perspective.

- (1) How did she manage these things in the depths of the county? He asked her. She was a wonderful woman. All his love, all his reverence, had returned... (TL: 115)
- (2) Il faut dire pour l'excuser que ce soir-là Madame avait fait sa Gorgone encore plus que d'habitude : elle examina César très attentivement, pareille à ces étoiles qui posent sur vous les nuits d'été leurs regards convergents, si bien que soudain les villageois effrayés joignent et élèvent leurs mains vers le ciel, puis, sans quitter César des yeux, elle fit une allusion aux mulets qui ne peuvent pas avoir d'enfants ; on vit à certains signes qu'elle allait se mettre à rire et dévoiler ses dents jaunes de scaphandrier. Mulet, vraiment ! Voilà pourquoi César le nomade, le D.P., essaya de tuer son neveu Abraham. Avant que le jour suivant se levât, il s'engagea sur la corniche, le chemin de pierre qui bornait le monde des enfants et sur quoi autrefois s'appuyait leur ciel. Il passa avec précaution, collé au mur, devant les quinze fenêtres. Si Madame à ce moment s'éveillait ! Mais non, on l'entendait ronfler. S'ils avaient bien écouté, ils l'auraient entendue ronfler dans le fiacre, quand un vieillard, autrefois, marchant à côté d'elle dans le brouillard. Qu'elle s'éveillât, elle ouvrirait ses volets, lancerait César dans le vide. Fini le retour du berger, du voyageur, de l'étranger hostile, du renard sans tanière, ses cheveux carotte cousus un par un à une rondelle de feutre ! quelle croix de le voir revenir à Fraidaigne vers la mi-mars, quand les osiers rougissent autour des ruisseaux et que la terre nue des vignes est couleur d'aurore !<sup>160</sup> (ET: 954)

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160 Eng. 'In his defence, it must be said that Madame, that evening, had acted like a Gorgon even more than usual: she kept scrutinizing César intently, just as stars do,

Woolf and Colomb blur the distinction between the characters' points of view, yet to different degrees. The sentences of 'represented speech and thought', in Woolf, convey the contents of Mrs. Ramsay's and William Banks' consciousness. The transition from William Banks' to Mrs. Ramsay's perspective is fluid. We read what they think about each other, yet, at different times as a shift in verbal tense shows. All sentences, apart from the last one, reflecting William Banks' speech and thought, are given in the simple past tense. These sentences are followed by reading Mrs. Ramsay's mind in the past perfect tense in the last line. The passage shows that a shift of perspective produces a shift of verbal tense. Mingling different characters' perspectives produces temporal complexification of the narrative. While it is made clear whose perspective is shown in *TL*, the reader of *ET* has difficulty in identifying who sees, speaks or thinks in a particular scene. Colomb's narrative incorporates the perspectives of different characters without making clear whose voice or perspective is heard. She represents the contents of her characters' minds through *style indirect libre*, in which the languages of different characters mingle. It is difficult to detect when one character's consciousness becomes interrupted by the thoughts of another. The first line is markedly different from César's usual thoughts and utterances, just as the tone of these words '[t]his is why César the nomad, the D.P., tried to kill his nephew Abraham' [Fr. 'Voilà pourquoi César le nomade, le D.P., essaya de tuer son neveu Abraham.')] reinforce the doubt that César's mind is here into the focus. For the words 'the nomad, the D.P.', represents Madame's vocabulary throughout the novel. Yet, in the absence of an omniscient-narrator—who could have commented on who

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*focusing their stares on you during summer nights, so much so that frightened villagers clasp their hands and raise them to the sky; and then, without lifting her eyes from César, she alluded to mules, which cannot have offspring. Various signs indicated that she was going to burst out laughing and show her yellow deep-sea-diver teeth. A mule, indeed! This is why César the nomad, the D.P., tried to kill his nephew Abraham. Before the sun rose the next day, he ventured out on the cornice, the stone walkway which marked the limits of the world of children and against which their sky once leant. Glued to the wall, he moved cautiously in front of the fifteen windows. What if Madame awoke at that very moment! But no, she could be heard snoring. If they had listened well, they would have heard her snoring in the fiacre back then when an old man was walking alongside her in the fog. If she awoke, she would open the shutters, pushing César off into the void. No more return of the shepherd, the traveler, the hostile stranger, the fox without a hole, his carrot-red hair sewn one by one onto a felt disk! What a cross to see him coming back to Fraidaigue in mid March when the osier bushes are reddening around the streams and the bare earth of the vineyards is the colour of dawn!' (The Spirits: 10–1) (The Italics are mine.)*

says what—this line can only be conveying César's interior monologue. Because apart from Madame and César, there is no one else to report how Madame focused her stare on César and was about to burst out laughing. Likewise, the next morning no one except César and Abraham could hear Madame snoring. Nor would have anyone known about his intention of killing his nephew, except himself. Even if the italicized lines provide evidence that César's consciousness is represented, a set of words: 'What a cross to see him coming back to Fraidaigue in mid March' [Fr. '[Q]uelle croix de le voir revenir à Fraidaigue vers la mimars'], indicate that Madame's thoughts take over; for they exemplify Madame's language throughout the novel. This ending line contains two parts: one which supposedly contains César's thoughts: 'when the osier bushes are reddening around the streams and the bare earth of the vineyards is the colour of dawn!' [Fr. '...quand les osiers rougissent autour des ruisseaux et que la terre nue des vignes est couleur d'aurore !'] and Madame's voice. The reader shifts from César's to Madame's consciousness. Consciousness is cut up when Colomb attempts to represent two characters' contents of consciousness at the same time. A 'stream' is broken by peculiar transitions between characters' consciousnesses: César's perception is replaced by Madame's consciousness within a few lines. Madame's utterances break the rhythm, while César's thoughts advance without cuts and ruptures. These poetic lines representing César's consciousness are melodic and emotional: 'No more return of the shepherd, the traveler, the hostile stranger, the fox without a hole, his carrot-red hair sewn one by one onto a felt disk!' [Fr. '*Fin* le retour du berger, du voyageur, de l'étranger hostile, du renard sans tanière, ses cheveux carotte cousus un par un à une rondelle de feutre !'] The words 'berger', 'voyageur', 'étranger', 'hostile', 'du renard sans tanière', 'ses cheveux cousus un par un à une rondelle de feutre!' have consonant, pleasing combinations of sounds. It follows that the shift in vocabulary (i.e., the choice of words) may also reveal whose perspective we are dealing with.

Colomb also uses 'nonfictional structures' (Sniader, 1992:92) which deconstruct a linear narrative design and allow several interpretations plausible regarding the speaker's identity. The 'maxims' (like '*ces étoiles qui posent sur vous les nuits d'été leurs regards convergents, si bien que soudain les villageois effrayés joignent et élèvent leurs mains vers le ciel*' or the '*mulets qui ne peuvent pas avoir d'enfants*') reveal the authorial voice but with a restricted narrative authority. Unlike 'fictions of authority' (Sniader Lanser, 1992), where the narrator is 'the single, extradiegetic and public voice, sole mediator of the fictional world, who occupies a 'higher' discursive plane than the characters' (*Ibid*: 85), the authorial voice expressed through the maxims in the present tense fails to provide a credible account and holds no privileged position to the characters in

Colomb's narrative. The maxims are inserted in the representation of characters' thoughts in *MD*; 'Cleverness was silly. One must say what one felt.' (*MD*: 292) 'It is a thousand pities never to say what one feels.' (*Ibid.*) Colomb and Woolf avoid using quotation marks to efface the distinction between the narrator's and the character's text or 'masculine' assertiveness and 'feminine' voice.<sup>161</sup>

In a similar vein to Woolf, Colomb makes experiments in fiction by integrating multiple and frequently shifting perspectives in *ET*. She also uses a rich palette of verbal tenses—contrary to the use of tenses in *CE*. In the passage, there are frequent shifts of different verbal tenses, namely: *passé simple* ('examina', 'fit', 'vit', 'essaya', 's'engagea', 'passa'), the present tense ('joignent', 'élèvent', 'peuvent', 'est'), *plus-que-parfait* ('avait fait', 'avaient écouté'), *imparfait* ('allait se mettre', 'bornait', 's'appuyait', 'entendait'), *subjonctif imparfait* ('levât'), *conditionnel passé* ('auraient entendue'), and *conditionnel présent* ('ouvrirait', 'lancerait'). Hence, in the use of verbal tenses—as the frequent use of the present tense illustrates—Colomb is no longer late in the use of the stylistic norms of her time.<sup>162</sup> What is more, using various tenses reflects on the temporal development of the narrative. The present tense is often found in the 'multiple-point-of-view novel'. (Leaska 1970: 43) Leaska explains the difference that lies between the classic omniscient novel and the 'multiple-point-of-view novel'. In the former, 'the information is narrated as though it had already occurred', while in the latter, 'the mental states are presented scenically as if the settings or situations which evoked those states were happening *now* before the reader, at the time of the reading'. (*Ibid.*) These differences reflect on the temporal development of the narrative. In the classic omniscient novel, information is communicated by someone who knows the end of the story; that is, in the past. In the above-given extract, there is no omniscient narration. The story is not told as though it had already happened. On the contrary, the information is provided through the consciousness of those observing in the present. Therefore, we have to do with the second type of narration, what Leaska calls 'multiple-point-of-view novel'. (Leaska 1970)

There are no genuine dialogues neither in *ET* nor in *TL*. Characters of these novels are not shown in situations where their feelings are revealed, and we may get to the intimacy of them. Even with her powerful capacity to unite people

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161 Susan Sniader Lanser suggests that 'novelistic 'stream of consciousness' was at first thought to reveal female consciousness (1992: 105), while 'women writers' (like Woolf or Eliot) reject narratorial authority as 'masculine'. (1992: 83)

162 Previous chapter explained that *CE* is behind the time in its use of verbal tenses, especially of the present tense, when compared to the *Nouveau Roman*.



and make ‘the house full of unrelated passions,’ (*TL*: 168) Mrs. Ramsay cannot express her deep feelings: ‘she never told [to Mr. Ramsay] that she loved him, but it was not so—it was not so. It was only that she never could say what she felt.’ (*TL*: 185) Both Colomb’s and Woolf’s characters converse more with their own thoughts than with each other. The novels focus on how they feel lonely even when surrounded by people. Some characters, such as Zoé, César, and Eugène, are mostly silenced, while the others (e.g., Madame) have no capacity and intellect to listen to others. Questions are often left in mid-air. Speaker may be not expecting an answer at all. Characters rarely exchange their thoughts in *ET*, and if they do, their words are cut short, as in these extracts:

Il part, tu entends ? Mais réponds au lieu de regarder par la fenêtre.<sup>163</sup> (*ET*: 962)

— La fille du directeur ? Laquelle ? Eugénie ?

— Non. La cadette. Oh ! c’est la cadette de plusieurs années, la petite. J’épouse la petite.  
Nous nous marierons prochainement.

— Fermez cette fenêtre, criait-elle, ce soleil de printemps me fait mal à la tête.<sup>164</sup> (*ET*: 972)

« Chère demoiselle, disait-elle le lendemain à Isabelle, vrai, vous ne savez pas filocher ? »  
En vain Isabelle lui objecta qu’elle connaissait le Reticello, la broderie anglaise, le point de Venise, celui de Boulogne et de Richelieu. Elle n’écoutait pas.

— Quoi ? vous ne savez pas faire le nœud du pêcheur ? Chère enfant !<sup>165</sup> (*ET*: 982)

That is why Colomb and Woolf seek to make the best use of techniques of free direct and free indirect discourses. While Colomb’s characters, Madame and César, do not dialogue in real life, their most hidden thoughts may be connected—placed side by side and within the same sentence— using these techniques. The unspoken—the inaudible thoughts of William Bankes about Mrs. Ramsay—is also voiced in Woolf when *style indirect libre* gets used.

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163 Eng. ‘He’s going away, are you listening? Answer instead of looking out the window!’ (*The Spirits*: 23)

164 Eng. ‘The director’s daughter? Which one? Eugénie?’

‘No. The younger one. Oh, she’s several years younger, the little one. I’m marrying the young one. We’ll be getting married soon.’ ‘Close that window!’ she was shouting, ‘The spring sunlight is giving me a headache.’ (*The Spirits*: 35)

165 Eng. ‘My dear daughter’, she asked Isabelle the next day, ‘is it true you don’t know how to do needle lace?’ Isabelle protested in vain that she in fact knew how to do Reticella, English embroidery, Venetian needle lace, Bologna needle lace and Richelieu needle lace. Pepin’s mother wasn’t listening. ‘What? You don’t even know how to tie a fisherman’s knot? My dear child!’ (*The Spirits*: 48–9)

Colomb's and Woolf's ways of representing characters' speech is in line with Banfield's non-communication theory of narrative (1982). In *Unspeakable Sentences* and her 1973 study, 'Narrative style and the grammar of direct and indirect speech: Foundations of Language', Banfield suggests that 'communicational theories of narrative can only account for the first-person fictional narratives where the narrator', according to Banfield, 'explicitly addresses a narratee and, from a formal viewpoint, where the narrative is recounted as communication'. (Patron & Nicholls 2013: 245) Based on Banfield's theory, since there is neither the first-person narrative with a narrator addressing to a narratee in Woolf and Colomb, there is not an act of communication. Characters' direct or indirect speech (given above) is reported in a specific form, which is distinct from an ordinary dialogue. And the language of narrative fiction differs from other types of discourses. (Banfield 1982: 10)

Hence, separate instances of consciousness may turn into streams in *TL*, whereas the flow of a character's mind is interrupted by the consciousness of another character in *ET*. Like Woolf, Colomb seeks to turn the interiority of several characters into a stream. She attempts to create continuity between separate instances of consciousness, thereby expressing the hope to establish a dialogue between those whose worldview and differences cannot be compromised and reconciled. Yet, a dialogue between separate instances of consciousness is not possible in Colomb, because the contents of a character's mind stop to be mirrored once the consciousness of another character takes over. In literary contexts, relying on Dowling's definition of a 'stream' as the uninterrupted flow of narrative as well as the narrative which is delayed, broken, (Dowling 1991: 47) *ET* may be thought of as a novel that contains a stream of interrupted consciousness rather than the consciousness as a continuous stream; whereas Woolf's moving from one consciousness to another is fluid, resulting in a continuous stream. Even if *ET* does not contain the Woolfian 'stream', it may still be classified in the category of 'stream of consciousness novel' genre.

We draw a distinction between Colomb and Woolf, suggesting that consciousness is more frequently interrupted in Colomb than in Woolf. Both employ a polyphony of voices. Unlike the fictional prose where the narrator controls or manipulates focalization, Woolf and Colomb deliberately choose to let go freely multiple characters' voices. The very absence of linear, mechanical thinking and of the omniscient narratorial voice exemplifies Colomb's and Woolf's modernist scepticism. Distribution of voices and perspectives creates shifts of time. Ultimately, telling the story from various angles of vision and at different times creates the aesthetics of time. We also learn that it is much easier to tell who speaks or thinks in *TL* than in *ET*. Besides, Colomb introduces

several characters' perspectives within a few sentences, giving not much time to the reader to understand which character sees, thinks, or feels in the story.

### 3.6 The '*roman poétique*' by Catherine Colomb

Our specific concern in this section is to learn in what formal properties and history of the novel Colomb's representation of time works out. Our answer to this question is that Colomb's 'French' novel develops independently from Woolf's 'English' novel,<sup>166</sup> according to the formalist principles of the 1930s '*roman poétique*', in the French literary and cultural contexts. The most recent study of Colomb by Anne-Frédérique Schläpfer (2019) focuses, by contrast, on the elements of the 'English novel' in the novelistic prose of the swiss French female writers including Catherine Colomb. While Schläpfer's contribution should be applauded for its discovery of qualities of the English novel in the writings of Colomb, its flaws need also be admitted. Schläpfer only partially accounts for the qualities of Colomb's fiction, drawing no attention to the French novel elements in her writings or in a broader sense, what distinguishes Colomb from English novelists. Like Schläpfer, Valérie Cossy (2019) also focuses on Colomb's privileged bonds with Lady Ottoline Morrell. Yet, reading Colomb in ways most of her contemporary scholars do suggest that we may well overlook the fact that her novels contain the features of 'French novel' too insofar as she is coming from the French-speaking cultural background, which is not the case for Woolf.<sup>167</sup> Whereas if we continue reading Colomb as early scholars do, we will not be able to place her work in the literature of her time. As noted earlier, from the 1960s to the 1980s, critics did not evaluate Colomb's novels in light of stylistic conventions of her time. Unlike early and contemporary critics, I remain attentive to both similarities and differences between Colomb's and Woolf's projects and hold that Colomb's 'English project' is also well placed in the 'French moment'. This way I hope to open up the features of both 'English novel' and 'French novel' that inform her writing and respond to Colomb's inventions with time and temporality.

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166 We do not ignore the fact that Woolf's prose, just like any English novel between 1880 and 1930, was written, in Gilles Philippe's words, during 'the French moment' of English prose (p. 6); see Philippe (2016). Woolf's letters to Roger Fry (*Letters*, II: 525), her diaries and essays attest that Virginia Woolf admired Proust's style and wished to write like him; see Barbakadze (2022: 75–88).

167 Anne-Frédérique Schläpfer and Valérie Cossy discuss the influence of the Anglo-Saxon world on Colomb. See Schläpfer (2019: 95–107) and Cossy (2019: 109–131).

The elements common to the French '*roman poétique*' [Eng. 'poetic novel']—well-developed in the literature in French of the 1930s— may well be traced in *CE* and in *ET*. These elements include both thematic and structural characteristics such as combining surrealist elements with the real-world experiences, representation of time, elusive characters, a spiral structure and cyclical temporality, and a return to the origin and to the mythical age. Tracing them helps us understand that what Colomb tries to achieve in fiction is not completely 'new'; rather, it is already present in the sensitivity of writers in the 1930s. Therefore, it is important to interpret her experiments and work on style in coherence with this sub-genre: how her fiction is driven towards *poiesis*.

We can begin to highlight what Colomb's fiction shares with the 1930s '*roman poétique*', also qualified as the '*récit poétique en prose*', ['poetic narrative in prose']. (Tadié, 1978) by giving some details about this sub-genre. In *La Crise du roman*, Michel Raimond (1967) explores historical and intellectual settings of the poetic novel of the 1920s-1930s.<sup>168</sup> He reviews different definitions (for instance, by Le Cardonnél, Du Bos, Gilbert de Voisins, Robert Poulet) and modalities of '*roman poétique*'. These modalities include the exploration of dream reality and of something fantastical about everyday life that we see in Arnoux and Aragon. (Raimond 1967: 225) According to Gilbert de Voisins' account, the poetic novel also loaded reality with magic and focused on images and symbols. (*Ibid.*, 226) The poetic tone in prose also slows down the action and paints everyday life as unreal and ridiculous. (*Ibid.*, 228)

A hybrid literary form combining poetry and prose emerged earlier than the 1930s. The symbolist artists counting Mallarmé and Rimbaud sought to break free the generic divisions between prose and poetry as early as the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. A literary form that upsets the relationships between these genres was referred as '*roman poétique*' or 'lyric novel' by Mallarmé's contemporaries.<sup>169</sup> Mallarmé praised *free verse*, a new form of verse which blurred the distinction between poetry and prose. Rimbaud himself implemented the form in the cycle of his prose poems, *Une Saison en enfer* (1873, *A Season in Hell*), and in *Illuminations*. (1871–75) The aesthetic revolution was taken further in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, followed by the emergence of a new literary form qualified as the '*roman poétique*'. As a sub-genre, the '*récit poétique en prose*' was first defined by Jean-Yves Tadié in 1978. It is a type of narrative which combines both poetic

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168 On the poetic novel see Chapter IV 'L'Âge du roman poétique' of Part 3 « Les métamorphoses du roman » in *La Crise du roman*. (1967: 224–242)

169 See the definition of the '*roman poétique*' in Combe (1992).

effects and novelistic techniques of description, thus constituting, for Tadié, a 'phenomenon of transition' between novel and poem. (1978: 7) In detail, the 'poetic narrative' retains fictional ingredients such as characters and places. Yet, there is a 'conflict between the referential functions of evocation and representation and the poetic function which draws attention to the very form of the message'. (*Ibid.*, 9) For J.-L. Tadié, the '*récit poétique en prose*' is simultaneously archaic and modern. For it contains archaic elements, such as the mythical ones, while also transcending the literary schools driven by the symbolist movements from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century to the 1950s, until the period of the 'Nouveau Roman'.

Even if Tadié's rigorous study is quite dated and includes a large number of French novelists in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, it may still be very useful for revealing Colomb's negotiations with the French literary tradition in this section.<sup>170</sup> The '*récit poétique*' is defined in a broad sense as Tadié uses an empiric approach in his reading of common points between different works. In Tadié's book, the places like castle, room or island are thought as privileged, mythological places which the '*récit poétique en prose*' sub-genre widely uses. (1978: 47–82) Colomb's novels fit into the category of '*roman poétique*' of the 1930s, because they include both surrealist elements and the real-world experiences.<sup>171</sup> Colomb's surrealist narrative gives poetic value to the castle, but it also reverses its classical meaning. The castle, a poetic place borrowed from the ancient texts, stands as a symbol of enclosed place or asylum in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. (*Ibid.*, 58–9) In Colomb's 1953 novel, a castle is not a strong, stable building. It is half demolished. The *château* of Fraidaigue comes to function as a metaphor for the civilization interrupted, an exile and the paradise lost under the tyranny and oppression of the so-called *Madame*, nicknamed *Sémiramis*. After the death of their mother, the orphan protagonists, César and Zoé, 'step on Madame's shadow, after avoiding the one cast by the demolished tower from which the turtledove had fallen'. [Fr. '[M]archer sur l'ombre de Madame, après avoir évité celle de la tour abolie d'où la tourterelle était tombée en voulant cueillir du capillaire'.] (*The Spirits*: 40; *ET*: 976) *Madame* intimidates everyone with her terrible stares and giggles and wishes everyone death. Whenever she groans or laughs 'the startled villagers stuck their

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170 Tadié's study of the '*récit poétique*' contains the analysis of the texts by French writers in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. His list includes Aragon, Bataille, Bonnefoy, Breton, Cocteau, Desnos, Giraudoux, Giono, Gracq, and Proust among many.

171 Catherine Colomb is only read as a war-novelist in Philippe Geinoz's 2019 book and my recent article; see Barbakadze (2021: 163–176). In these works, Catherine Colomb's fiction is placed into the historical reality, leaving us with renewed appreciation for Colomb's *œuvre* as an account of war and persecution.

heads out of their windows: 'It's the baroness. What's the matter with her? Let's hope our windowpanes won't fall out as they did the other day!' ['[L]es villageois effrayés passèrent la tête à la fenêtre : « C'est la baronne. Qu'est-ce qu'elle a ? Pourvu que nos vitres ne tombent pas comme l'autre jour ! »'] (*The Spirits*: 6; *ET*: 951) No one, not even her husband, dares to speak freely to *Madame*. If anyone somehow does it, he/she is immediately interrupted. If *Madame* is not laughing or groaning, she is staring at Isabelle's suitors or criticising her brother-in-law César. From time to time, she even raises her 'big, lividly, white hand to impose silence'. ['[E]lle levait pour imposer silence sa grande main blanche d'emmurée.'] (*The Spirits*., 151; *ET*: 1055). *Madame* thus personifies the totalitarian force. The castle cannot perform its main function of protection under her ruling. It cannot defend people from the evils of totalitarianism.<sup>172</sup> Colomb makes a strong connection between real life and fiction through the use of '*roman poétique*'. This literary form in the 1930s, for Robert Poulet, refused causal determinism by introducing the inexplicable to turn novel into the 'living thing'— what the avant-gardists also strived for.<sup>173</sup> Likewise, Colomb sought to represent the inexplicable totalitarian menace by mirroring life within and outside the castle walls.

Another more relevant point characterizing the '*récit poétique*' is syncretic, primordial time, especially the time of childhood, with season images, a time without duration and date, marked by both stillness and discontinuity. (Tadié, 1978: 83–111) The chronology of events described in the '*récit poétique*' generally responds to the question 'What time is it?', rather than which year or which date it is. (*Ibid.*, 86) Likewise, relevant events, such as the christening banquet, the reception for the Shah, the characters' death and birth have no date in *CE*; whereas we know at which precise hour some seemingly irrelevant facts

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172 Details about Colomb's negotiation with history given in this paragraph are borrowed from my talk given at the 11<sup>th</sup> Congress of German Franco-Romanistic Association [Fr. *L'Association des francoromanistes allemands*] 'Guerre et paix. Crises et conflits – nouvelles perspectives', University of Osnabrück, (September 26–29, 2018), and are further given in my article: see Barbakadze (2021: 163–176).

173 In 1929, in the first notebook of the review *Nord*, Robert Poulet developed his position about '*roman poétique*' while presenting some extracts from his novel *Handji*. The presentation lanced the debate about the '*roman poétique*' and '*réalisme magique*'. The formulation of '*roman poétique*' in 1929 described the process of assimilating Belgian to French literature. More precisely, it grasped the transition from the '*fantastique réel*', championed by Hellens, to magical realism—the conception which was similar to what Poulet adopted in 1929 with regard to the '*roman poétique*'; see Denis (2002: 31–32).

occurred. We know, for instance, at what time Adolphe takes photos: 'Adolphe also took his photographs between noon and 2 a.m.' [*Adolphe tirait aussi ses photographies entre midi et deux heures.*] (CE: 850) or when the train passes through the town: 'She was passing through town on the eight forty-five train.' [*Elle passait dans la ville par le train de huit heures quarante-cinq.*] (CE: 769) Again, some apparently important historical events have no dates; whereas we know in what year the cover of 'Voltaire armchair' was embroidered: 'a large Voltaire-style armchair [...] was covered with the merdoie tapestry that the dyer's daughter embroidered in 1840.' [*[U]n grand fauteuil genre Voltaire [...] étia[t] recouvert de la tapisserie merdoie que la fille du teinturier avait brodée en 1840.*] (CE: 764.) As in the 'récit poétique', Colomb's characters desire to return to childhood. Her novels do not show us a child becoming an adult. On the contrary, Galeswinthe looks young even if she ages: 'Galeswinthe put the crepe veil around her little face; time was prowling around but couldn't find a place to rest.' [*Galeswinthe mit le voile de crêpe autour de son petit visage ; le temps rôdait autour, mais ne trouvait pas un endroit où se poser.*] (CE: 826) Colomb's poetic narrative seeks to escape time by going back to the origins of the world and beyond history. As her novels are devoted to childhood—to the origins of life—they do not contain explicit historical references with dates.

Also, Colomb's characters are elusive, as in the 'récit poétique'. They can only be defined by their look, language, dreams, and reveries. Most of them can be identified by what they say or think. For instance, Galeswinthe mostly wonders when her dear brother comes back: 'Paul! When will he be back? I loved him. He was my favorite.' [*Paul ! Quand reviendra-t-il ? Je l'adorais. Il fut mon préféré.*] (CE: 826) The snob banker Jâmes Laroche keeps saying to his relatives: 'our family ties are very distant, they are lost in the mists of time; do they even exist?' [*[N]os liens de parenté sont bien éloignés, ils se perdent dans la nuit des temps ; existent-ils même ?*] (CE: 827) Madame believes: "I think I would have made a very good doctor". [*« Je crois que j'aurais fait un très bon médecin ».*] (ET: 1056; *The Spirits*: 152) She also regrets rushing into her marriage with Eugène. The stranger, who she thinks an 'ambassador's attaché', she met once in Venice, would perhaps be a better husband:

Et c'est là que Madame vit pour la première fois son attaché d'ambassade, placé à sa gauche, guettant les oiseaux des mers. [...] Madame fit plier sous son poids la jetée de pierres disjointes, l'étranger débarqué avant elle lui tendit la main. Elle le retrouva devant l'échoppe de cartes postales, puis devant l'église enfoncée dans la terre. Mais que me veut-il ? Est-ce que j'ai l'air d'une femme facile ? Moi ? Le voici qui s'avance comme pour me parler ; et Eugène qui montre des coquillages à Ulysse et à Isabelle ! « Madame, dit-il, excusez-moi, prenez-vous la vedette pour rentrer à Venise ? » Elle s'éloigna sans

répondre ; mais que de fois dans les longues soirées d'hiver, quand Eugène s'endormait sur sa chaise, regretta-t-elle de n'avoir pas répondu ! [...] C'était sûrement un attaché d'ambassade, il portait des souliers vernis, une jaquette noire, la Légion d'honneur.<sup>174</sup> (ET: 1053–4)

Tadié explains that in 1900, a character is no longer a driving force of story; since Flaubert, a character has become the 'pure place of passions, impressions, and ideas'. He is no more than the 'emptiness filled with the world, a glance cast on a spectacle and the means for questioning the appearances'. (Tadié 1978: 14) In Colomb, comic and tragicomic images, given in the above passage, are set to the fore. Action is reduced to a minimum, and events and characters appear like images as in a child's memory. Even if it is skilfully crafted, the physical appearance cannot say much about a character's personality: 'Adolphe already bald, his eyes weary and wrinkled behind his lorgnon' [*Adolphe déjà chauve, des yeux fripés derrière son lorgnon*], or 'César whose carrot-red hairs have been sewn one by one to a felt disk. [*César dont les cheveux carotte sont cousus un par un à une rondelle de feutre*]. (The Spirits: 41; ET: 977) Most of them have no voice like the actors in the silent movie and the mime show: 'Emilie Févot frowning her thick eyebrows as when watching with her cold and silent mother the cavalcade at Le Creusot'. [*Émilie Févot fronçant ses sourcils épais comme lorsqu'elle regardait avec sa mère froide et muette la cavalcade au Creusot*]. (CE: 787) We understand of César—of the protagonist of *ET*—only because we enter into his dreams. He believes that one day he will find his brothers and sister as they were in childhood: "Where are my brothers, my sister from back then? Where are the children? In my dreams, I meet up with them, they're standing on the beach, I speak to them, I touch their chubby little hands". [*« Où sont mes frères, ma sœur d'autrefois ? Où sont les enfants ? Dans mes rêves, je les rencontre, ils se tiennent debout sur la grève, je leur parle, je touche leurs petites mains épaisses »*].

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174 Eng. 'And this is when Madame saw her embassy attaché for the first time, sitting to her left, on the look-out for seabirds. [...] The jetty of loose rocks sagged under Madame's weight, the stranger, who had debarked before she did, lent her his hand. She met up with him again in front of the postcard booth, then in front of the church sunk into the ground. But what does he want? Do I look like an easy woman? Me? Now he's coming forward as if to speak to me while Eugène is showing shells to Ulysse and Isabelle! 'Madame', he says, 'excuse me, will you be taking the launch back to Venice?' She moved off without replying; but so often during the long winter evenings, when Eugène dropped off to sleep in his chair, how she regretted not having replied! [...] He was surely an embassy attaché, with his polished shoes, black dress vest, Legion of Honour'. (The Spirits: 48–9)



(*The Spirits*: 8–9; *ET*, I: 953) Hence, Colomb captures a character's entire life not through his actions or parole but through his dreams and reveries as found in the 'roman poétique' of the 1930s.

With focus on childhood and search for origins, her novels utilize cyclical and spiral structures as found in the 'récit poétique'. Some events or memories keep repeating in the course of the narrative. For instance, César moves from the *château* of Fraidaigue claimed by his brother Eugène and to the country mansion which is taken by his other brother Adolphe every six months. Isabelle's suitors Pépin, Benjamin Dogodela, the 'gentleman-farmer,' and Uranais also come and go. Yet, the order of these events is reversed, and the narrative takes us back to the protagonist's childhood. César's desire to 'find children,' and Madame's groaning, laughters, cleaning her nails, and calling César 'our cross.' [ '« Oh ! c'est ma croix »'. ] (*The Spirits*: 40; *ET*: 975) are also mentioned several times in *ET*. Spiral narrative is mainly used in *CE*.<sup>175</sup>

As we acknowledge the specificity of the theme—search of origins and childhood—, it becomes understandable why the chronology is reversed in *ET*. Going back to childhood implies giving rise to a still life, to time which does not flow. The text also suggests that:

[O]n peut compter de cent à un aussi facilement que de un à cent, et est-ce que le lac parfois, les chaudes journées d'août, ne s'incline pas vers l'embouchure du Rhône en renversant sa pente légère ? on pouvait donc partir du dernier prétendant d'Isabelle, l'Uranais,—à son oreille gauche pendait un anneau d'or,—longer les événements, marcher en marge de la vie, pareil à un enfant que les grandes personnes qui parlent du temps, d'horaires, de caleçons de laine, poussent insensiblement vers la frange de terre inséparée des eaux.<sup>176</sup> (*ET*: 1102)

Counting backwards from one hundred in a way implies reversing the order of events to return to the origins, to 'walk on the fringes of life like a child' as this passage suggests. The main function of circular structure, for Tadié, is to suspend

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175 Examples are given in the subchapters: 1.3 Interrupted Consciousness vs. Consciousness as a Stream ; and 3.8 A Story within Colomb's leitmotif & Woolf's 'moment.'

176 Eng. 'One can count from one hundred to one as easily as one can from one to one hundred, and doesn't the lake, during the hot August days, sometimes slant down to the mouth of the Rhone by inverting its slight slope? One could thus begin with Isabelle's most recent suitor, the man from the canton of Uri—a gold earring dangling from his left ear—move along the events, strolling on the margins of life like a child whom adults, speaking about time, schedules and woollen long johns, imperceptibly push off to those fringes of land inseparable from the waters.' (*The Spirits*: 219–220)

time and enclose in itself the world enclosing the end of our childhood in itself. (1978: 119) *ET* contains both the circular structure and the one with the reversed chronology.

The poetic tone of Colomb's prose also owes much to the linguistic resources. The syntactic composition of her subjectivist novels creates poetic effects. The lyrical quality of Colomb's work is also a product of figures of speech: ellipses, similes (e. g., '*le syndic, le visage grand comme une montagne*'. (CE: 117) '*Cependant le vieux médecin violet et blanc auscultait Jâmes, le retournait, les sourcils hérissés, comme un chat avec sa patte*'. (CE : 120)), oxymorons ('*la pauvre et riche Elise*') (CE: 48), irony.<sup>177</sup>

Elisabeth, sur leur balcon, sèche ses cheveux qui viennent d'être lavés avec un jaune d'œuf et du rhum et se regarde avec satisfaction dans la porte-fenêtre où paraissent comme sur un daguerréotype un coin de ciel bleu sombre, des feuilles vert foncé, une petite fille blonde, immobile, dans ce paysage des îles peint en lie de vin. Là-bas la mère en robe surannée redresse une rose ; à la hauteur de ses pieds, des femmes dépeignées, avec leurs faces toutes semblables, couleur laine de mouton, la regardent.<sup>178</sup> (CE: 115)

This extract is made rhythmical by the uses of alliteration ('*sur, sèche ses*'; '*rhum, regarde*'; '*porte- fenêtre, paraissent*'; '*fenêtre, feuilles, foncé, fille*'; '*robe, redresse, rose*'), complex syntax and punctuation marks. The poetic style in these lines also originates from the wealth of Colomb's vocabulary. To create melodic sonorities, Colomb describes the faces of women as 'sheep's wool coloured', and 'this landscape of islands' as 'painted in wine lees'. With its 'lexical deployment', the words featuring landscape and natural phenomena, Colomb's novel reminds Gilles Philippe of Colette's poetical prose (2017: 56):

Le temps était suspendu sur la trêve de septembre ; toute l'année, ses vents, ses orages, ne font que préparer ces journées miraculeuses où dans la balance que tient un Dieu

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177 Eng. (1) 'the trustee, his face as big as a mountain'; (2) However, the old purple and white doctor was thoroughly examining Jâmes, turning him over, his eyebrows raised, like a cat with its paw'; (3) 'poor and rich Elise'.

178 Eng. 'Elisabeth, on their balcony, dries her hair, which has just been washed with egg yolk and rum, and looks at herself with satisfaction in the French window where appear as on a daguerreotype a corner of dark blue sky, dark green leaves, a little blonde girl, motionless, in this landscape of the islands painted in wine lees. Over there the mother in an outmoded dress straightens a rose; at the height of her feet, disheveled women, with their faces alike, the color of sheep's wool, look at her'.

à l'immense tête d'azur le vent du sud équilibre le vent du nord, où le lion joue avec l'agneau.<sup>179</sup> (CE: 751–52)

These lines, lyrical in intonation, pronounce the passage of time and also recall Woolf's poetic dealing with inanimate things in *To the Lighthouse*. Her contemporaries recognized Woolf more 'as a lyrical poet than as a novelist'. (Woolf Online : 'Lyrical Fiction'. The Glasgow Herald. (26.05.1927: 4)) Earlier scholarship on Woolf mainly focused on lyrical imagery, which seemed particularly well presented in the second section of *TL*—'a rhapsody where ten years pass away in a kind of incantation'. (Williams 1927: 78) Currently we know that 'prose was her natural medium'.<sup>180</sup> (Kopley, Sullam (2013: 1)) Woolf's prose consists of a hybrid literary form; the recognition of the 'historical interdependence and interaction of literary genres and forms' led her to consider 'the possibilities of English prose'. (*Ibid.*) Woolf's blending verse and prose in a unified artwork is now defined as an experiment with the lyrical novel as a genre, or subgenre, 'a strangely alienated, yet somehow essential genre'. (Freedman (1963: viii)) Observing themes and images from a lyrical point of view suggests releasing them from a linear time-dependent narrative and integrating a dual vision of inner and outer. Connecting 'the novelist's need for a concrete world with the poet's heightened insights' thus effaces the division between subjectivity and objectivity within the Woolfian 'moment'. (*Ibid.*, 201)

Woolf's and Colomb's contribution to the genre is to organize opposing perceptions (subjective and objective) within one poetic vision but to different degrees. Woolf, unlike Colomb, is less concerned with actual or possible phenomena. Woolf, Gilles Philippe rightly suggests, mainly adopts 'phenomenological' views to explore consciousness; Colomb relies more on a 'phenomenalistic' perception. (2017: 13)

In Proust and Colomb, just as in the '*récit poétique*' in general, a story of experience or revelation is subject to transformations over time and undercut by an internal doubt that resists the sameness. Both use the circular structure: a narrative is broken by the repetition of themes, as in music. But the theme is different in each repetition: more for Proust than for Colomb experienced moments are never the same or as Bergson puts it, 'there are no two identical

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179 'Time was suspended over the September lull; all year long its winds, its storms only prepare these miraculous days when on a scale held by the God with a huge azure head, the south wind balances the north wind, the lion plays with the lamb.'

180 For a thorough study of Woolf's practices of a variety of literary genres and activities see Sullam (2016), (2020).

moments in the life of the same conscious being', for 'the second moment always contains, over and above the first, the memory that the first has bequeathed to it'. (Bergson 1999: 26) In other words, the meaning that we give to things is never all-comprising, absolute. Rather, our worldview revolves around ambiguity. In general, for Proust and Colomb, the uncertainty constitutes an essential part of our perception of reality. What we learn out of reading their fiction is that our being in the world is subject to repetitive experiences—we move on the circle—, but these moments are never the same, and the differences need to be researched. Presentations of Alphonse's theme in different chapters, and what Swann feels each time he listens to Vinteuil's sonata are very different from one another. In each repetition, given somewhere later in the text, a 'little phrase' acquires a different meaning for Swann just as the theme of *Alphonse's fall* is loaded with the meaning that all previous mentions of this experience in the text contain. Thus, for Proust and Colomb, our views and beliefs change in time. At first one cannot tell what meaning this or that image contains in Colomb. For instance, the reader should guess that a 'small hand placed on a stone flowered with moss' (*The Spirits*: 136) is Gwen's. ['[U]ne petite main appuyée à la pierre fleurie de mousse'. (*ET*: 1044)] As for Walter's wife, who is addressed as 'the humble girl from Emmental', ['[L]'humble fille de l'Emmental'] (*CE*: 760–61) she is called Liesel, as we later learn. The meaning that these images contain is only clarified in repetition.

Hence, we read a story of revelation in Proust and Colomb as in the '*roman poétistique*'. By contrast, in Woolf, there are 'moments of revelation' rather than a 'story of revelation'. 'The Window' of *TL* and *MD* adopt the structure of 'one-day novel' rather than a circular structure. Woolf does not make as much use of recurring themes and leitmotifs in her two novels as Proust and Colomb. Besides, the narrative in *TL* and *MD* evolves around 'moment', as the following pages of this chapter explain, rather than in its circular unfolding.

### 3.7 Simultaneity of multiple time frames

Our comparative study of Proust and Colomb focused on the experiments with time and temporality in the previous chapter. It sought to explore the relations between past and present in *CE* and *ET*. This chapter continues to explore Colomb's and Woolf's practices of representing multiple points of view in several distinct fictional worlds and time frames through comparative examination of some fragments in *CE* and *TL*. The analysis of selected novels sheds light on multiple facets in which Colomb and Woolf reveal the complexity of the notion of time. It illustrates that not only does Colomb examine the relations between

past and present,<sup>181</sup> but she also represents time passing on clocks and calendars, in history and prehistory, in a dream and a fairy-tale in order to report the human and non-human experiences of time. In doing so, Colomb relies on both traditional and experimental narrative techniques and complex symbolism in search to invent new modes of time representation and expand the reader's sense of how time is experienced. Focusing on time in the non-human world, the section uses the middle part ('Time Passes') of *TL* as a point of reference and contrast in the analysis of Colomb's Modernist practices. Woolf strictly separates the human and non-human perceptions of time in *TL*. The section explains that, unlike Woolf's novel, a mechanism of time in Colomb is depicted in several distinct fictional worlds, such as the humans' mental and physical worlds, the underworld (settled by the dead and aquatic creatures), the earthly (various types of insects), the heavenly (such as angels in the biblical world), and the Fairy-tale realms. Therefore, this section focuses on Colomb's complex system of representation, revealing the sub-conscious and its mechanism of time.

In the 'Time Passes', ten years that include the First World War and the deaths of three members of Ramsays' family are reduced to the passage of a single night.<sup>182</sup> All go to sleep when Mr. Bankes, Lily, Andrew, and Prue come back home after their dinner walk.<sup>183</sup> Darkness, wind, and chaos invade the house at once in section 2 of Part 2. Sleep, as a suspension of consciousness, allows the 'immense darkness' to sweep in once lighted bedrooms. (*TL*: 143) While the dreamers dream, the house starts to 'rack and ruin', (*TL*: 158) allowing 'the thistle and the swallow, the rat and the straw' (*Ibid.*) and 'the tortoise-shell butterflies' (*TL*: 157) to nestle in. 'Poppies sowed themselves among the dahlias; the lawn waved with long grass' (*Ibid.*) in their accelerated rhythm. The house becomes 'deserted'. (*Idem.*) 'Many families', including the family of Ramsays, 'los(e) their dearest'. (*TL*: 156) Mrs. Ramsay, Prue, and Andrew—they all die. When 'the sun lift(s) the curtains' (*TL*: 163) on the next day, Lily Briscoe discovers that 'here she was again, [...] sitting bolt upright in bed. Awake'. (*Ibid.*) She sits at the kitchen-table again just as 'she had sat there last ten years ago'. (*TL*: 167) Yet, this time, she is 'alone'. Mrs. Ramsay is no longer alive. After ten years of absence, 'the house, the place, the morning, all seemed strangers to her', (*TL*: 166) because 'the link

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181 See a comparative study of Proust and Colomb (Chapter 2).

182 The discussion about how much time passes in Part 2 of *TL* is held in the following pages in this chapter.

183 See section 1, Part 2 of *TL*.

that usually bound things together had been cut'. (*Ibid.*) Things have dramatically changed over time, over the passing years.

Woolf compresses not only ten years but also four seasons in the passage of 'Time Passes'. Winter and Autumn are described in Section 3 (145–147); Spring and Summer—in section 6 (150–153). In Woolf's Winter the nights 'lengthen' and 'darken'. (*TL*: 145) There is once again an allusion to Shakespeare's 'yellow leaves' (Sonnet LXXIII) changing their colour and dying—a significant leitmotif in 'The Window'—in the description of 'autumn trees' in Part 2. The Spring of Part 2 is 'without a leaf'. (*TL*: 150) And 'in the heat of summer the wind sent its spies about the house again'. (*TL*: 151) The 'flies', which 'wove a web in the sunny rooms' (*Ibid.*) and 'weeds that had grown close to the glass'. (*Idem.*)

The world in consciousness of Part 1 is contrasted with the world without consciousness of Part 2. Whereas Part I and III are concerned with the human viewers and the humans viewed, the middle panel does not describe the world through the human perspective. Woolf sets up Part 1 and Part 2 on oppositions. Time slows in Part 1 as Woolf projects multiple characters' consciousnesses in parallel within the confines of one day. Whereas in Part 2 she takes note of the lapse of time by accelerating its usual speed. Long lapse of time lasts only a few minutes or seconds in the 'Time Passes' as in a dream. She speeds up time passing at night, when the humans are in their deep sleep and probably dreaming. Woolf paints colourful life in a family house of Part 1 as it appears during the day; whereas in the middle part she projects nightmarish dreams of death. 'All the rooms of the house made full of life – the drawing-room; behind the drawing-room, the kitchen, and 'above the kitchen the bedrooms; and beyond them the nurseries [were] filled with life' in Part 1. (*TL*: 42) Whereas they are filled with darkness, wind and 'nothingness' in Part 2. (*TL*: 143–145) Chaos takes on in Part 2 and replaces the 'order', (*TL*: 111) 'the domesticity triumph(ing)' (*TL*: 35) of 'The Window'. In Part 1, the Ramsays' guests went 'indoors'. (*TL*: 145) In Part 2, 'certain airs, detached from the body of the wind' seem now to 'venture indoors'. (*TL*: 144) In Part 1, the house was 'filled with [humans'] words'. (*TL*: 43) In Part 2, 'a giant voice shriek(s) loud in its agony'. (*TL*: 152) The focus is shifted away from the humans' world. The looking glass on the wall no longer holds a human 'face', 'a figure', 'a hand' or 'children' who would 'come in rushing and tumbling'. (*TL*: 147) Instead, it reflects 'form(s) from which life had parted'. (*TL*: 141) More precisely, 'only the shadows of the trees, flourishing in the wind, [which] made obeisance on the wall, and for a moment darkened the pool in which light reflected itself. (*Ibid.*) 'The trees standing there, and the flowers standing there, looking before them, looking up, yet beholding nothing, eyeless, and thus terrible' (*TL*: 154) change the human viewer. Woolf calls 'eyeless' to 'the thing that

exists when we aren't there.' (*Diary 3*: 114) The world of Part II is 'both "eyeless" and "I-less"; notes Suzanne Raitt. (1990: 90) Whereas human consciousness constitutes the central theme in the first and last parts of *TL*, in the middle part time is represented as it exists according to Nature and non-human criteria.<sup>184</sup> The metaphor 'eyeless' stands for the sightless mind rather than for physical blindness. The sightless personified forces of nature replace human vision.

Communication between nature and humans is not possible in *TL*. Woolf even sets up brackets in the middle panel to draw a distinction between the human and the non-human. There is no place for humans in the world of Part 2. The humans' space (house) and time (ten years or lifetime) are stolen by nature. The human values and language are held meaningless in Part 2. Human reason cannot be applied to the non-human. Human actions and experiences are enclosed in the parenthesis: '[Here Mr. Carmichael, who was reading Virgil, blew out his candle. It was past midnight.]' (*TL*: 145) Even the sense of time passing is different in the human and the non-human worlds. There is a lack of specificity about how much time passes in the "Time Passes" section. It can be ten years if we compare the time length of and recovery from the Great War in history to what happens in the middle panel. But fiction does not necessarily assess its events with the same spatio-temporal accuracy as history. No dates are given in *TL*. Reading the fiction and reading the real is not a single act in the 20<sup>th</sup> century unlike 19<sup>th</sup> century fiction which may be read as a report of historical facts with its numerous direct references to real-world events, dates and places. (Tadié 1978: 83–111) Also, the human and the non-human experiences of time cannot be measured on the same scale. True, in the human sense of time, Mrs. Ramsay, Andrew, and Prue die because of various reasons and in the course of several years rather than in one night. But the human sense of time is not valid and reliable where there is no human. We should not forget that time passes in the

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184 We do not explore a highly controversial issue related to the non-human beings that is currently much debated and discussed from various perspectives: philosophical, political, literary, artistic, and cinematographic; see Hunyadi (2018). The question of non-human has also been discussed from different angles in Woolf's fiction. Some contemporary critics view Woolf's 1933 novel *Flush: A Biography*, in relation to modern anthropocentrism, and recent explorations of non-human subjectivity; see Smith (2002: 348–361) or the politics of biology and medicine; see Williams (2020: 107–123) Others explore the subjectivities of 'other-than-human' beings in *The Mark on the Wall*; see Swanson (2012: 53–74); or 'the spirituality of Meat' in *TL*; see Tromanhauser (2011: 14–16). Some have even gone so far as to discover a more-than-human world in Woolf with the 1918–1919 influenza pandemic; see Outka (2020).

absence of human viewers in the non-human world of Part 2. Time can no longer be regulated by humans—neither by the mechanism of his mental workings nor by his clocks and calendars. If Woolf encloses important human life events, such as deaths, in square brackets, while leaving the non-human experiences out, it is to create ‘the sense of reading the two things at the same time.’ (*Diary 3*: 106) The middle part is characterized by a double awareness: time passes not only within a human scale of reference. The human and the non-human worlds with their own time perception are held together in a mutually testing relation. The non-human world includes destructive forces of Nature, symbols of war machine, which effaces the individual differences when used against the human. Overlapping worldviews inevitably shake and problematize a worldview held by the human alone. When Augustus Carmichael blows out his candle at the beginning of Part II, it is ‘past midnight’; and it is almost eight in the morning when Lily wakes up in her bed. But when the Ramsays and Lily Briscoe return to the vacation house in the post-war period recorded in ‘The Lighthouse’, they will be found ten years older than they were in ‘The Window’ section, which reveals the pre-war cultural consciousness. Therefore, we may read these hours as ‘the two things at the same time’: as ten years, from the human point of view, and as one night, from the non-human standpoint. What counts as one night for the nature is considered as ten years by humans. One night is enough for wild forces of nature to invade culture and to steal human life.

Whereas Woolf strictly divides human from non-human sense of time in *TL*, all times and spaces are interconnected in Colomb’s fictional universe. Colomb does not attempt to give a psychological depth to her characters as Woolf. However, she seeks to explore the complexities of visible and invisible worlds, and a mechanism of time in each of them. She expresses her curiosity towards the unknown worlds in her 1962 radio interview. Colomb explains: ‘*Il y a deux parties différentes. Il y a les fantoches d’un côté, et de l’autre, il y a [l’]ailleurs. Voilà, c’est comme cela que je peux peut-être définir tous mes livres.*’ [‘There are two different parts. There are the puppets, on one side, and on the other side, there is the elsewhere. That’s how I can define all my books.’] (*I*.)

There are various realms in Colomb’s fictional universe. The realms can dialogue with one another. Human and non-human characters may cross the established confines of their own realms. Even if it may sometimes be difficult, human and non-human characters are still granted access to each other’s worlds. The humans can hear the sound that the angels’ wings make: ‘The angels, the regular sound of their powerful wings, Joseph heard them as soon as he woke up. And even the Gontran Budivilles heard the noise of wings despite the pon-toon and the jetty that defended the Possessions.’ [‘*Les anges, le bruit régulier*



de leurs ailes puissantes, Joseph les entendait dès son réveil. Et même les Gontran Budiville percevaient ce bruit d'ailes malgré le ponton et la jetée qui défendaient les Possessions.'](TA: 1137) One may also meet dead residents 'attending to [their] transparent affairs' (*The Spirits*: 3) in the halls of Fraidaigue.<sup>185</sup> Like Homer's Odysseus making his journey to Hades, César descends into the underworld to join the land of the dead. The humans are able to observe the invisible: heavenly, aquatic, and fantastic creatures, such as angels and ogres as well as the dead, namely, the mother-phantom. The living meets the phantom of the dead: 'this is where, at night, the great uncle met up with his sister's shade coming down to the kitchen to drink one last glass of water.' ['[C]est là que le grand-oncle a rencontré dans la nuit l'ombre de sa sœur qui descendait à la cuisine boire un dernier verre d'eau.']( *The Spirits*: 59; *ET*: 990) There are no barriers of separation between the living and the dead worlds set as if Colomb were in search of a timeless condition.

The meaning of time is enriched as Colomb's fictional characters, human or non-human, interact with each other. All blurring temporalities result from connecting various worlds as in the passage below. Colomb seeks to connect the human's mental and physical worlds, the aquatic, the earthly and heavenly worlds to one another. She also links the most remote, such as the far-away planets, to the most proximate (e.g., 'a few pink and grey pebbles'), the ancient, the origin of the world—'the first sunlight of the world' ['[Le] premier soleil du monde.']( *The Spirits*: 40; *ET*: 976)—to the moment that is passing by: 'An idle wasp emerging from the winter darkness was lingering on the beach.' ['Une guêpe indolente sortant de l'obscurité de l'hiver se traînait sur la grève.']( *The Spirits*: 41; *ET*: 976)

César, couché sur la grève, sentait avec délices la terre nue céder sous son poids ; il soulevait quelques pierres roses et grises que les vagues de mars avaient apportées et contemplait le ciel peuplé de fenêtres bleues et d'anges en trompe-l'œil. Il pensait au firmament de novembre, mieux accordé à sa vie misérable, ces rideaux qui s'écartent lentement sur un ciel peint de couleurs sombres qu'un oiseau solitaire traverse en allongeant son long cou., les sphères se traînaient ainsi sur le seuil, se réchauffaient au premier soleil du monde.<sup>186</sup> (*ET*: 976)

185 Fr. 'Il faudra désormais rencontrer dans les corridors de Fraidaigue Abraham mort vaquant à ses transparentes affaires' (*ET*: 949)

186 Eng. 'Lying on the beach, César was joyfully feeling the naked earth sagging beneath his weight; he was fingering a few pink and grey pebbles that the March waves had washed ashore and gazing at the sky speckled with blue windows and angels in trample l'œil. He was thinking of the November firmament, more in keeping with his wretched life, those curtains that slowly open onto a dark-tinged sky across which a solitary bird is flying, sticking out its long neck. An idle wasp emerging from the winter darkness

Several temporal and spatial frames are blended in the passage: the East is connected to the West, the past – to the future; the months (November and March) and the seasons (Spring, Autumn and Winter) are all intermingled and introduced simultaneously. The ‘first sunlight of the world,’ ‘pink and grey pebbles that the March waves had washed ashore,’ ‘the sky speckled with blue windows and angles in *trompe l’oeil*,’ and a ‘dark-tinged sky across which a solitary bird is flying’— all meet as César lies on the beach. The every-day is inter-twisted with the world of senses. These complex forms of representation give spatial and temporal depths to the narrative. Introduction of parallel worlds with their own mechanisms of time halts the smooth flow of narrative. Frequent motion between the human and the extra-human worlds results in the choppy and fragmented narrative sequence. All these intermingled temporalities and fictional inventions pronounce Colomb’s artistic vision which lies behind a disordered narrative within her novels.

In the extract, events are not ordered in a coherent time sequence. There is no stream of time that runs between the past and the future. Instead, different temporalities are made simultaneous: various realms with its own time, the fantastical and the real creatures, the dead and the living—all are interconnected—the communications not possible in Woolf’s universe. *ET* is complex primarily because points of view shift between several distinct fictional worlds in unconventional ways. These shifts may be considered ‘vertical’ insofar as one seems to see through the eyes of different characters, be them the human or non-human, not in succession, horizontally, rather now and then. The effect is like looking through one fictional world which opens onto another fictional world which opens onto yet another.

The above paragraph is excerpted from Colomb’s 1953 novel. Colomb first subverted traditional conceptions of time and temporality in *CE* (1945), eight years before publishing *ET*. Just as in *ET*, several time frames are represented simultaneously in *CE* as the example shows below. However, the fragmented patterns are not necessarily connected by using the same method in both novels. A scene from *CE* below consists of a chain of segments and is made out according to the principle of association. The associations are not randomly chosen as all these segments add to the meaning of time:

Déjà les troncs de la glycine tordaient comme des boas les fers du perron et disjoignaient le balcon minuscule en fer forgé, dallé de rouge, de la chambre aux guirlandes qui sentait

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was lingering on the beach, the spheres were likewise lingering on the threshold, warming themselves in the first sunlight of the world.’ (*The Spirits*: 40–41)

les roses sèches. L'aristoloche fumait chaque année davantage de ses pipes violettes devant le pavillon, et les bambous [...] évoquaient dans un coin de la troisième terrasse par le froissement de leurs feuilles [...]. Les bambous sautaient à pieds joints chaque année un peu plus loin et il fallait les extirper à la pioche de la plate-bande de roses ou du massif de pivoines. Les courges rampaient sur le ruclon, reste d'une époque antéglaciaire avec sa végétation luxuriante, resté là depuis des milliers d'années. La nuit, Eugène se levait, allait à la fenêtre ; il étouffait ; sur les terrasses, à la pâle clarté des étoiles, il voyait les brontosaures et les plésiosaures qui envahissent les jardins la nuit. Caillou alors gémissait doucement dans sa niche brune, tout près de la fontaine ovale, dont le tuyau de cuivre, lui aussi, se terminait en un masque comique à bouche toujours ouverte.<sup>187</sup> (CE: 822-3)

This paragraph exemplifies Catherine Colomb's aesthetic innovation. Being intrigued by the notion of time, her greatest achievement in fiction consists of conveying diverse time frames simultaneously. She experiments with a new form of writing enabling her to represent time as it may be experienced by humans as well as beyond the humans' world. Representation of various kinds of time in an inclusive way is something of Colomb's own. Colomb's true originality is about condensing human and non-human kinds of time, and various contexts in which time is signified (calendar time, imaginary time, prehistoric era, near past, etc.).

Catherine Colomb blurs all temporalities. There is no straightforward indication about when all these independent events occurred. Furthermore, temporal distance between the prehistoric era and the proximate past, between the human and the non-human perception of time, between the time in the calendar, in a dream and a fairy-tale are blurred. Introducing various events that occurred at different times as simultaneous acts, Colomb places all these diverse time frames

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187 Eng. 'Already the wisteria trunks were twisting the iron railing like boas and separated the tiny wrought iron balcony, paved in red, from the room with the garlands that smelled of dry roses. Each year the aristolochia smoked more of its purple pipes in front of the pavilion, and the bamboo [...] evoked in a corner of the third terrace by the rustling of their leaves [...]. The bamboos jumped with both feet a little further every year and they had to be pulled out with a pickaxe from the flower bed or the bed of peonies. Marrows crept over the compost, a pre-glacial remnant with its lush vegetation that has stood there for thousands of years. At night, Eugene got up and went to the window; he was suffocating; on the terraces, in the pale light of the stars, he saw the brontosaurus and plesiosaurs which invade the gardens at night. Rock then moaned softly in his brown niche, very close to the oval fountain, whose copper pipe also ended in a comical mask with an ever-green mouth.'

on an equal level. There are no boundaries between fantasy and reality, between human and non-human realms with respect to time perception.

This paragraph comprises significant allusions to various time frames, namely:

- **Time in the pre-human era**, which is revealed through botanical and zoological evidence. Colomb describes vegetation and animals from the Pleistocene Epoch who survived the Ice Age, and now appear in the compost and in Eugène's gardens, respectively. 'The brontosaurus and plesiosaurs, 'a pre-glacial remnant with its lush vegetation' are pouring through the present. Through these allusions to the prehistoric, Colomb reflects on the possible decline and extinction of the human race and its customs.

This perspective on prehistory and its temporality invites reflection on the moment of the primeval myth that the beggar sings in *MD*. The moment is described in paradoxical terms: the song that has stood for 'a million years', (*MD*: 120) surviving 'through all ages—when the pavement was grass, when it was swamp, through the age of tusk and mammoth' (*MD*: 120) is still 'bubbling up' (*MD*: 119) into the metropolis. The episode is revealing timelessness and continuity of the old woman's song as opposed to the ones centered around the city in its constant motion and change. As in the era of 'tusk and mammoth', (*MD*: 120) a voice reaching the passers-by outside 'Regent's Park Tube Station' (*MD*: 119) is without 'beginning or end [...]' and with an absence of all human meaning into it'. (*Ibid.*) But the 'ancient song' of love, once heard in the 'age of silent sunrise', (*MD*: 120) is incomprehensible and is 'running weakly' (*MD*: 119) along vibrations and noise caused by the Underground. It is now 'issued from so rude a mouth, a mere hole in the earth, muddy too, matted with root fibres and tangled grasses.' (*MD*: 120) The prehistoric is dressed like a beggar when it breaks in a modern age in its unaltered actuality. It is 'battered [...]' with one hand exposed for coppers the other clutching her side'. (*MD*: 121) Yet it can still make the present deeper and more meaningful. As long 'as the ancient song bubbled up opposite Regent's Park Tube station', (*MD*: 120) 'the earth seemed green and flowery' (*Ibid.*). And there is a hope that things may endure: the 'old woman' will still be recognisable in a distant future, remembering her lover in her song, even after 'ten million years.' (*MD*: 121)

Colomb's and Woolf's recordings of primary forms reveal their search for lost origins and times. Gillian Beer relates Woolf's representation of the primeval in her first and last novels, *The Voyage Out* (1915) and *Between the Acts* (1941), to Darwin's Evolutionary theory which 'had made a new myth

of the past. Instead of the garden, the swamp'. (Beer 1989: 170) Woolf's and Colomb's simultaneous recordings of the primeval and modern worlds in *MD* and *CE* reveal that the prehistoric is not remote or attainable, rather a part of *self* and daily life. The 'ancient song' reaches the ears of Peter Walsh and Rezia Smith as unconscious. Massive land creatures, primeval vegetation survive in Eugène's gardens at night, outside conscious awareness. The survival of the primitive animals and vegetation in a modern age contributes to a multiplicity of time modes in *CE* and *MD*.

- **Non-human time:** Such non-human life-forms as plants have their own time-measuring mechanism and rhythm.<sup>188</sup> *CE* is more than a novel of memory or a novel of consciousness as much as it allows to perceive the humanless time and reality.
- **Calendar time:** she records the events that occur each year.<sup>189</sup> Like non-human time, calendar time goes independently of human activity and culture.
- **Time in a dream:** She gives an account on night-time, dream time, imaginary time.<sup>190</sup> The study of the theme of time in Colomb shows us that the personality is complex and layered, as Freud suggested. It is made of memories and fantasies.
- **Fairy-tale time/indefinite time:** The characters, objects, and events in Colomb's novels are lost in time like the ones in a Fairy-tale. They may not always be located in the historical, calendar and clock-times. In the given case, it cannot be said with precision when '[r]ock then moaned softly in his brown niche'. (*CE*: 823) It may have happened 'once upon a time', i.e., at some indefinite moment in the timeline as in a fairy-tale.

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188 For instance: 'Déjà les troncs de la glycine tordaient comme des boas les fers du perron et disjoignaient le balcon minuscule en fer forgé, dallé de rouge, de la chambre aux guirlandes qui sentait les roses sèches'. (*CE*: 822) | '*Already* the wisteria trunks were twisting the iron railing like boas and separated the tiny wrought iron balcony, paved in red, from the room with the garlands that smelled of dry roses'. (The italics are mine).

189 For instance: 'L'aristoloche fumait chaque année davantage de ses pipes violettes devant le pavillon'. (*CE*: 822) | '*Each year* the aristolochia smoked more of its purple pipes in front of the pavilion'. (The italics are mine).

190 For instance: 'La nuit, Eugène se levait, allait à la fenêtre; il étouffait; sur les terrasses, à la pâle clarté des étoiles, il voyait les brontosaurus et les plésiosaures qui envahissent les jardins la nuit'. (*CE*: 822-3) | 'At night, Eugene got up and went to the window; he was suffocating; on the terraces, in the pale light of the stars, he saw the brontosaurus and plesiosaurs which invade the gardens at night'.

- **Human time:** Eugène's time. Colomb's instantaneous portraiture of men is also everlasting. It shows as if we can see Eugène standing and suffocating on his terraces every night.
- **Near Past:** A mention of place, 'the third terrace', where the Christening dinner takes place in *CE*, indicates that the action has occurred in the near past.<sup>191</sup>

Colomb's mode of writing about various kinds of time in an inclusive rather than binary way can be contrasted with Woolf's setting up of oppositions and square brackets to separate the human and the non-human from each other. Woolf introduces the human and the non-human in different sections suggesting that they are separate from one another with respect to time perception. Colomb seeks to discover a link between various places what she calls the realms of the living and the dead (2019 (1962): 1380), and to weave them together. Woolf's and Colomb's projects are similar to the extent that the past is known impersonally, without the gazer, in the absence of consciousness in them. Colomb describes the ages in the past which a human being has never lived or experienced. The past Colomb tells is so remote that it is not only forgotten by humans but never lived. Likewise, in the middle part of *TL*, time passes in the man's absence. In Colomb, the beginning of time: 'the first sunlight of the world' (*The Spirits*: 41) or prehistory: 'a pre-glacial remnant,' (*CE*: 882) endures in the characters' fictional present, yet the humans cannot notice it. Woolf too refers to the places on Earth humans have never visited, such as 'the little sandy beaches where no one had been since the beginning of time.' (*TL*: 105) As Banfield notes in her reading of Woolf, 'there can be no acquaintance with prehistory, synonymous with the pre-human, but only with fossils, long lost objects.' (Banfield 2000: 140) In Colomb, ancient life is mostly preserved in water. Evidence of ancient life— both natural and man-made objects— survives under water. There are 'ancient waves,' 'shells from the lake,' aquatic plants populating the Earth. 'Ancient lake vases,' (*The Spirits*: 11) lost a long time ago, are now found by the fishermen 'with their nets.' (*The Spirits*: 12) Woolf also preserves ancient life—insects.

In conclusion, events are not ordered in a linear stream of time that runs between the past and the future in Colomb and Woolf. Colomb reveals the experience of the passage of time through her formally innovative ways that challenge the human based perception of time. She mimetically captures the world

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191 For instance: 'Les bambous [...] évoquaient dans un coin de la troisième terrasse par le froissement de leurs feuilles.' (*CE*: 822) | 'The bamboos [...] evoked in a corner of the third terrace by the rustling of their leaves.'

in its accelerated rhythm and problematizes the relationship between the past, the present, and future. Colomb's consciousness eliminates distance in time. She blends different moments to create a single whole out of separate incidents detached from one another by time. Present, past, and future as well as various kinds of time experiences merge within just a few lines in her novels. Woolf also sums up many years by telling the events of one night. However, unlike Colomb, Woolf does not weave a tight network out of various kinds of time. Instead, she accelerates the rhythm of time passing. Events occurring within a night in the 'Time Passes' would generally take up many years. These events reflect time passing. Had the passing years been recounted in their own rhythm, the 'Time Passes' section would have extended on many more pages than it actually does. Had the section focused on a human life, it would have had human-centred reflection of time. But the 'Time Passes' section does not measure time according to human terms. It rather highlights that the measure of time is not the same on human and non-human scales. Besides, the accelerated rhythm of time passing is precisely what makes the events developed in the middle part look catastrophic. Had they gone according to their own rhythm, they would have had no strong effects.

Hence, apart from mingling separate fictional worlds with their own time frames, Colomb and Woolf revise the genre of family saga. They portray the families at the edge of extinction and degradation. Colomb anticipates the extinction of the human race in the vineyard houses along the shores of Lake Geneva, while Woolf portrays the process of extinction in the emptied Ramsays' house. These portrayals are double-edged—they have aesthetic and historical implications, referring to the catastrophes of the World War.

### 3.8 A story within Colomb's leitmotif & Woolf's 'moment'

Catherine Colomb's novels stem from the sense of loss. Just as the narrator suffers from the feeling of alienation and being lost in time and space on the first pages of *La Recherche*,<sup>192</sup> Woolf builds *TL* from a kaleidoscope of memories of her dead mother and father. *TL* is an elegy for the dead parents of Woolf. The novel, she wrote, was meant to lay the memories of her mother to rest: 'I wrote the book very quickly; and when it was written, I ceased to be obsessed by my mother. I no longer hear her voice; I do not see her.' ('A Sketch of the Past': 81) The qualities remembered by Woolf about her own mother Julia Stephen in real life, which

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192 As explained in 2.5 Colomb's associations vs. Proust's reminiscences.

she describes in 'Reminiscences,' (*Ibid.*, 32–40) correspond to what Mrs. Ramsay stands for in *TL*. In *A Writer's Diary*, Woolf further confirms that her new novel *TL* is inspired by the memories of her childhood, of her mother and father: 'This is going to be fairly short; to have father's character done complete in it; and mother's; and St. Ives; and childhood...' (*Diary 1*: 14 May 1925)

Colomb's novels also drawn from fragments of memories from a past where characters and objects have lost their edge. Time makes everyone vanish. It makes the living tableau out of the human characters of her novels. Colomb attempts to reconstruct a story out of a lost past to give meaning to the present. She desires to challenge time by memorizing lost objects and dead characters, and by using them as the sources of perception in her novels. *CE* and *ET* seek to connect ends with origins. However, what survives in time are only some physical traits, gestures, shadows of human forms rather than characters made of flesh. Most of Colomb's characters are described with the same attention as the clothes they wear, because 'they look like their clothes in the *elusive reality of time*.' (Anex (1962: 11) For instance, *Mme Angenaisaz* 'n'était plus qu'une porte-habits'. (*CE*: 750) Focus on clothes gives the impression of the effacement of individual life. The more time passes the more memories are forgotten. What remains is a narrative of a forgotten past, fragments of stories of 'countless crowd, made up of the dead and the living, who leaves the age-old nooks and fragments of time and teem over the paths of memory' [...*une foule, innombrable, des morts, des vivants[,] qui déferle sur les chemins de mémoire, ils ont quitté les uns leur fragment de temps, les autres leur fragment d'espace*'.<sup>193</sup>], as Colomb herself puts it. (*Chemins de mémoire*: 1661) Sources of perception in her novels are means to think about what or who is missing; to highlight more absence than the presence. The objects like 'silver kettle' and '*pèlerine au laine noire*' [Eng. a 'black wool cape'] stand for the missing people. Such an object as a 'black wool cape', which figures a mother's absence and seemingly refers to the novelist's own story, who also lost mother at the age of five, is more relevant in Colomb than the living beings. The absence counts more than the presence. Because something needs to be absent to create, to invent, to remember, to associate. Mrs. Ramsay—even if it is a painful experience for Lily—needs to be absent to be then immortalised in Lily's painting. Likewise, the objects and characters in Colomb gain meaning only because they remind of someone or something missing. It is the novelist that brings into being the meaningfulness of irrelevant objects, of forgotten characters.

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193 John Taylor's translation (*The Spirits*: xviii).



Chaos is preceding every work of art that stems from the sense of loss. Chaos refers to the state of disorder and 'void' leading to the creation of the universe in Greek mythology.<sup>194</sup> Woolf, a voracious reader of ancient Greeks, mentions the word 'chaos' in her novel many times: 'In the midst of chaos there was shape,' (*TL*: 183) 'barbarity was tamed, the reign of chaos subdued.' (*TL*: 54) Colomb and Woolf seek to establish order out of chaos, to turn the elusive reality of time into moments of permanence, 'to make of the moment something permanent' (*TL*: 183) by giving 'shape' to chaotic thoughts and impressions. Sometimes they succeed in turning vanishing impressions into story—into an ordered form of art—, and in conferring permanence onto a moment which is about to fade away. But sometimes they also fail to resolve chaos into order by shaping a story out of fluid impressions. A sense of loss is not only one of the leading themes of *CE* and *TL*. It also manifests itself formally in the fragmented textual landscape—in the narrative made out of interruptions.<sup>195</sup>

Colomb and Woolf seek to wrest meaning from an apparently chaotic world through the art of the novel. This section shows that through vertical organization of narrative around 'leitmotif' and 'moment,' they try to make coherent the apparently chaotic fragments, reflections that frame the complexity of the world. While Colomb seeks to shape a story out of forgotten past, Woolf attempts to arrange multiple fluid impressions in order. This section illustrates that both writers seek to turn chaos into order by turning vanishing impressions and memories into an ordered form of art. It exemplifies that Woolf gives permanence to a moment which is about to fade away by arranging multiple fluid impressions into a unified story. As for the leitmotif, it helps to shape a story out of fragmented consciousness in Colomb. Finally, the section deals with the aesthetics of time within Colomb's leitmotif and Woolf's 'moment'.

### 3.8.1 Colomb's leitmotif

Like Proust, Colomb frequently uses the musical device leitmotif in her novels. In *La Recherche* and *CE*, the narrative evolves around recurring themes, images, and motifs. By introducing recurring formulas, both writers refer to the methods and techniques of the art of memory: to enhance the recall of memorial contents.

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194 In Greek mythology Chaos was often represented as the oldest of the gods and the first being to exist. See oed.com: 'chaos.'

195 The last chapter explains that Woolf's and Colomb's perception of reality as chaotic has much to do with the philosophical and scientific theories at the dawn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Proust, for example, transposes the Wagnerian leitmotif into literature in the form of 'petite phrase' from Vinteuil's sonata. He integrates the musical form of the sonata in his book to depict the principle of memory and repeating life patterns.

A leitmotif is a musical device, but it may as well be transposed into a novel, in particular into the modern novel. Originally, the German leitmotif, i.e., a '*leading motive*', (*OED*) Wagner's musical signature contained the meaning of dominant recurring thematic melodies in a musical composition. It was mainly used to accompany the reappearing person or idea. As for the literary leitmotif, after Thomas Mann, it represents an underlying message which is used repeatedly and contributes to the overall development of the narrative.<sup>196</sup> The meaning is created not in time but spatially, or as Thomas Mann stated, 'musically'. (Mann 1953: 723)

A leitmotif differs from a narrative theme. Firstly, because the leitmotif is much smaller in size than a theme: it can be as short as a phrase or an epithet. Secondly, it is used to represent a particular character or setting rather than the overall meaning of the book. The leitmotif also differs from the theme because it can be used both as a thematic material and a narrative technique. The leitmotif is used to repeat phrases, formulas in different contexts to attain various associations. As a consequence, it might take a story in a new direction. Whereas the theme connects a plot, scenes, characters, settings, and makes a whole out of individual aspects of the literary work. (*OED*)

A leitmotif works like a repetition of variation. Variation transforms something into something else; the leitmotif reuses words, phrase or sentences. It is enriched with a new meaning when repeated. A story's underlying idea that might be repeated with the help of a leitmotif. A key message is passed through recurring metaphorical representations—though a leitmotif.

The leitmotif provides sources of nourishment to Colomb's texts. It is frequently used in *CE*. The pages of this novel are haunted by recurring themes, phrases or formulas, such as the white roses fallen from the 'coffin of the young dead' [Fr. '*jeune cercueil*'], Uncle *Alphonse's* fall from the great wall [Fr. '*la chute d'Alphonse*'], the copper lamp of Galeswinthe [Fr. '*la lampe de cuivre*'], etc. These repetitive images seem to stimulate the process of evocation of memories. As a result, the leitmotif is not only a thematic material, but it also is a structural component.

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196 For a discussion of Thomas Mann's use of the leitmotif see Peacock (1934: 29–45).

Two levels of meaning are created by Colomb's use of leitmotifs. One consists of reminding the reader of a certain idea, character or setting previously mentioned in the text. The other translates into an activation of memory with the help of repeating formulas so as to create a story out of memories, out of networks of association. Such leitmotif elements as '*le capillaire*', ['the maidenhair fern'] '*les roses blanches qui hésitaient au bord du jeune cercueil*', ['the white roses hesitating at the edge of the young coffin'] '*un demi-rideau de reps vert*' ['a green rep half-curtain,'] '*démolir la tour à demi ruinée*' *d'où la tourterelle était tombée* ['the demolition of the half-ruined tower'] precede the appearance of the 'turtledove,' of the missing mother of César, Eugène, Adolphe, and Zoé in *ET*. (*ET*: 949–950; *The Spirits*: 3–4) These details may not at first be even noticed by the reader. While they help recall everything related to '*tourterelle*'. The narrative begins to order little by little around these leitmotifs and the portrait of '*tourterelle*' becomes more distinct: '*On commence à la voir plus distinctement, la tourterelle, elle est petite, elle porte des souliers de cuir rouge*'. ['The turtledove can now be made out more distinctly, she's short, wearing red leather shoes.'] (*ET*: 1031; *The Spirits*: 117) Her portrait is disclosed slowly, only a few pages later in the text.

Colomb uses several examples of leitmotifs in *CE*. Among them, the theme of 'Alphonse's fall from a big wall' is quite subtle. Through this theme, the readers examine various stories separated by time. Therefore, this example will be used in the analysis of the Colombian leitmotif.

Alphonse's fall from the great wall occurs in Chapter II of *CE*. The sentences accounting for Alphonse's fall appear several times in the novel. The description is thus transformed into a frozen formula: 'Uncle Alphonse fell from the big wall. [*L'uncle Alphonse est tombé du grand mur*.] When recurring, the phrase is likely to be quickly recognized by the reader: it is not lost in a non-linear narrative sequence. Every detail associated with the theme of Alphonse's fall is significant for it turns into a leitmotif element.

The theme of Alphonse's fall is a part of a series of descriptions of the 'foreign family' [Fr. '*famille étrangère*'] (*CE*: 761) started by Madame Angenaisaz. In the description, the family members are introduced by a memorable epithet, mostly outlining their grotesque appearance: '[Mme Angenaisaz], adult like Adam and Eve, with big knees and varicose veins: the aunt with abscesses, the aunt with cactus.' [*Mme Angenaisaz*] *adulte comme Adam et Ève, avec leurs gros genoux et leurs varices : la tante aux abcès, la tante aux cactus*.'] (*CE*: 761) The death of the other family member Etienne is also recounted. He 'died in a train accident in America.' [*Etienne est mort d'un accident de train en Amérique*.'] (*CE*: 761) As for Alphonse, he fell from a great height:

Alphonse qui, sous les yeux de sa mère languissante, inclinant sa petite ombrelle, était tombé du grand mur, au ralenti, comme se font les chutes anciennes des morts, est assis maintenant devant sa tente avec Ferdinand de Lesseps, tous barbus, des filets à papillons sur les genoux.<sup>197</sup> (CE: 761)

The description includes two temporal levels: it relates the fictive *now* to the moment in the past when Alphonse fell from the wall. The temporal difference is also indicated through the use of verbal tenses: the *pluperfect* and present tense. The verb '*était tombé*' represents an action that has occurred before a past setting; whereas '*est assis maintenant*' [Eng. '...now is sitting'] refers to Alphonse as he appears in a photograph in the fictive now. It is also remarkable that the fall of Alphonse from the big wall is not directly captured. It is narrated through the perspective of Alphonse's mother sometime later.

The event is recalled again in a different context in Chapter V, when Galeswinthe makes a visit to Jâmes Laroche's office. The banker Laroche tries to convince her to sell her properties: 'Grand Railway Society, Imperial Land Bank of the Nobility' or 'Egyptien Land Credit'. [*Grandes Sociétés des Chemins de fer*, '*Banque impériale foncière de la Noblesse*', '*Crédit Foncier Egyptien*.'] (CE: 827) Galeswinthe recalls Alphonse, his photograph and is not willing to sell the ancestral property:

Non, elle ne voulait pas les vendre, à cause de l'oncle Alphonse et de cette image où on le voyait immobile avec F. de Lesseps devant sa tente, des mouchoirs sur les nuques et des filets à papillons sur les genoux, si immobiles que peu à peu on devinait toutes leurs pensées, leur nostalgie du grand mur de pierres et de mousse brune au-dessus du figuier et du jardin potager d'où l'on voyait par-dessus le cimetière le Jura bleu.<sup>198</sup> (CE: 827)

In the repetition, some details mentioned previously and relating to Alphonse's death disappear. Others appear for the first time. There is no more mention of the mother witnessing the fall of Alphonse from the big wall. The other detail, the men with beards in the photograph, is also omitted. What this description retains

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197 Eng. 'Alphonse who, in front of his languid mother, tilting her little parasol, had fallen from the great wall, in slow motion, like the ancient falls of the dead, is now seated in front of his tent with Ferdinand de Lesseps, all bearded, with butterfly nets on the knees.'

198 Eng. 'No, she did not want to sell them, because of Uncle Alphonse and this image where we saw him motionless with F. de Lesseps in front of his tent, handkerchiefs on their necks and butterfly nets on their knees, so immobile that little by little we could guess all their thoughts, their nostalgia of the great stone wall and brown moss above the fig tree and the vegetable garden from which we could see the blue Jura over the cemetery.'

from the previous example is Alphonse sitting next to Ferdinand de Lesseps, and all having the butterfly nets on their knees in the photograph. Interestingly, the stillness of the human world figured through the uses of the word '*immobile*' in the above passage (e.g., '*on le voyait immobile*', '*si immobiles*') is opposed by the animated nature, with its capacity of reproduction: 'In the spring, the piles of horse droppings open up and give birth to lavender-blue butterflies. [*Au printemps, les tas de crottin s'ouvrent et donnent naissance à des papillons bleu lavande.*]' (*The Spirits*: 129; *ET*: 1040) Other details pertaining to Alphonse's death appear for the first time. This time the story of Alphonse's death is made known as Galeswinthe recalls the past. Characters' lives are presented in a spatial rather than in a linear order. As she recalls the photograph of Alphonse, of his aunt and F. de Lesseps, Galeswinthe decides not to sell her ancestral property. For, they had led a pastoral life and stayed nostalgic about 'the big wall made of stones and, the brown moss above the fig tree and the vegetable garden.' [*...du grand mur de pierres et de mousse brune au-dessus du figuier et du jardin potager.*] (*CE*: 827)

Thus, this second description contains more details than the first one. The memories about the pastoral lifestyle and nostalgic thoughts of Alphonse, his aunt and F. de Lesseps were not recalled in the first description. They were enveloped in a dormant state before page 827. The omitted, forgotten associations were revived using a technique of leitmotif—though the repeated phrases concerning Alphonse's fall in a new context.

In each repetition, the leitmotif is enriched with new details. The more we read, the more associations get interconnected with the theme of Alphonse's fall. The description contains more information in Chapter V (on page 827) than in Chapter II (on page 761). The most detailed description is given later, at the beginning of Chapter VI (on page 839):

Soudain un cri, c'est Alphonse qui s'est trop penché et qui tombe avec son étroit pantalon de velours noir et sa tunique serrée à la taille, lentement, comme les morts ; on a tant parlé de cette chute ! « Ne grimpe pas sur le grand mur, c'est de là que l'oncle Alphonse est tombé » disent les trois mères qui se sont succédé tous les vingt ou vingt-cinq ans, balayant les feuilles mortes de leurs jupes de soie puce ou de leurs lacets-brosses. Marguerite s'approche à son tour du grand mur. Le nœud de satin blanc tremble sur sa tête ; [...] Il y aurait des figues cette année au bas du grand mur d'où l'oncle Alphonse était tombé tant de fois en paroles, en rêves.<sup>199</sup> (*CE*: 839)

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199 Eng. 'Suddenly a cry, it is Alphonse who leans too much and falls with his narrow black corduroy pants and his very close fit tunic, slowly, like the dead; so much has been said about this fall! 'Don't climb on the big wall, that's where Uncle Alphonse

The leitmotif gives rise to more associations in this description than in the previous examples. A greater number of associations produces the temporal complexification of the narrative. Different temporal layers are mingled in the description. There is a reference to the present in the opening; the narrative then develops in the past. The narrative breaks into various temporal levels as it imbricates bonds of associations stemmed from the recollection of Alphonse's fall and his photograph. It imbricates what Lise Favre calls 'lived memories' (the narrator's past) and 'transmitted memories' (earlier past). (Favre 1993: 17–18) The two different levels of memories encompass different temporal layers. For instance, the memory of "Don't climb on the big wall, that's where Uncle Alphonse fell" ["« Ne grimpe pas sur le grand mur, c'est de là que l'oncle Alphonse est tombé »"] is transmitted and refers to the earlier past. The memory was transmitted by 'the three mothers who have followed one another every twenty or twenty-five years.' [*[L]es trois mères qui se sont succédé tous les vingt ou vingt-cinq ans.*] Thus, it has been heard for about seventy or eighty years. The description then is continued in the present – Marguerite is going close to a 'big wall', [*grand mur*] (CE: 839) and the future in the past: "There would be figs this year at the bottom of the great wall from which Uncle Alphonse had fallen so many times..." [*Il y aurait des figues cette année au bas du grand mur d'où l'oncle Alphonse était tombé tant de fois...*] Thus, the text oscillates between 'now' and 'then' as well as between private and shared experiences. All current, previous and anticipated actions or brief stories interconnected with the story of Alphonse's fall from the big wall are brought together. Since multiple temporal layers are exposed at once, various parts are arranged in a spatial (vertical) rather than in a linear (horizontal) order in the story.

Bringing relevant material or what has remained in the consciousness to the foreground and relegating certain minor elements to the background—Weinrich's (1973 (1964)) definition of a twofold textual movement—are central to the elaboration of Colomb's art. The coexistence of ordinary and extraordinary life experiences allows us to see the kinship between the poetics of memory in Colomb and Freud's psychoanalysis. Through her treatment of 'leitmotifs', Colomb makes the oblivion and 'the return of the repressed' key processes to

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fell' say the three mothers who have followed one another every twenty or twenty-five years, sweeping away the dead leaves from their crimson silk skirts or laces-brushes. Marguerite in turn approaches the great wall. The white satin bow trembles on her head. [...] There would be figs this year at the bottom of the great wall from which Uncle Alphonse had fallen so many times in words, in dreams.'

creation. The act of writing stimulates the re-emergence of repressed material. It brings to the level of consciousness what has been preserved in the unconscious.<sup>200</sup>

Visually, a form of the above paragraph reminds of a patchwork of fragmented consciousness as Colomb subverts traditional conceptions of time and temporality. A linear narrative is broken as the memory, Woolf wrote, 'runs her needles in and out, up and down, hither and thither' (*Orlando*: 37) and results in what Woolf called a 'thousand odd, disconnected fragments, now bright, now dim, hanging, and boring and dipping and flaunting.' (*Ibid.*) The description retains and connects bits of information given in the two previous examples. It is also enriched with new details—new memories. Colombian leitmotif thus functions as a core message in the memory system. The memories are revitalized and brought to daylight by associations derived from the leitmotif. Through the repetition of the theme of Alphonse's fall from the wall in different contexts, a wave of recollections is brought back. Hence, the leitmotif represents not only a thematic material in *CE*, but also a transitional medium from which the chain of associations emerges. As a result, the Colombian leitmotif is not far from shaping a story out of memories. It has a power to evoke memories related to one another and transform separate recollections in a unified story.

Hence, the uses of leitmotif delicately re-shape Colomb's writing based on memory, suggesting that in the process of creation, Colomb relies on both intuitive and rational levels of knowledge. As it compares Woolf's and Colomb's formal experiments, this section enhances the fact that some memories may turn into story within *CE*. Hereby, it allows us to see what sets limits to Woolf's and Colomb's experimentations with temporal complexity of the narrative. While some memories fade away with the passage of time, such as the ones related to Jenny's, Marguerite's, Galeswinthe's stories in *CE* (as explained in Chapter 2), others, such as memories connected to Alphonse's death, may be retrieved, recollected and imagined in contact with images, people and objects related to them. The letter has the capacity to shape a story as the narrative moves forward and backward. If the narrative sometimes goes forward based on some analogy, it also slips back to some recurring formulas and leitmotifs. In time,

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200 Sigmund Freud (1856–1939) emphasizes the importance of repression in his study of dreams, see *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900). In his 1915 article entitled 'Repression', Sigmund Freud defined the concept as such: "*The essence of repression lies simply in turning something away, and keeping it at a distance, from the conscious.*" (XIV: 147) Psychoanalysts define 'Return of the repressed' as 'the reappearance in dreams, symptoms, or parapraxes of material that has been subject to repression.' (Colman, 2006: 'return of the repressed'.)

new experiences and ideas are added to them. The fragmented narrative slowly starts to turn into a unified story. As separate memories are grouped together to be transformed into a single narrative, the gap is bridged between past and present, between the origin of memory and the final idea that develops from it. In the course of the novel, readers discover not only a story of the forgotten past, but also the process of recalling, imagining, recreating, and transforming the fragments of memory into works of art.

Sewing and knitting may be thought as metaphors for Colomb's visions overlapping between multiple experiences. Colomb playfully elaborates the aesthetic in which the meaning is built up, like in Marguerite's and Jenny's sewing, by adding one thing to another.

Marguerite s'assit près de la fenêtre et reprit son ouvrage, une rose en filet. Imprudente, elle brodait des fleurs et des oiseaux en filet et en Venise.<sup>201</sup> (CE: 822)

Jenny laissa tomber le canevas où elle brodait à minuscules points de deux petits sapins vert tendre, un dragon chinois rose, l'alphabet.<sup>202</sup> (CE: 747)

Just as Marguerite who embroiders flowers and birds, (CE: 822) Colomb seeks to create enduring patterns out of fragmented pieces through formal devices which may be considered the artistic counterparts of weaving and knitting. Such quasi-artistic forms of female creativity as weaving and embroidery are at the heart of Catherine Colomb's fiction. Apart from Marguerite's embroidery, there is also 'tourterelle' who embroiders, and Jenny's canvas in CE. Before her untimely death Jenny is said to have been 'embroidering' the 'alphabet'. (CE: 747) The name Jenny should be referring to the so-called 'Spinning Jenny' — a machine for waving developed during the Industrial Revolution. The 'Spinning Jenny' is mentioned by Karl Marx in *The Capital*.<sup>203</sup> (Marx 1976 (1867): 28–29) The weaving machine ('Spinning Jenny') is at the centre of Karl Marx's historical

201 Eng. 'Marguerite sat down by the window and resumed a rose netting. Careless, she embroidered the flowers and birds in nets and the Venice style.'

202 Eng. 'Jenny dropped the canvas where she was embroidering in tiny cross-stich two little tender green pine, a pink Chinese dragon, the alphabet.'

203 Karl Marx mentions a 'cotton-spinning Jenny', which is a 'machine for spinning cotton' in Chapter 3 of Part 4: *Machinery and Modern Industry* of his work *Capital* (1867). The allusion to Karl Marx's 'spinning Jenny' comes from Prof. Alfons Knauth. I received this precious feedback when presenting Colomb's work (*The Literary Reinterpretations of Myths in Catherine Colomb's Fiction*) in the framework of the annual conference of the Swiss Association of Comparative and General Literatures in Lausanne, 22–24 November 2018.



overview of the evolution of capitalism after the onset of the industrial revolution when the machines replaced manual production. 'Jenny' was also an English slang for 'engine'. (Haven 2006: 73) On these terms, this brief episode in *CE* brings out clearly a number of motifs. Jenny's embroidery symbolizes Colomb's aesthetic innovation just as the 'spinning Jenny' began the industrial revolution. 'Spinning Jenny' is a significant allusion to the change of Colomb's literary style between her previous texts, namely *Pile ou Face* and *Noix sur un bâton*, and *CE*. It accounts for the fact she gave up a traditional way of writing<sup>204</sup> in favour of experimenting and renewing fiction.

Knitting, as a gesture of relating separate pieces together, comes to function both as a metaphor of feminine art and a model of 'unity'. Despite multiple interruptions, the analysis of Colomb's leitmotif shows that her novel can still arrange fragments of consciousness into a unified story. The leitmotif is precisely what transforms a fragmented memory into an organized form of art. In such resolution, it creates continuity between now and then, origins and endings, loss and recovery.

### 3.8.2 Woolf's 'moment'

In his study of Woolf entitled 'The Brown Stocking', which contains rigorous analysis of narrative point of view in *TL*, Auerbach focuses on the 5<sup>th</sup> section of part 1, 'The Window', which develops around Mrs. Ramsay's knitting scene. Auerbach states that the section is made of various events occurring at different times and places, such as in the Ramsays' summer house in the Hebrides islands, in Mr. Bankes's house in London, and in the Swiss maid's house. Yet, these separate events are tied as if they had taken place at once. Separate incidents make up one continuous story based on Mrs. Ramsay's knitting episode (Auerbach (1974 (1946): 529)) In the episode Mrs. Ramsay measures the stocking she intends to give to the lighthouse-keeper's son against James' leg. James is fidgeting. The reader can notice a change of Mrs. Ramsay's mood between her repeated warnings as James refuses to stand still. Auerbach notes that the narration of the episode and representation of characters' consciousness take more time than they could have possibly lasted. (*Ibid.*) While the construction of the building next to the Ramsays' summer house would have taken years. Yet, Woolf uses the

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204 'Liberation' of *CE* from the narrative ordered by chronological time is discussed by Gilles Philippe in his article 'Catherine Colomb et le roman subjectiviste'. (2017: 47–59.) Philippe lists the stylistic attributes by which Colomb's first novel *Pile ou Face* differs from *CE*.

exterior occurrence as a support to observe the characters' inner processes and thereby, squeezes it in few lines. Auerbach explains how Woolf's representation of exterior occurrences and inner processes differ from the techniques practiced earlier. He states that Woolf inserts a series of occurrences (such as a story of the Swiss maid, the telephone conversation, the construction of the building) and consciousnesses of various characters (of Mrs. Ramsay, Mr. Ramsay, Mr. Bankes) between Mrs. Ramsay's two warnings that James receives, which could not have possibly consumed the long timespan. Auerbach concludes that through such representation the reader finally gets down to the problem of time—to the division between 'exterior' and 'interior' time. (*Ibid.*, 528)

Even if Auerbach's analysis is quite dated, we may still learn a lot from it today. We learn from his study that Woolf places various events – exterior events and characters' inner experiences—separated by months and years between two moments which are only a few minutes apart. Representation of the world takes place as Mrs. Ramsay measures the stocking. What Auerbach left unsaid is the significance of the 'moment' itself.

His analysis shows that the exterior and interior processes gain significance between the measurements—the moments which bring different temporal and geographical incidents together.

However, since Auerbach only focuses on one section of Part 1, he omits the fact that Woolf organizes a story around 'moments' to order multiple characters' perspectives and numerous temporally and geographically distant occurrences. Woolf frequently employs the concept of 'moment' in both her fictional and autobiographical writings. In her essay 'The Moment: Summer's Night', Woolf imagines the 'present moment' to be 'largely composed of visual and of sense impressions'. ('The Moment: Summer's Night', 9) Those impressions being instantaneous and ephemeral, in her *Diary* excerpt about *The Waves*, Woolf expresses her desire to 'saturate every atom' of the moment, (*Diary*, III: 209) or to expand the moment beyond its temporary limits. Woolf was aware of the strong effects of momentary impressions. She called 'moments of being' these moments of 'epiphany' and thought that they were 'more real than the present moment'. ('Sketch', 67) In 'A Sketch of the Past' (1919), Woolf reflects on the power of such moments on her art and life. Those rare moments have 'the shock-receiving capacity', which, she explains, 'is what makes me a writer'. ('Sketch', 84) 'A revelation of some order' deriving from an involuntary 'blow' becomes 'whole' and 'real by putting it into words.' (*Ibid.*) Those intense experiences articulating Woolf's psychic state lie at the heart of her poetics of the 'moment'. 'Moments of being' are central to the artist's vision. They stimulate to give shape and wholeness to often controversial meanings, to a chaotic thread of thought or temporally and

spatially detached incidents in a process of creation. To highlight the importance of the artist's unifying vision, Woolf employs the concept of 'vision' rather than 'moments of being' in *TL*. 'Moments of being' in *TL* represent, for Teresa Prudente, 'extraordinary experiences in which the subject's mind proves to sustain and contain the simultaneous vision of the contrasting elements composing perception.' (2009: 53)

Auerbach's analysis sheds light on how Woolf fills the gap between Mrs. Ramsay's measurements of stocking. Yet, it does not pay much attention to the unifying principle of 'moment' which is compared to an act of knitting a 'reddish-brown stocking'. While, as mentioned, all exterior occurrences and characters' minds are read as the main storyline—the act of knitting—develops. The act functions as the frame for mirroring Mr. Ramsay's and Mrs. Ramsay's thoughts. As she measures the stocking against James' leg, Mrs. Ramsay thinks about the house which would become 'shabbier summer after summer,' (*TL*: 30) if she did not take great care of it. While knitting she also thinks that Lily Briscoe and William Bankes should marry. The passages about Lily Briscoe's and William Bankes' walking, talking, and Mrs. Ramsay's knitting are given without interrupting their mental voyaging. Other exterior events, such as the construction of the building, Mr. Bankes' and Mrs. Ramsay' telephone conversation and the Swiss maid's story are further discussed as part of Mrs. Ramsay's knitting scene. Thus, the knitting represents the main subject matter around which other stories develop. It is in the centre of narration, functioning as a prism through which characters' minds and events are read. If one sticks to Auerbach's analysis, one expects to see that characters' consciousnesses were placed at the centre, because Woolf's reading of the characters' inner processes is typically thought as her most important achievement. However, in this particular section we may suppose that Woolf places equal emphasis on the processes of knitting and reading the characters' consciousness.

This particularity leads us to draw attention to the literal and figurative meanings that the act of knitting presupposes. Literally, it represents Mrs. Ramsay's everyday reality, her engagement in the homely work. While figuratively it mirrors Mrs. Ramsay's capacity to connect and to create. She alone can impress others with her dinner parties and power to connect people. She knows that 'the whole of the effort of merging and flowing and creating rested on her.' (*TL*: 79) On these terms, the act of knitting stands as a metaphor for turning parts into wholes—the process of female creativity in which Virginia Woolf herself was engaged. Such interpretation also stems from the implied analogy between Michael Angelo's masterpiece and Mrs. Ramsay's random daily activity:

Knitting her reddish-brown hairy stocking, with her head outlined absurdly by the gilt frame, the green shawl which she had tossed over the edge of the frame, and the authenticated masterpiece by Michael Angelo... (*TL*: 33)

In the passage, Woolf is not so bold as to compare Mrs. Ramsay's *quasi*-artistic potential to Michael Angelo's genius. However, it cannot be a simple coincidence that she refers to the 'authenticated masterpiece by Michael Angelo' next to Mrs. Ramsay's 'reddish-brown hairy stocking.' The emphasis is laid on the value of Mrs. Ramsay's and Michael Angelo's works and in the same context. The reference mirrors what Mrs. Ramsay and Michael Angelo may share is their creative, artistic qualities. Yet, Mrs. Ramsay's creativity is an alternative for the masculine creative potential. Her *stocking* is a product of the feminine creativity. Therefore, just as Michael Angelo's 'authenticated masterpiece', Mrs. Ramsay's product contains *authentic* qualities.

Despite numerous shifts of perspective and time leading to the narrative interruption that Auerbach<sup>205</sup> and Leaska refer to in their stylistic analyses of point of view in *TL*, this section seeks to show that the novel achieves aesthetic unity by organizing different experiences around 'moments.' I suggest that with its unifying principle, the Woolfian 'moment' conveys the meaning of permanence and unity – important ingredients of any artwork and those key messages that the book transmits. I observe the moment(s) of 'revelation' to explain that creating moments help Woolf arrange fragments of consciousness into a unified story.

Remarkably, as stated above, constructing the whole out of fragments is the idea that Russell formulates in *The Problems of Philosophy*. To Russell, the goal and the principle of logic resides in linking 'helter-skelter sense-data', (1914: 112–13) i.e., 'a plurality of private objects.'<sup>206</sup> (Banfield 2000: 97) 'Logical construction' (Russell (1957 (1917): 150)) is possible by some 'common element', i.e., 'something which a number of mental events have in common'. (Russell 1913: 115) Banfield recalls the example of the 'dinner table' that Russell gives in *The Problems of Philosophy* in an attempt to show how to connect the separated objects. 'When ten people are sitting round a dinner-table', Russell explains, 'they are not seeing the same tablecloth, the same knives and forks and spoons and glasses.' He adds that 'sense-data are private to each separate person'. In other words, 'they all see things from slightly different points of view, and therefore

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205 Auerbach defines characters breaking into each other's stream of thought, entailing shifts of time and space, as interruptions.

206 The references to Bertrand Russell's texts are borrowed from Banfield's *Phantom Table* (2000).

see them slightly differently'. (Russell (1959 (1912): 20–21), quoted in Banfield (2000: 97–98)) Russell's solution is that the people may be connected by 'neutral objects' shared by the 'public'. (*Ibid.*) 'The public object', Banfield notes, 'puts together the different perspectives on the table, "ordered in one space"'. (Russell (1957 (1917): 154), quoted in Banfield (2000: 98)) Supposedly following Russell's advice, Woolf invents 'neutral objects' – 'a yellow and purple dish of fruit' (*TL*: 110) and makes it into everyone's focus by placing it in the centre of the table in a candle-lit room. Thus, the characters start to observe one and the same object at a time. The guests start to see the things with a 'public', shared perspective: 'Augustus too feasted his eyes on the same plate of fruit, plunged in... That was his way of looking, different from [Mrs. Ramsay's]. But looking together united them.' (*TL*: 111) Woolf makes their gazes focused. She makes them see 'something over and above the private and particular sense-data which appear to various people'. (Russell, 1959 (1912): 20–1, quoted in Banfield (2000: 98)) If at first the room appeared to Lily Briscoe as the 'strange no-man's land where to follow people is impossible', (*TL*: 96) and 'in the failing light they all looked share-edged', 'divided by great distances': (*TL*: 111) After lighting the candles, it turns into an ordered space. If at first the guests 'sat separately', (*TL*: 95) later 'the faces on both sides of the table were brought nearer by the candle light', and they were 'composed, as they had not been in the twilight into a party round a table'. (*TL*: 146) The light for Russell is 'specially warm and intimate and bright, surrounded in all directions by gradually growing darkness'. (1962 (1940): 102) Light, as opposed to darkness, generates 'the space of perception'. (Banfield (2000: 114)) The dinner-table and the candle-lit room 'order' different points of view 'in one space'. (Russell, 1957 (1917): 154) Hence, constructing the whole out of the separated fragments, intersects both as theme and style in *TL*.

The novel is mostly made up of events of two days, drawn apart by ten years. These two days are recorded in the first ('The Window') and last parts ('The Lighthouse') of the novel. Each day is given in a moment-by-moment description. Woolf arranges the moments in a chronological order. 'The Window' starts with a six-years-old James Ramsay's desire to go to the lighthouse on the next day and ends with a dinner party that Mrs. Ramsay gives late in the evening. The trip to the lighthouse was postponed for a decade. James's desire is only fulfilled after his mother's death, when he is sixteen years old. The Ramsays visit the lighthouse in the last part. Other events are also recounted in a chronological sequence. Lily initiates painting Mrs. Ramsay with her son James on the empty canvas in 'The Window'. She is only able to complete it in part 3, when she gets back to the Ramsays' vacation house ten years later. Dispersed by the war in the middle part 'Time Passes', the Ramsays go to the island together in 'The

Lighthouse'. The nature of family has changed: now it is 'motherless', the grown-up children and Lily Briscoe no longer think of Mr. Ramsay as powerful but as a fallible human, and James forgives his father. Only in the third part are Cam, James and Mr. Ramsay finally able to reconcile their differences—made clear by their trip to the lighthouse, symbolically.

All these moments are ordered by chronological time, though separated by long time intervals. The events in Part 1 and Part 3 extend over a long period of time. They are drawn apart by the decade in which Mrs. Ramsay dies and the World War 1 occurs. To have their desires fulfilled the characters make a journey not only in space but also in time. It takes a long time for James Ramsay and Lily Briscoe to succeed in their projects, almost as long as a lifetime.

Fulfilment of desires consume time and are contrasted by moments of 'epiphany' that Mrs. Ramsay and other characters experience in 'The Window'. These moments highlight the hidden truth of daily life. Like the author, Lily reflects on the neglected luxuries of everyday life. 'The great revelation perhaps never did come', she thinks; 'instead there were little daily miracles, illuminations...' (TL: 183) And since 'life [is] made up of little separate incidents', people need to live them 'one by one'. (TL: 53) Mrs. Ramsay is also vigilant towards the beauty of the moments in everyday life. 'Of such moments', thinks Mrs. Ramsay, 'the thing is made that remains for ever after'; because 'there is a coherence in things, a stability; something, she meant, is immune from change, and shines out...' (TL: 120) She further reflects that this short life given to us may be 'enough' when the beauty of it is measured by moments:

...watching [the steady light] with delight, she had known happiness, exquisite happiness, intense happiness, and it silvered the rough waves a little more brightly, as daylight faded, and the blue went out of the sea and it rolled in waves of pure lemon which curved and swelled and broke upon the beach and the ecstasy burst in her eyes and waves of pure delight raced over the floor of her mind and she felt, it is enough! It is enough!  
(TL: 74)

At this moment, Mrs. Ramsay accepts reality as it is. Even if she desires to seize the moment and make it longer than it is, she thinks that its time length is sufficient to reach a state of plenitude, of wholeness. Mrs. Ramsay can see what is hidden beyond the surface. She has her vision, a private moment. In a moment of ecstasy, she can take hold of life and live it to the full. It appears as if the moment has become as 'steady' as the lighthouse's beam. She has reached the state when the habitual march of time is halted, passing more slowly than usual.

These moments of ecstasy are preceded and followed by interruptions, a sense of insecurity, and the deeds of time that Shakespeare's sonnet symbolizes.

Elsewhere in the 'Window', Mrs. Ramsay thinks that 'No happiness last[s]'. (*TL*: 73) She is aware that happiness is short: 'there was a sense of things having been blown apart'. (*TL*: 83) She thinks that she is powerless against the threat of time. She knows that even her offerings and parties cannot thwart the flow of time. After the dinner party, when 'she moved and took Minta's arm and left the room, it changed, it shaped itself differently; it had become, she knew, giving one last look at it over her shoulder, already the past'. (*TL*: 127) She knows that her insistence that 'people must marry; people must have children' (*TL*: 68) is only 'an escape'. (*Ibid.*) Yet she still attempts to connect the threads of consciousness and create stable relationships between people. These attempts are symbolized both by her knitting of a stocking (ordering threads) and the beam of the lighthouse – a symbol of continuity and permanence.

Woolf focuses on two types of feminine creativity in *TL*: Mrs. Ramsay's setting up of connections in human relations and Lily Briscoe's painting. Whereas Mrs. Ramsay celebrates her creativity in human relations, Lily Briscoe wishes to make a portrait of this mother figure immortal. She desires 'to make of the moment something permanent', (*TL*: 183) while Woolf attempts to shape a unified story out of fragmented consciousness. Lily comes up with the idea that 'one colour [should be] melting into another like the colours on a butterfly's wing' (*TL*: 186) in her painting. She 'knits' different fragments to give a 'shape' to her painting just as the author tries to connect the before (Part 1) and the after (Part 3) as well as several minds. Woolf constructs a novel by way of a series of moments that are not 'symmetrically arranged'. (Woolf, 1984 (1925): 150) The narrative of 'The Window' section is divided into the moments and structured around the idea of holding together (Mrs. Ramsay) and finding shape (Lily) to the fragmentary post-war reality and to the world (i.e., the Victorian Ramsays) which stands outside contemporary history.

As Woolf makes parallels between two types of female creativity, intellectual and domestic, she plays with the relationship between art and life. In the essay *AROO*, Woolf theorizes the links between women and fiction. She explains that if there is no female literary tradition it is because the women had always been poor and with no equal rights to men. Whereas in *TL* she practices the narrative technique which symbolizes and combines intellectual and domestic activities of women. As Woolf tries to represent the unrepresented life of women, she transforms a domestic female activity of knitting into a narrative technique while also using the images of a knitting woman as a symbol of femininity in *TL*.

Colomb and Woolf take note of a substantial shift in women's culture and history via the metaphors: Jenny's/Marguerite's embroidery and Mrs. Ramsay knitting, respectively. On the first pages of their novels, *CE* and *TL*, they construct

the images of a knitting woman who is at the edge of disappearing. Mrs. Ramsay dies in the middle part of the novel; Jenny—in the first lines of *CE*. Both are archetypes of a knitting woman. Interestingly, Woolf and Colomb do not end their novels (*CE* and *TL*) with the heroines' (Jenny, Mrs. Ramsay) death. Instead, they are trying to find new ways of 'writing beyond ending'. (Blau Duplessis, 1985) Jenny's and Mrs. Ramsay's premature deaths suggest that the days when women sat at home knitting are gone. That a knitting woman is not a survivor is pointed out by the name 'Jenny' itself. It is the name of a knitting woman. But the work also refers to the knitting machine, suggesting that no female hand-work is needed in the age of machines. 'Jenny' thus marks a substantial step in women's history and culture. It marks the end of that age when women's creative life was reduced to 'knitting a stocking,' and symbolizes a transition to a moment when a woman could teach herself her craft and use the feminine creativity in the highest forms of art. If Lily survives, it is only because she has not chosen the same path as Mrs. Ramsay. She refuses Mrs. Ramsay's advice to get married: 'she need not undergo that degradation. She was saved from that dilution.' (*TL*: 111) More importantly, she disagrees with Charles Tansley's idea that 'women can't paint, women can't write'. She is a survivor because she has never abandoned the idea to paint.

Gender engages in Colomb's and Woolf's novel production as well. It is at work on a formal level. *CE* calls attention to acutely dehumanising power of mechanical labour in the post-Industrial world. This political message underpins Colomb's aesthetics: the non-linear narrative—made of assembling and relating the parts as in the process of hand knitting—exemplify Colomb's modernist scepticism towards linear, mechanical thinking. Knitting conceptualizes joining of different streams of thought. Mrs. Ramsay's, Marguerite's, Jenny's embroidery, which parallel Mrs. Ramsay's and Mrs. Dalloway's associative thinking against the straight line of masculine reason and reflection, are undoubtedly elements of the division that Woolf and Colomb construct between male and female visions. Mrs. Ramsay's train of thought is repeatedly broken by her children, servants, husband and guests. Mrs. Dalloway's movement of thought gets interrupted by her daughter Elizabeth, husband, guests, all she sees or hears in the city streets and more importantly, by the strikes of Big Ben. These interruptions reflect on the textual representation of their speech and thought, which in its turn relates with the expression of time. The journey of associative thinking made of curls and interruptions taken by Mrs. Ramsay opposes the narrow and straight line of argument of such male scholars as Mr. Ramsay and his guests. Rather than constructing a plot or character-based structure of a novel, the emphases are placed on a shifting perspective and wandering consciousness. In *MD* and *TL*,



one character's consciousness is repeatedly replaced by another's, making the central London with its streets and parks, in the first case, and the Ramsays' summer house in the Hebrides, in the other, a site of mental voyaging of passers-by.

A 'moment' gives formal order to the free movement of thought. To communicate the meaning of the moment, Woolf arranges characters' impressions' moving back and forth in time. And believes that 'one stable moment vanquishes chaos' (*Diary* 3: 141) in *TL*. Since they tend to create a sense of stability and unity, Woolf's moments are coherent patterns. They are minimal, not diffuse. Contrary to the events covering over a long period of time and given in a chronological order, no temporal order is respected within the moment itself, just as Colomb's leitmotif. One of such moments is described at Mrs. Ramsay's dinner party later in the evening. In the passage, Mrs. Ramsay gives coherence to the moment:

Everything seemed possible. Everything seemed right. Just now (...), just now she had reached security; she hovered like a hawk suspended; like a flag floated in an element of joy which filled every nerve of her body fully and sweetly, not noisily, solemnly rather, for it arose, she thought, looking at them all eating there, from husband and children and friends; all of which rising in this profound stillness (she was helping William Bankes to one very small piece more and peered into the depths of the earthenware pot) seemed now for no special reason to stay there like a smoke, like a fume rising upwards, holding them safe together. Nothing need to be said; nothing could be said. There it was, all round them. It partook, she felt, carefully helping Mr. Bankes to a specially tender piece, of eternity; as she had already felt about something different once before that afternoon; (...) so that again to-night she had the feeling she had had once to-day already, of peace, of rest. (*TL*: 119–20)

At the dinner-party, Mrs. Ramsay experiences a moment of wholeness and peace. The moment reaches both the past and the future. It becomes a meeting point between a 'myriad,' fluid 'impressions' ('Modern Fiction': 160) moving between past, present, and future.

Despite the fact that Woolf attempts to highlight the importance of some concrete, single moment in the form of a 'moment of revelation,' the significance of the moment cannot be apprehended only in its independence, rather through the prism of and in its relation to other moments and consciousnesses. Teresa Prudente describes Woolf's 'moments of being' as simultaneously marked by two 'movements,' namely 'the expansion of the present' and 'the falling of the past into the present' (2009: 25) or 'structuring the process of memory.' (*Ibid.*, 27) The experiences condensed within the moment have not all been experienced at once, within a single, concrete moment. Instead, the moment builds on the past and forthcoming experiences of consciousness. Banfield writes, 'only in represented speech and thought are the present and future time deictics—*now*,

*today, this morning, tomorrow* and so on—not cotermporal with the present and future tense.’ (Banfield 1982: 98) ‘Now’, i.e., ‘the moment of the present and future time deictics’ is not cotermporal with the verb in the past tense, i.e., with ‘had reached security’, in the give case. Woolf swells the moment by inserting in it the experiences that have already occurred or are about to come. If Mrs. Ramsay feels ‘joy which filled every nerve of her body fully and sweetly, not noisily, solemnly rather’ (TL: 119) and experiences the feeling of ‘eternity’ (TL: 120) at some particular moment during the dinner, it is by references to all those incidents that occurred in the past or will occur in future. Just few hours before the dinner she felt ‘uneasy, waiting for Paul and Minta to come in, and unable, she felt, to settle to things.’ (TL: 111) As she sits at the dinner table, surrounded by Paul and Minta, by her sons and daughters, by Lily, Mr. Ramsay and his friends, her mood changes. This time, ‘everything seemed possible. Everything seemed right. Just now (...), just now she had reached security.’ (TL: 119) This concrete moment is one of stability to Mrs. Ramsay, revealing that her expectations raised in the past are resolved in the present. Her hope that Minta and Paul would soon come back together has been met. They have been back by dinner time. The ‘Bœuf en Daube’<sup>207</sup> served up by Mrs. Ramsay, which took the cook’s three days, has further met her expectations: it impressed her guests, it ‘was a perfect triumph.’ (TL: 120) Mrs. Ramsay feels that she has succeeded in her past projects—she has shared ‘the community of feeling with other people,’ (TL: 130) which gives meaning to her present. She thinks that this moment is not lost, that it ‘remains for ever after.’ (TL: 120) In the moment, past and future expectations connect. The moment is revealing to Mrs. Ramsay that some of her hopes raised in the past are already accomplished. The others will be met in future. She is persuaded that Paul Rayley will marry Minta Doyle and is convinced that ‘they will be perfectly happy.’ (TL: 68) The moment is also revealing to Mrs. Ramsay that she is connected to other people, forming a part of ‘one stream’, and that ‘Paul and Minta would carry it on when she [would be] dead.’ (TL: 130) Hence, Mrs. Ramsay’s mind acquires a unifying vision in some concrete moment by references to all those events that happened in the past or will happen in future. Therefore, Woolf’s moment is not absolutely independent and acquires meaning only in relation to past and future experiences. Its ‘revelation’ and ‘permanence’—enduring quality—may only be tested in comparison to the qualities of other moments.

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207 James Naremore makes an interesting point when he notes that ‘Bœuf en Daube’ ‘functions to create order out of apparent disorder’; see Naremore (1973: 74).

The enduring moments or in Woolf's own words, the 'moments of being' are rare in Woolf, while they are very common in Colomb. Objects have permanent forms in *CE*. Even such ever-changing forms of clouds are preserved in Colomb's fictional sky: 'À l'horizon monta un nuage gris qui s'avança avec rapidité, conservant sa ferme forme ovale au lieu de se changer en lion, en arbre ou en chimère.' ['A grey cloud appeared on the horizon. It moved swiftly, retaining its firm oval shape instead of changing into a lion, tree, or chimera.'] (*CE*: 817.) While like 'the smoke, words [are] languishing and melting in the sky' when left by the airplane in Woolf. (*MD*: 31) The point is that Colomb immobilizes a moment, while Woolf illustrates its passing, fragility.

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The previous section showed that when compared to Proust's work, *CE* and *ET* rely on intuitive writing. It focused on how the narrative evolves around some negligible details according to a principle of association in Colomb. Introduction of a new element—of a fragment of memory—resulted in the narrative variation. A comparative study of Colomb and Proust allowed us to see that while the memories are organized around some event or character in *La Recherche*, they cannot shape a story in Colomb. Whereas by comparing Woolf's and Colomb's experimentations with temporality and reproductions of consciousness in the study of the aesthetics of time, this section illuminates what creates an ordered work of art. It compares Colomb's use of 'leitmotif' to the woolfian 'moment' to illustrate how a unified story is made out of fragments of consciousnesses.

Principles of memory appear central to the interpretation of Woolf's and Colomb's formal experiments for the depiction of the moment and the leitmotif, respectively. Woolf's moment and Colomb's leitmotif draw together the past and the future. As they fuse the two, the past may be re-enacted in the present. It may also be connected to the future. The linear march of time is brought to a halt within Colomb's leitmotif and Woolf's moment. More exactly, the moment and the leitmotif do not operate temporally, in agreement with the principles of the horizontal progression of time. Instead, they are characterized by vertical expansions. They stretch between the past and the future thoughts, sensations, and impressions they connect. They operate spatially, following a vertical rather than a horizontal narrative path. The 'vertical dive into the realm of memory' (Roud (1997 (1956): 64–5)) is apparent not only on formal but also on thematic levels in Colomb's fiction. César finally manages to 'leave behind this fragment of time even as one leaves behind a fragment of space, [...] dropping straight down instead of continuing to progress horizontally?' [*quitter ce fragment de temps*

*aussi bien qu'on quitte un fragment d'espace, de tomber d'une chute verticale au lieu de toujours s'avancer dans l'horizontal.*] (*The Spirits*: 219; *ET*: 1102)

Not only in *CE* and *ET*, but also within Woolf's 'moments' the narrative unfolds on the vertical axis. Using her 'tunnelling' method, Woolf supports 'the vertical expansion of time to take over'. (Leaska 1977: 146) As in a poem, Woolf's moment is marked by spatial expansion. Her moments do not convey life experiences in a linear sequence. They encircle and shape stories in a spatial order. With their spatial expansion, Woolf's moments oppose Mr. Ramsay's horizontal reading of a philosophical alphabet and are in line with Mrs. Ramsay's 'flashing of needles' (*TL*: 42) 'in and out, up and down, hither and thither', (*Orlando*: 37) to which Woolf compares the principles of memory. Woolf's displaying images of stillness and change, of spatialized time and movement, of how 'this eternal passing and flowing' may be 'struck into stability', (*TL*: 183) the future's sudden coming into existence, such as multiple deaths in the 'Time Passes', embraces, for Banfield, the Cambridge philosophy of time, i.e., the model of time introduced by the Cambridge Apostles which counts Russell, Moore, Whitehead, Wittgenstein and few more as its members. (Banfield, *Tragic Time* (2000)) In addition, there is a connection between the complex symbol of the lighthouse and the epiphanies – moments of vision. Both contain the qualities of permanence and unity. The ray from the lighthouse illuminates the chaos just as the moments of revelation create order out of void. The vertical and the far-away lighthouse parallels the vertical expansion of the moment. Mingled in the moment, impressions do not organize themselves in agreement with the horizontal march of time. They move between the past and the present.

Colomb's and Woolf's works trace visions of subjectivity with marked consistency. A range of subjective narrative strategies including stream-of-consciousness and point-of-view narration shape their subjective vision. Their novels propose alternative forms, interrogating the relationships among fragmentation and unity, uncertainty and predictability, loss and recovery, chaos and order. Representation of subjectivity in Woolf and Colomb shifts away from the consistent tolling of clocks and a linear narrative to the ones proceeding around 'leitmotif' and 'moment', rather than around characters. It privileges the pattern of spatial form over the temporal one. Unity and coherence of the Woolfian 'moment' and the Colombian 'leitmotif' owe primarily to its spatial rather than temporal nature. The vision of the 'great wall' in *CE* and a 'dinner table' which gathers the Ramsays and their guests around in *TL*, further increase sense of space and of unity. Structuring the narrative via 'moments' and 'leitmotifs' suggests separation from a linear narrative and exploration of the atemporality. Through the integration of 'the leitmotif' and 'the moment' in the processes of creation,

Colomb and Woolf try to renew fiction in a time of collapsing civilization and crisis of the novelistic genre. Just as the use of Homeric myth generates a form in Joyce's *Ulysses*, 'leitmotif' and 'moment', as structuring elements in Colomb and Woolf, constitute, using Eliot's words, a 'way of controlling, of ordering, of giving a shape and a significance to the immense panorama of futility and anarchy which is contemporary history'.<sup>208</sup> The vision offered by Colomb's 'leitmotif' and Woolf's 'moment' stands against linear narrative and the inevitable (controlling) flow of time. These alternative narrative forms encircle, connect and give shape to the dispersed stories of the everyday life while ignoring the laws of temporality. In this respect, the 'moment' and the 'leitmotif' contain not only stories but also a world within them.

*CE* and *TL* are not books that excite thrilling interest in readers, that make their hearts beat and their eyes water. They tell the tale of writing a 'tale about time' (Mendilow, quoted in Ricoeur, 1985 (1984): 101.) if they tell a tale at all. And these books do tell a tale of recreating life out of death, of constituting wholeness out of fragments, of giving new forms to old characters and incidents, of finding shape to chaos, of reproducing old stories in new combinations, of mirroring the life of dead characters and lost objects, of death and rebirth.

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208 Eliot thus defined Joyce's use of Homer's myth. See Eliot (1975: 177).



## IV. Time in Colomb, Proust & Woolf: In Dialogue with the *AIR DU TEMPS*

### 4.1 Introduction: modernist time

This chapter aims to provide a comprehensive overview of the concepts of time appearing at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In so doing, I am willing to show that the vision of time in Colomb's, Proust's, and Woolf's novels is *sui generis*. Colomb (*CE*), Proust and Woolf published their novels in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, at which time Freud's, Bergson's, and Einstein's theories became widely known. The unconscious, the notions of 'simultaneity', the *durée*, 'temporal indivisibility', and 'relativity' become useful for redescribing the representation of time, space, memory and point of view in a novel.<sup>209</sup> But while the literary works aim to offer a singular vision, the scientists seek to reach universally accepted definitions. The spectacular developments in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century such as Max Planck's discovery of 'energy quanta' (discrete and indivisible packets of energy) (1900), Einstein's theories of 'special relativity' (1905) and 'general relativity' (1915) regarding the relationship between time and space,<sup>210</sup> Bohr's theory of the atom (1913–1925), de Broglie's formulations of matter and electrons (1924), Heisenberg's 'Uncertainty Principle' (1927), 'Schrödinger equation' between 1925 and 1926, and other contributions to quantum mechanics all tended to lay down the valid general laws. A series of scientific discoveries in 'new physics'

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209 The notions of 'simultaneity', the *durée*, 'temporal indivisibility' are found in Bergson (1989); 'simultaneity' and 'relativity' are the ideas elaborated in modern physics (see note below).

210 'Special relativity' theory studies the relationship between an object and space-time. It further includes the relativity of 'simultaneity' discussed in the following pages. As for the theory of 'general relativity', it is known for having refined Newton's 'law of universal gravitation' and introduced the idea of the 'curvature of space-time'. My account of Einstein's theories in this chapter comes from the following sources: (a) For the detailed insight into the theory of Relativity from a scientific and philosophical point of view see Lawson (1920.); (b) The conceptual foundations of spacetime in classical and modern physics, the differences between Newtonian and Einsteinian accounts of spacetime, between Relativity and theories of matter (known as 'quantum theories') suggested in this chapter are found in Maudlin (2015); (c) On the scientific revolution of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and its impact on literature of the time see Lewis (2007: 17–25); Whitworth (2001) and Kern (1983)

warp the Newtonian notions of universal and immutable space-time.<sup>211</sup> With the rejection of the idea that the absolute measure of spacetime is possible, the commonly held systems of measurement and perception break down: the ideas of continuity are replaced by the concept of quantum discontinuity in physics; what were once believed to be clearly framed particles behave like waves; the Newton's idea of gravitational force is replaced by Einstein's idea of gravity as a distortion or 'curvature' of space, in which various gravitational fields have their own *clocks*; the belief in a single static space for all is abandoned in favor of 'the infinite number of spaces [...] in motion.' (Einstein and Infeld (1938) in Kern (1983: 126))

Before that, time and memory have been the principal questions of investigation in Henri Bergson's works *Time and Free Will: An Essay on the Immediate Data of Consciousness* [Fr. *Essai sur les données immédiates de la conscience*] (1889) and *Matter and Memory* [Fr. *Matière et Mémoire. Essai sur la relation du corps à l'esprit*] (1896). At that time, Bergson was an influential figure in artistic circles due to his remarkable additions to the *air du temps*. He rejects a mathematical view of time as a measurable unit. In parallel to Bergson's thinking of the notion of time as continuous flow, rather than as series of separate units in France, William James views consciousness as continuous in the United States at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>212</sup>

The originality of Bergson's discovery lies in the distinction he makes between psychological time and clock time. Modern physicists including Einstein elaborate the notion of a 'space-time *continuum*' or of a 'four-dimensional world' (definition of Minkowski) composed of a time co-ordinate and three space co-ordinates: *x, y, z*, of Euclidean geometrical space. (Lawson 1920: 55–57) By contrast, Bergson makes a distinction between the *durée* and clock time. (Bergson 1910 (1989): 100) He thinks time, i.e., the *durée* and space, i.e., clock-time, as two opposite notions. Space is marked by 'quantity' and 'homogeneity'; whereas time is defined by 'quality' and 'heterogeneity': 'space is to be defined as the homogenous...every homogenous and unbounded medium will be space.' (*ibid.*, 98) The *durée* is an inner duration involving 'qualitative', rather than 'quantitative' succession, which originates from an extension of the past state of consciousness into

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211 The term 'new physics' designates novel discoveries, such as relativity, quantum mechanics, wave-particle duality, in the science of physics during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Henceforth referred to as 'modern physics'.

212 For an account of William James's philosophy, see 3.3 'Stream of consciousness' – definition of concept.



the present. (*idem.*) ‘Pure duration,’ Bergson argues, ‘might well be nothing but a succession of qualitative changes, which melt into and permeate one another, without precise outlines.’ (*ibid.*, 104) He defines ‘pure duration’ as ‘pure heterogeneity.’ (*idem.*) Bergson considers memory as a ‘mental state,’ which, ‘as it advances on the road of time, is continually swelling with the duration which it accumulates: it goes on increasing – rolling upon itself, as a snowball on the snow.’ (1911 (1907): 2) He compares his concept of *durée* to a melody which has its own rhythm and length and cannot be shortened or extended without altering its nature.<sup>213</sup> (1910 (1889): 100–101) The *durée* is ‘an endless flow,’ (1911 (1907): 3) indivisible, made of diverse states of consciousness. In Bergson’s own words, it represents ‘fluid mass of our whole psychical existence.’ (*Ibid.*)

New notions of time including the one proposed by Henri Bergson have been thought to have left an imprint on 20<sup>th</sup> century art. The ways in which modernist writers and artists depict time and experiment with narrative forms have often been considered, whether persuasively or not, in relation to Bergson’s theories both in and out of France. In his polemic *Time and Western Man* (1927), Wyndham Lewis even goes so far as to expose this modernist intelligentsia’s ‘obsession’ with the Einsteinian ‘relativity-philosophy’ and Bergson’s ‘flux’ as a ‘cult of Time.’ (Lewis 1927: 84) Bergson was read not only by the French-speaking world, but also in Britain. (Gillies 1996: 28) His influential work, *Time and Free Will: An Essay on the Immediate Data of Consciousness*, was made available to English readers in 1910.<sup>214</sup> The discoveries of Bergson and Einstein altered, for Lewis, the writings of Marcel Proust and James Joyce, among many. Lewis further argues that a parallelism between philosophy and science is not a ‘case of the accidental coincidence of a new philosophical view with the results of reasoning from physical grounds,’ rather ‘a demand of the time.’ (1927: 15–16) Likewise, György Lukács, in his study *The Meaning of Contemporary Realism* (1963), holds that Bergson’s theory arose from the real-world experience, which is the ‘disintegration of the world of man.’ (Lukács 1963: 40) ‘Subjective Idealism had already separated time, abstractly conceived, from historical change and particularity of place.’ (*Ibid.*, 37) Lukács explains that ‘experienced time, subjective time, now became identical with real time,’ and ‘this tendency’ finds its echo

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213 For an early exposition of Bergson’s distinction between the *durée* and space or clock-time, and of his time-philosophy, see Farges. (1912: 337–378) For a recent reading of Bergson, see Guerlac. (2006)

214 Henri Bergson’s, *Essai sur les données immédiates de la conscience* | *Time and Free Will: An Essay on the Immediate Data of Consciousness* (1989), was translated into English by F. L. Pogson 1910.

in art and literature. (*Idem.*) Following Lukács's example, in *The Culture of Time and Space* (1983), Stephen Kern studies time and space in the 1880–1918 novel, poetry, painting, architecture, and cinema to draw a parallel between the changes in experiences of time-space in various fields and Bergson's theories. What Lewis's, Lukács's, and Kern's studies tend to illustrate is not so much Bergson's influence on art and literature, as the parallelism between different fields in their responses to the real-world challenges. More like Wyndham Lewis, than like Lukács and Kern, in *The Novel and the Modern World* (1960), David Daiches maintains that Bergson's and Einstein's theories about time inform the 1920's literature. (1970 (1960): 7–8) He studies the ways in which the novelists, considering Bergson's and Einstein's (but also by Bertrand Russell's, William James's, etc.) findings, created new experiences of time. He argues that, in response to such changes, novels start to lose linearity and to embrace a renewed vision of time. (*Ibid.*, 7–12) Introductions of Bergson's *durée*, William James' view of continuous consciousness, Einstein's outlook on simultaneity and spacetime coincide with the abandon of a chronological sequence in favor of the narrative that captures multiple viewpoints, individual's memory, parallel acts, and time as 'heterogenous' (i.e., unmeasurable, with respect to Bergson's definition of time). (*Ibid.*, 7–18) Not only Daiches' but also other studies in the 1960s, including Shiv Kumar's *Bergson and the Stream of Consciousness Novel* (1962) and Margaret Church's *Time and Reality: Studies in Contemporary Fiction* (1963), focus on Bergson's influence on modernist writers' including Woolf's. (Kumar 1962: 17) Kumar argues that the technique of 'stream of consciousness' corresponds to a Bergsonian time-philosophy.<sup>215</sup> Generally, in earlier studies, representations of time and consciousness in Woolf's art are understood in relation to the theories of Henri Bergson.<sup>216</sup> More recent Woolf critics including Ann Banfield (2000, 2003, 2007), Michael Whitworth (2001), Jeff Wallace (2007), Peter Brooker (2007) and Andrew McNeillie (2000) downplay the importance of Bergson's philosophy for Woolf's art.<sup>217</sup> Woolf's 'philosophical learning', for Banfield, 'is more extensive and plausible than the sole case of Henri Bergson so often suggested'. (2000: 30) 'Woolf's Bergson was filtered through Cambridge'. (*Ibid.*, 35)

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215 On Woolf's techniques and on the stream-of-consciousness technique in general see Chapter 3: 1.3. 'Stream of consciousness' – definition of concept.

216 For instance, Gillies (1996) maintains that Woolf, like Joyce, Richardson, Conrad, and T. S. Eliot, was influenced by Bergson's conception of time. Earlier, Hafley saw Bergson's conception of time best represented in Woolf's art, so that Woolf, for Hafley, was 'a better artist than Bergson [was] a philosopher'; see Hafley (1954: 166).

217 For more reflections about Woolf's philosophy, see 3.2 Current state of research.

Unlike Lewis, Lukács and other theorists, Georges Poulet's four-volume masterwork *Études sur le temps humain* (1949–1964) brings the literary consideration of time experience into the forefront of his analysis while eschewing the scientific and philosophical treatment of the problem. Poulet explores the question of time in literature from the Middle Ages to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century through a rigorous study of individual French authors namely Montaigne, Descartes, Pascal, Molière, Corneille, Racine, Madame de la Fayette, Fontenelle, Prévost, Rousseau, Diderot, Benjamin Constant, Vigny, Théophile Gautier, Flaubert, Baudelaire, Valéry, and Proust. His critical work centers on the *expérience vécue de la durée* to examine the structures of human subjectivity, thereby proposing an alternative reading method to a formalist approach to literary criticism. Poulet includes the works of Bernanos, Supervielle, Ungaretti, Whitman, etc. in his study on the literary representation of time in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. He shows rich and diverse time experiences in literary works that may not have equivalent in other fields. For instance, unlike Bergson's vision of time, the 'moment' as it appears in Poulet's reading of Racine, Stendhal, and Proust is not fixed but changing reality.

In what remains of this introduction, I provide a review of currently available literature about Proustian and Bergsonian time and memory, and Woolf's conversations with Russell and Fry that provide an important backdrop to my main analysis.

## 4.2 Proust and Bergson

Proust's obsessions with the workings of time and impulses of memory have been considered similar to Bergson's since the publication of the first volume of *La Recherche*.<sup>218</sup> Proust seems to be regarded with more scepticism than praise in the 1920s. In the first major study of Proust's life and work (1925), Léon Pierre-Quint suggested that Proust had met Bergson at the Sorbonne (1946 (1925): 33) and that 'memory and involuntary associations' introduced in Proust's book were inspired by Bergson. (*Ibid.*, 33–34) Later, Pierre-Quint continued to hold that Proust's art originated from Bergson's thought. (1943: 330) Likewise, in France and in England, notably Gladys Turquet Milnes (1926), Paul Souday (1927), and Wyndham Lewis (1927) regarded Proust's contribution as Bergsonian and Freudian without going into further detail. In the 1930s, Charles Blondel (1932: 187), Samuel Beckett

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218 Notably, Rageot (1 January 1914), Latourette (24 January 1914) and Boulenger (4 December 1920) think Proust as Bergson's follower.

(1931), and Kurt Jäckel (1934) asserted the innovation and originality of Proust's *Weltanschauung* by paying attention to the psychological depth of Proust's thought and measuring Proust's memory-experience against Bergson's theory of memory, to Proust's extratemporal experience against the *durée*. In his 1931 essay on Proust, Beckett offered a Schopenhauerian rather than a Bergsonian reading of *La Recherche*. Blondel held that there are striking similarities between Bergson's and Proust's philosophy. (1932: 167) As for Bergson, in his correspondence to Henri Massis, he noted that Proust's thought turns away from the *durée* and 'vital momentum' [Fr. '*l'élan vital*']. (Bergson 1948 (1937): 381)) However, Massis contradicted Bergson's claim and supposed, like many in the 1930s, that Proust had experimented some of Bergson's theories in relation to memory. (*Ibid.*, 160.) Proust was thus read like an offspring of Bergsonian philosophy in the 1920s and the 1930s.

However, no serious comparative study of Proust's and Bergson's works was undertaken until the late 1940s. From this period on, Proust's art has been regarded with more interest and examined through and against Bergson's philosophy. Henri Bonnet (1949), Georges Poulet (1950, 1963), Georges Cattai (1952), and Michel Raimond (1966), unlike the readers of Proust in the 1920s-1930s, underlined the differences between Proust's and Bergson's conceptions of time and memory. Bonnet, with *L'Eudémonisme esthétique de Proust*, made an important contribution to Proust studies in 1949. He made a distinction between Proust's and Bergson's thought. For him, Bergson imagines quality as continuous, while Proust thinks that it is complex and discontinuous. (Bonnet 1949: 214–227) Like Bonnet, Poulet (1950: 395; 1963) and Cattai (1952) drew a clear distinction between Proust's and Bergson's projects. For Poulet, there is nothing in common between the Proustian and Bergsonian '*durée*'; the 'spatialized' time in Proust, Cattai suggests, is not compatible with Bergson's 'pure duration'. Many in the 1960s and the 1970s such as Merleau-Ponty (1964), Gilles Deleuze (1964), Michel Raimond (1966) and Joyce N. Megay (1976) sought to downplay the importance of Bergson for Proust's work. With their focus on the relations between art and its expression in *La Recherche*, Merleau-Ponty and Deleuze did not read Proust as Bergsonian. Raimond in *La Crise du Roman* suggested that time in Proust is 'only super-space', (1966: 341) as opposed to Bergson's conception of time.

Joyce Megay further argued that Proust went against Bergson's philosophy by relying on the fragment about a 'Norwegian philosopher' that Proust added to *Sodom and Gomorrah* in 1921, on Proust's interview with Élie-Joseph Bois

in 1913<sup>219</sup> and a 1921 letter to Duc de Guiche.<sup>220</sup>(Proust (17 June 1921), *Corr.* XX: 348.) Proust's and Bergson's works, for Megay, are very different. (Megay 1976: 27) In his other significant study, Megay made a distinction between Bergson's conception of 'spontaneous memory' and Proust's 'involuntary memory'. For Bergson, memory is a consciousness that lasts, and true reality is not outside the laws of time, rather movement and change. (Megay 1973, 27/2: 57) Whereas, for Proust, the real is a timeless and mental experience as opposed to the disappointing external reality. (*Ibid.*)

The question of Bergson's influence on Proust is now very debated. Some suggest that even if Proust shares much with Bergson in his thinking of the questions of time and memory, *La Recherche* is still quite different from Bergson's philosophy.<sup>221</sup> In the latest comparative study of Proust and Bergson entitled '*Le Morceau de sucre et la fleur de papier. Écrire avec et contre Bergson 1890–1940*', the experience of time in *La Recherche* is not quite the same as Bergson's theory of the *durée*, (Girardi, 2019) just as there is no Proustian 'atemporality' in Bergson. (Megay 1973: 54) More recently, some have preferred to read Proust through Freud, the others – through Schelling, Schopenhauer, etc. For instance, in his 1984 study on Proust, Jean-Louis Baudry offered a Freudian rather than a Bergsonian reading of *La Recherche*; whereas in *Proust romancier : Le Tombeau égyptien* (1983: 30–57) and in the *Théories pour une esthétique* (1981) or *La*

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219 In the interview Proust suggests that his work 'est dominée par la distinction entre la mémoire involontaire et la mémoire volontaire, distinction qui non seulement ne figure pas dans la philosophie de M. Bergson, mais est même contredite par elle.' | 'is dominated by the distinction between involuntary memory and voluntary memory, which goes missing in and is even contradicted by Mr. Bergson's philosophy'.

220 In his letter to Duc de Guiche Marcel Proust notes: 'Bergson trouve que si le jour où une femme meurt au Cap, sa fille en a la vision à Paris, ce n'est pas là un fait extraordinaire ; mais l'extraordinaire est que ces phénomènes se produisent si rarement. [...] j'ai dans mes livres noté une série de faits que j'inventais, que je ne pouvais savoir, qui souvent n'avaient pas encore lieu, et qui se sont trouvés minutieusement réalisés dans la vie...Mais ce n'est nullement à la télépathie et à la théorie de Bergson que j'attribue cette description des faits que je ne pouvais connaître.' | 'Bergson thinks that if one day a woman dies in Cape Town, her daughter sees it in Paris. It is not an extraordinary fact. The surprise is that these phenomena occur so rarely. [...] In my book, I have written down several cases that I invented, which I could not know. Often, they have not yet occurred but have scrupulously come true in life. [...] However, all the facts I could not know are in no way related to telepathy, and I do not attribute them to Bergson's theory'.

221 See Megay (June 1973: 57.) and Girardi's thesis presentation (26 March 2019).

*tentation de Marcel Proust* (2000), Anne Henry claimed that Proust practiced Schelling's philosophy of art which he studied at the Sorbonne in 1894–1895. Henry recognized that Schelling's ideas with regard to spontaneity in the production of works of art and 'aesthetization of philosophy' found their echo in Proust's aesthetics. (1983: 38) Proust's novel reminded her of an Egyptian tomb with its detailed recapturing of the life of the deceased 'with the hope of perpetuating it in the possibility of an indefinite rereading'. (*Ibid.*, 54) Proust, for Bizub, had chosen to focus on a variety of issues including unconsciousness and consciousness widely discussed in the fields of philosophy and of the experimental psychology of Pierre Janet and Alfred Binet among a few. (*Proust et le moi divisé*, 2006) In *L'éclectisme philosophique de Marcel Proust* Luc Fraisse has reconstructed Proust's philosophical culture to show how his novel goes beyond the influence of any particular philosopher (including Kant, Leibniz, Schelling, Schopenhauer, among many). Proust is 'eclectic' and therefore, he is sometimes Bergsonian and at other times, anti-bergsonian. (Fraisse 2013: 279) Antoine Compagnon asserted that Proust's idealist doctrine was inspired by Schelling and Schopenhauer. (1989: 24) He recognized 'historical and aesthetical ambiguity' (*ibid.*) of Proust's *œuvre* as he reflected on its historical and aesthetic relationships with the culture of the age: on the one hand, *La Recherche* has its aesthetic affinities with the 19<sup>th</sup> century which, for Compagnon, is the century of Baudelaire, Wagner, and Ruskin, and on the other hand, it shares with the 20<sup>th</sup> century an idea of the *avant-garde* and reflections on history. As such, Proust's place, according to Compagnon, is between decadence and modernity. (1989: 19) Julia Kristeva (1994) and Anne Simon (2016) gave credit to Proust's definition of essences in *La Recherche*. Kristeva recognized the originality of Proust's experience of 'sensitive time', which is 'woven with perceptions and fantasies', which is 'neither Bergsonian nor Heideggerian'.<sup>222</sup> (1994: 276) Proust's conception of memory, for Gérard Bensussan, is also unique. His two forms of memory are very different from Bergson's 'spontaneous memory recalls' and 'habit memory' introduced in his *Matter and Memory* (1896). (Bensussan 2020: 101–106)

These readings suggest that even if Proust's work embraces some of Bergson's concepts, it cannot be summed up using the philosopher's theories. What draws from the currently available comparative studies of Proust's artwork and Bergson's philosophical project is that there are obvious affinities between the two. The affinities primarily consist of the subjective, internal dimension of time

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222 Fr. 'Tissé de perceptions et de fantasmes, ce temps proustien – qui n'est ni celui de Bergson ni celui de Heidegger – devient sensible'.

because of a common Schopenhauerian background (as we learn from Anne Henry). Secondly, the questions of time, memory and consciousness are also widely discussed at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. However, Bergson's *durée* is not quite the same as Proustian 'atemporality' (as Megay and Girardi suggest). Also, unlike a Bergsonian time-philosophy, which is markedly different from space, (Bergson 1910 (1989): 98) time, for Proust, is the 'fourth dimension of space'. (*Remembrance I*: 66; *La Recherche I*: 60) Besides, Proust thinks of time, and memory not as a philosopher but as a writer,<sup>223</sup> not only through the prism of the 19<sup>th</sup> century thought, but as Luc Fraisse suggests, from the beginning of Western philosophy. (2013: 279) The other significant difference also lies in Bergson's and Proust's conceptions of memory. Bergsonian memory 'goes on increasing – rolling upon itself, as a snowball on the snow'. (1911 (1907): 2) Proustian memory is more complex in nature: it can be voluntary or involuntary; it can sometimes be laden with sensations, impressions, and recollections and at other times, forgetful.

### 4.3 Proust and Einstein

Critics compared *La Recherche* to Albert Einstein's theories as early as 1921. In the preface to his *Dates: Propos de Peintre* (1921), as he gives credit to Marcel Proust's discovery of a new spacetime dimension, Jaques Émile Blanche wonders teasingly whether Einstein could become as great as Proust.<sup>224</sup> Paul Souday calls Marcel Proust 'a Bergson or an Einstein of novelistic psychology'. (*Le Temps*, 12 May 1921; quoted in Proust, *Correspondance*, xx. 260–1.) Camille Vettard held that if curvature fluctuated in the Einsteinian universe of General Relativity, so did the *self* and the external world in *La Recherche*. (Vettard (1922), quoted

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223 In response to the claims about Bergson's influence on Proust, the author wrote: 'J'ai assez à faire avec ce que j'ai senti, et à tâcher de le convertir — dans la mesure où la lumière et les forces m'ont été données — en idées claires, sans chercher à mettre en roman la philosophie de M. Bergson!' ['I have enough to do with what I have felt, and to try to convert it - insofar as light and strength have been given to me - into clear ideas, without trying to put philosophy of Mr. Bergson into a novel!'] (XXX, 39): 258.)

224 'Herr Einstein, déjà si fameux avant la guerre par son principe de la *relativité*, nous ferait croire aujourd'hui que Newton s'est trompé. Vous saurez plus tard, vous, Marcel Proust, si Einstein est aussi grand que vous... Car vous avez déjà fait connaître une dimension nouvelle.' ['Herr Einstein, already so famous before the war for his principle of *relativity*, would make us believe today that Newton was wrong. You will know later, you, Marcel Proust, if Einstein is as great as you... Because you have already made known a new dimension!'] (Reproduced in *Correspondance*, xx. 1992 (1921): 70.)

in Ollivier. (2018: 90)) Later, the question of Proust's scientific culture was addressed in Mouton's ((1948: 71–72, 88–92), quoted in Virtanen (1954: 1038)) and Virtanen's (1954) critical works by paying attention to Proust's scientific metaphors, such as a few allusions to electric currents in *The Fugitive (Albertine Gone)* and to the phenomenon of magnetism comparable to the association of ideas in *The Guermantes Way*.

Recently, several critics have suggested the commonalities between the conception of time set forth by relativity theories and the idea of time in *La Recherche*.<sup>225</sup> Some suggest that Proust and Einstein dismiss the idea of flowing time. (Damour 2006) Proust's knowledge of science is not only examined considering a relativistic time, but also by his use of scientific terms and his definitions of such themes as electricity, waves, and radiation as well as with respect to Algebra, Galilei's and Newton's laws of motion. (Vannucci 2005; 2008: 93–100) Three hundred passages (out of total three thousand pages) in *La Recherche* contain scientific references and metaphors. (Virtanen (1954); Vannucci (2005; 2008: 94–5)) Most metaphors in relation to physics are given in the episode of 'Matinée chez la Princesse de Guermantes', in the last volume of *La Recherche*. (Ollivier (2018: 87)) Yet, 'Einstein arrived too late for Proust's work to truly benefit from the time of Relativity, but early enough for the writer's fame to benefit from flattering connections'.<sup>226</sup> (*Ibid.*, 94) Besides, one of the commonalities between Proust's ideas of time and Einstein's relativity theories is the belief in the four-dimensional reality:

[U]n édifice occupant, si l'on peut dire, un espace à quatre dimensions –la quatrième étant celle du Temps—déployant à travers les siècles son vaisseau qui, de travée en travée de chapelle en chapelle, semblait vaincre et franchir, non pas seulement quelques mètres, mais des époques successives d'où il sortait victorieux...<sup>227</sup> (*La Recherche* I: 60)

This excerpt reminds of Einstein's 1905 theory, which dismisses the idea of absolute time and space and introduces them in combination with each other.

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225 We have in mind more recent works by Ollivier (2018: 83–94) and Vannucci (2005); (2008: 93–100)

226 Fr. 'Einstein est arrivé trop tard pour que l'œuvre de Proust bénéficie véritablement du Temps de la Relativité, mais suffisamment tôt pour que la célébrité de l'écrivain tire avantage de rapprochements flatteurs.'

227 Eng. '[...] an edifice occupying, so to speak a four-dimensional space—the name of the fourth being Time—extending through the centuries its ancient nave, which, bay after bay, chapel after chapel, seemed to stretch across and conquer not merely a few yards of soil, but each successive epoch from which it emerged triumphant'. (*Remembrance* I: 66)



Proust thinks of time as a fourth dimension of space. Einstein thought of 'physical reality as a four-dimensional existence, instead of, as hitherto, the *evolution* of a three-dimensional existence.' (Einstein and Infeld (1938), quoted in Kern (1983: 206)) Proust's depiction of time in spatial terms suggests that he was aware of Einstein's contribution to physics: '[M]algré Einstein je ne pouvais croire qu'il fût cinq heures du matin rue Hamelin, et deux heures de l'après-midi rue de la Faisanderie'. ['Despite Einstein, I couldn't believe it was five in the morning on rue Hamelin and two in the afternoon on rue de la Faisanderie.'] (Proust (16 June 1921), quoted in *Correspondance*, xx. 342) Proust might have known more about the theory of *relativity* than he admitted; but it also appears that he could not make use of Einstein's scientific theories.<sup>228</sup> These letters only show Proust's sharing of general excitement about his contemporary physics. 'There is a serious scientific—indeed, a legislative—impulse in Proust's conception of *À la recherche*', claims Luckhurst in *Chapter 2* ('Correspondence Between Art and Science') of his 2000 book. But Proustian 'scientific metaphors' are also 'contaminated by comparisons with other areas of intellectual enquiry and creativity'. (*Ibid.*) We need to recognize the independence of Proust's literary work, because uncovering literary truths is as difficult as discerning scientific laws.<sup>229</sup> *La Recherche* is not the literal application of science. To represent a slow and progressive development of the 'self', Proust makes an effective use of a 'coming-of-age' novel form.

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228 On 9–10 December 1921 he wrote to Duc de Guiche about Einstein: 'je ne comprends pas un seul mot à ses théories, ne sachant pas l'algèbre. Et je doute pour sa part qu'il ait lu mes romans. Nous avons paraît-il une manière analogue de déformer le Temps. Mais je ne puis m'en rendre compte pour moi, parce que c'est moi, et qu'on ne se connaît pas, et pas davantage pour lui parce qu'il est un grand savant en sciences que j'ignore et que dès la première ligne je suis arrêté par des « signes » que je ne connais pas'. | 'I don't understand a single word of his theories, not knowing algebra. And I doubt he has read my novels. We apparently have an analogous way of distorting Time. But I cannot get it for myself, because it is me, and we do not know each other, and no more for him because he is a great scientist in sciences that I do not know and from the first line I am stopped by 'signs' to me unknown'. (*Correspondance* xx, 1992 (1921): 578.)

229 Fr. 'La vérité, même littéraire, n'est pas le fruit du hasard [...]. Je crois que la vérité (littéraire) se découvre à chaque fois, comme une *loi* physique. On la trouve ou on ne la trouve pas'. | 'The truth, even literary, is not the result of chance [...]. I believe that (literary) truth is discovered every time, like a physical law. We find it or we don't find it'. (Proust's letter to Léon Daudet, March 1917, *Correspondance* xvi, 1988 (1917): 65.)

#### 4.4 Woolf's negotiations with Russell, Fry & Einstein

Recently, Woolf criticism has become more and more multifaceted. Apart from Feminist, Marxist and historical studies of her work,<sup>230</sup> her negotiations with the cultural climate of the age such as the developments in philosophy and science have also been credited. Several critics propose that she was exposed to a series of innovations in contemporary physics and philosophy and examine the extent to which Woolf's texts and literary culture are rooted in philosophy and science. For instance, Ann Banfield notes that '[t]he breakthroughs of physics' in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, which included 'Max Planck's discovery of the quantum in 1900, the confirmation and application of Niels Bohr's theory of atom between 1913 and 1925, Einstein's formulation of the special theory of relativity in 1905 and of the general theory in 1915 and the discoveries of de Broglie, Heisenberg, P. Jordan, Dirac and Schrödinger on wave and particle theories in 1925–6' undeniably informed Woolf's writings. (2000: 5–6) Gillian Beer's 1996 essay 'Physics, Sound and Substance: Later Woolf', and her 2000 book *Wave, Atom, Dinosaur: Woolf's science* links the stylistic effects of Woolf's later writings to the questions of wave and sound underlying the debates among scientists in the 1920s and 1930s. Michael Whitworth discusses Woolf's engagement with scientific ideas as he explores Modernist simultaneity and its relation to science.<sup>231</sup> Whitworth (2001) examines certain metaphors available both in science and Woolf's modernist writings to bring close literature and science to one another. Woolf's art, Whitworth suggests, complies with the theories of 'physical science... dealing with phenomena inaccessible to unaided human perceptions', insofar as it represents 'the universe quite differently from human perceiving subjects' (2001: 83) and as 'chaotic'. (*Ibid.*) The idea that reality has no structure and order 'was the basis for philosophical, scientific, linguistic, and aesthetic theories in this period'. (*Idem.*) Woolf is attentive not only to the ideas but also to the images and the vocabulary of physical science, (*ibid.*, 127) as shown by her use of the word 'atoms' in the description of perception of reality as the 'shower of innumerable atoms' ('Modern Fiction': 160). (Whitworth 2001: 109) Julia Briggs historically connects Woolf to Einstein in *Reading Virginia Woolf*. (2006: 125–9) Sharon Stockton pays attention to time and relativity in her article 'Public Space and Private Time: Perspective in *To the Lighthouse* and in Einstein's Special

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230 Notably, Guiguet (1965) and Zwerdling (1986). The latter focuses on Woolf's reflections on pacifism, class conflict, feminism and domestic life. For more details about feminist and Marxist readings of Woolf, see 3.2 Current state of research.

231 See Whitworth (2011: 683–703) and (2001).

Theory'; (1998: 95–102) and Paul Tolliver Brown discusses Woolf's notions of space and time and their relation to Einstein's thought in 'Relativity, Quantum Physics, and Consciousness in Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse*'. (2009: 39–62) All these readings of Woolf with regard to Einstein's theories suggest that Woolf's art negotiates with the eminent scientific theories of her time.

Banfield acknowledges Woolf's awareness of Einstein's thought through her social ties with Bertrand Russell and other members of the Bloomsbury Group in her book *The Phantom Table* (2000) and two articles 'Tragic Time: The Problem of the Future in Cambridge Philosophy and *To the Lighthouse*' (2000) and 'Time Passes: Virginia Woolf, Post-Impressionism, and Cambridge Time' (2003). Banfield's Woolf is involved in the life of the mind, philosophically aware, responsive to a 'historically localizable theory of knowledge'. (*The Phantom Table* (2000: 3)) In her influential studies, Banfield turns away from the then current Bergsonian interpretations of time in Woolf as does Jane Goldman, who rather suggests the link between Woolf's moments and historical world in her significant study *The Feminist Aesthetics of Virginia Woolf: Modernism, Post-Impressionism and the Politics of the Visual* (1998). Yet, unlike Goldman, Banfield does not focus on the 'maternal influence' on Woolf's writings to show the importance of the aesthetic and philosophical findings of pre-war Bloomsbury, developed by 'the Cambridge Apostles'.<sup>232</sup> Banfield records evidence against Woolf's own claims suggesting a lack of formal philosophical training. Woolf points out both in her novels and essays that 'the daughters of educated men are not members of Cambridge University' (*Three Guineas*: 31) and that they are 'restricted to the education of the private house'. (*Ibid.*, 37) Despite Woolf's lack of a proper education because of which she would 'never understand the harder problems of philosophy', (*The Waves*: 186.) 'philosophy', for Banfield, 'marks a locus of her desire, the longing for some possible world, in which she might have gone beyond her limits'. (*The Phantom Table* (2000: 28)) That Woolf could read anything she wished in her father's library is evidence, for Banfield, of Woolf's access to philosophical learning. (*Ibid.*, 29) Woolf, in Banfield's words, 'had a knowledge *ex auditu* of philosophy'. (*Ibid.*, 30)

What Banfield argues is that Woolf's art and philosophy emerge from *The Theory of Knowledge*, which was devised by Bertrand Russell in contact with Wittgenstein, but grounds itself on Moore's 'Refutation of Idealism' and

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232 See Banfield's works: (1). *The Phantom Table*. 2000; (2). 'Tragic Time: The Problem of the Future in Cambridge Philosophy and *To the Lighthouse*'. (2000: 43–75); (3). (2003: 471–516.); (4). (2007: 48–64).

Whitehead's thought. (*Ibid.*, Preface: x.) Banfield even goes so far as to seek the relations, on the one hand, between Russell's aesthetic principles and Roger Fry's theories of 'impressionism' and 'post-impressionism', and on the other hand, between Fry and Woolf to show that despite Woolf's well-known handicaps 'in logic, mathematics and philosophy', (*Idem.*) she could grasp Russell's theories through Fry's 'theory of modern painting'. (*Ibid.*, 26) 'Out of the idea of possible worlds comes the strange theory of "sensibilia." They become the basis for a "post-impressionist" reconstruction of the external world [...]. From these dual processes Woolf would take the principles of "modern fiction"': (*Ibid.*, xiv) What Russell calls 'sensibilia' are 'the unsensed sensations' recorded by the 'unperceived perspectives.' (*Ibid.*, 39–40) Banfield shows that the 'unobserved sensibilia' or 'the dualities of matter and mind', which Russell theorized, translate into Woolf's 'selfless world and the worldless self'. (*Ibid.*, 52–3; 59–241) What draws from Banfield's significant account is that Woolf's writings are not only informed by the Cambridge philosophy, but they seek to find the solution, via art, to the scientific and philosophical preoccupations with regard to the apprehension of the external world.<sup>233</sup> The preoccupations, for Banfield, are marked by the date of 'December 1910' and defined as 'human character change' (Woolf 1966 (1924): 320) in Woolf, which bring at the same table the members of Bloomsbury, on the one hand, and philosophers and an artist in *TL*, on the other hand. 'The table is interposed between Woolf's woman-artist and the philosopher, placing the problems of knowledge at the center of Woolf's art'. (Banfield, *The Phantom Table* (2000: 49–50)) The table conveys, for Banfield, the uncertainty of knowledge presented as a 'reality unaffected by human agency whose literary correlate is the disappearance of the author...a disappearance not simply a theme of the novels but a stylistic principle'. (*Ibid.*, 53) The results are 'the world seen without the self' and 'the self alone without the world'. (*Idem.*)

Woolf's art and thought are further considered in relation to Fry's visual aesthetic with a particular focus on dual ways of apprehending reality. (*Ibid.*, 245–357) Like Russell's theory about the duality of the nature of knowledge, a post-impressionist canvas bears, for Banfield, a dual language of forms and sensation. (*Ibid.*, 53) Woolf, for Banfield, presents 'an unseen vision' (*ibid.*), but also one that is visual – a combination of 'vision' and 'design' as in Paul Cézanne's geometry, as suggested in 'Time Passes: Virginia Woolf, Post-Impressionism,

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233 Banfield mentions two versions of knowing 'the external world, one direct apprehension of it through the senses and the other scientific knowledge, chiefly modern physics. (2000: 7)

and Cambridge Time'. (2003: 471–516) More precisely, 'the interlude "Time Passes"' transforms story into novel by relating past to future in a time-series, creating a post-impressionist "modern fiction"'. (*ibid.*, 471)

Here again Woolf turns away from Bergson's philosophy, Banfield suggests. For in Woolf, 'Time passes not as *durée* but as a series of still moments. Temporal relations connect moments as spatial ones unify Impressionism's atomized color, with the mathematical theory of continuity playing a crucial role'. (*Idem.*) What is more, in conformity with 'modernist time-thinking', Woolf's novels display 'an increasingly marked dualism: a disjunction between public/objective and private/subjective time' (Banfield 2007: 48) and the dualism of time and tense.<sup>234</sup> As such, Woolf turns away from Bergson's conception of time. For 'Henri Bergson criticized this dualism, asserting that time was really experienced 'duration', that is, a flow of interpenetrating moments, by contrast with scientific or physical 'spatialized' time, the 'time' measured by clocks, in which the units are discrete'. (*Ibid.*)

In another significant study 'Tragic Time: The problem of the Future in Cambridge Philosophy and *To the Lighthouse*' (2000), Banfield explains that two currents in modernist conception of time: a 'spatialized' notion of time and time in motion, chiefly interpreted as Hegelianism and Bergsonism respectively, derive from the Cambridge Apostles. Both Idealism and Bergson maintain that 'physical time' is 'timeless.' (2000: 46) Russell offers a spatialized view of time. While Bergson considers time as 'the flow of interpenetrating moments.' (*Ibid.*) He rejects a spatialized notion of time, i.e., time that is marked by interruptions, and, like Idealists, adopts 'the tensed view' (*ibid.*, 48) of time. Banfield explains that '[i]n the Russellian solution to the problem of the future, the Platonism of the early logic is projected onto the conception of time', (*ibid.*, 53) which means to apprehend the future via the past. 'British modernism saw the consequences of the Great War with something like the vision of Greek tragedy'. (*Ibid.*, 69) Woolf, who, for Banfield, organizes her novel *TL* around the question of the future, presents as unforeseeable the events to come including the war and the deaths, Mrs. Ramsay's matchmaking, weather, and a trip to the lighthouse.

All these findings suggest that Woolf's writings shift from Bergson's interpretations of time and are rather in synchrony with the current scientific as well as British philosophical interpretations of time and of the life of mind.

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234 The apparent duality between the world of linear time and the world of mind time in Woolf's three novels (*The Voyage Out*, *Night and Day*, and *Jacob's Room*) had already been theorized by John Graham (1970).

#### 4.5. Colomb's negotiations with Bergson & Einstein

Until very recently Catherine Colomb has been considered as a stay-at-home hostess who wrote in secret and led a life apart from literary circles and writers. Besides, little has been written about her readings. The recent edition of her *Complete Works* has reproduced Colomb's doctoral thesis 'Béat Louis de Muralt' written in 1917–1920 along with a long list of her bibliographical readings of historical, theological, and literary texts concerning the literary and cultural exchanges between Switzerland and France, Switzerland, and England in the 18<sup>th</sup> and in the 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. Although partially, this edition lifts the veil on the secrets of her correspondence with Lady Ottoline Morrell, a close friend of Bertrand Russell's and of other members of the Bloomsbury Group including writers like Virginia Woolf, Aldous Huxley, T. S. Eliot. Lady Ottoline Morrell was then a major patron of the arts, helping artists, writers and philosophers meet both in Bloomsbury and Garsington Manor near Oxford. Colomb spent the summer of 1913 in England as an *au-pair* of Lady Morrell's daughter. She met Bertrand Russell, Aldous Huxley and some other philosophers and writers, as we learn from her letters. From the year 1913 until the death of Lady Morrell in April 1938, Colomb and Ottoline remained good friends. Lady Morrell kept encouraging Colomb to follow her literary vocation. While Colomb shared with Lady Morrell her reading impressions of literary and philosophical texts and her new discoveries regarding the question of time.<sup>235</sup> Colomb read Hegel and Schopenhauer, her notebooks (*carnets*)—currently available at the the Centre for Research in French Swiss Literature (CRLR) archive—reveal. Letters to Lady Morrell held by the University of Texas at Austin, further attest that Colomb knew about Bergson's and Einstein's theories, through her relationship with Morrell's close friend Bertrand Russell—an author of *The ABC of Atoms* (1923) and *The ABC of Relativity* (1925)—, but also through her readings of Henri Bergson and the popular media about the major scientific discoveries in her times.

Einstein's theories had been part of the intellectual atmosphere since 1919, as had been Bergsonism from 1910 onwards. Although the epistemological enigmas of the relativity theory were not easy to grasp for those with little scientific

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235 Before her career as a novelist, as her letters make it explicit today, Colomb read widely English, French German and Spanish literatures, read the Russian authors, and widely cultivated herself in German and French philosophy. The letters evoke her interest in the works by Flaubert, Balzac, Valéry, Novalis, Proust, Shakespeare, Woolf, Katherine Mansfield, Austen, The Brontës, Bloy, Montaigne, Mallarmé, Ibsen, Chekhov, Dostoevsky, and in philosophy: Kant, Bergson, Freud, and Nietzsche.

culture, they had been made available to a wider audience by newspaper articles, popular science pamphlets, generalist periodicals and radio broadcasts from the 1920s. Colomb's contemporary Gustave Roud suggested that a popularized version of Einstein's ideas could have had affected Colomb's novelistic treatment of time. (Roud 1997 (1945): 49–52)<sup>236</sup> Later, Pierre-André Rieben (1973) further asserted that the idea of spacetime presented by the theory of relativity found their echo in Colomb's work.

In one of her 1918 letters to Lady Ottoline Morrell, Colomb notes that reading the psychology of Henri Bergson and Théodule Ribot offers her some 'consolation': '*je me plonge dans la psychologie, dans Ribot, dans Bergson*'. ['Consolation, I bury myself in psychology, in Ribot, in Bergson.'] Colomb's references to Bergson and Ribot side by side reveal that she had read *Matter and Memory* (1896) by 1918, some twenty years before she started writing *CE*.<sup>237</sup> In *Matter and Memory* Bergson attacks Ribot's claim that the quality of memory is material. Relying on the discoveries of brain science, in his book *The Maladies of Memory* (1881), Ribot suggests that memory is located within the brain. In opposition, Bergson considers memory as immaterial: 'The brain is not a place to store memory' (in *Matter and Memory*, Chapter 2). Colomb mentions Bergson later as well. In January 1954, she wrote in her diary that she agrees with Bergson in thinking that 'intelligence is feminine': '*Les hommes, décidément, ont du génie, mais l'intelligence est féminine (moi et Bergson)*'. ['Men are indeed genius, but intelligence is feminine (me and Bergson)']. (1973: 15) Not only did Colomb read Bergson, but she was even exposed to the philosophical questions about spacetime underlying Einstein's theories. In a 1926 letter to Lady Ottoline Morrell, Colomb writes: '*Puis intervenait le sentiment de la relativité des choses humaines : qu'est-ce qu'un lien ou un autre, un homme ou un autre, devant l'éternité ? Et tout à coup une rage folle, un désir acharné d'être heureuse, et l'illusion d'être le centre du monde*'. ['Then came the feeling of the relativity of human things: what is one link or another, one man or another, before eternity? And suddenly a mad rage, a longing to be happy, and the illusion of being the center of the world.'] (*L.*, 11 July 1926) She draws parallels between Einstein's physical system and the absurdity of opinion that human beings are the most important organisms in the universe.

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236 Roud's remarks on the theory of relativity are available later in this chapter.

237 Colomb started writing the novel in 1936 as we learn from her letter of 11 April 1936 with Lady Morrell: 'J'ai pu quand même recommencer à travailler [...]. J'écris, (j'essaie) un livre d'amour filial'.

By using this evidence coming from Catherine Colomb's diary and letters as points of departure, the current chapter aims to show how Colomb's prose along with Virginia Woolf's and Marcel Proust's dialogues with the breakthroughs of physics and philosophy at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> and in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. I posit that even if *CE* and *ET* are family novels, describing life and conflicts of the various members of different families and their ancestors' lineage as in 19<sup>th</sup> century novel, they go well beyond telling the life of families. This chapter shows that Colomb places at the center of her novels the concerns of her contemporaries at large. By looking at the ways in which time is represented in her work, we can notice that Colomb originally responds to important questions raised by her contemporaries. Her refusal to order a narrative in a continuous, horizontal line and catching the sight of vast distances and periods of time in one glance can be used as evidence of her conversation with some important scientific and philosophical ideas of her time.

This chapter comprises two sections. The first focuses on Colomb's and Proust's search of the original contact with the world by tracing time into memory. As such, I look at the ways in which Colomb and Proust agree and disagree with Bergson and Darwin. The second section focuses on Colomb's and Woolf's weaving a 'web of time' in the perceived and the unperceived worlds and on the implicit allusions to non-absolute time-space. My study introduces Colomb as a highly relevant author for the study of links between literature and science as it shows another version of literary engagement in science. It highlights how Colomb's vision of time-space overlaps with and diverges from Woolf's. Exploring the affinities ultimately allows us to see that in many ways, Colomb stands in-between Proust and Woolf.

## 4.6 Colomb's and Proust's search of the original contact with the world. Darwinism? Bersonism?

### 4.6.1. The Merovingians: Legendary Times

Colomb constructs her novels using tales of the past, placing a legend of Louise-Galeswinthe and a lamp that 'falls but does not break' at the center of *CE*. A 'copper lamp' [Fr. 'la lampe de cuivre'], used as a *leitmotif*, appears each time the central character is introduced in the text. Galeswinthe is a guardian of the memories of family in Colomb's novel.<sup>238</sup> Galeswinthe, a Goth princess and

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238 Colomb has read Augustin Thierry in Alexandre Vinet's *Chrestomathie française* (1828, ed. Eugène Rambert. Lausanne: G. Bridel, 1879) as noted in Catherine Colomb, *CE*, in *TCC*: 755, note 2.



Sigebert's sister-in-law, is a legendary figure in Augustin Thierry's *Narratives of the Merovingian Era*. In Thierry's text, 'a crystal lamp, suspended near Galeswintha's tomb on the day of her burial' falls on the 'marble pavement without breaking or going out'.<sup>239</sup> Galeswinthe's tomb makes an appearance in *La Recherche* as well, creating a legendary atmosphere in the whole of Combray. Colomb tries to bring the legendary figure of Galeswinthe (in *Merovingians Tales*) to life by giving her name and personality to the central character and even 'the copper lamp' that accompanies her. Colomb's Galeswinthe, just like Augustin's legendary character, is halfway between life and death.<sup>240</sup> She is already dead when her story begins in *CE* as in Proust who introduces a passage from Augustin's legend associated with the tomb of Galeswinthe in the first volume of *La Recherche*.

Elle Galeswinthe, la balsamine, elle était morte et désormais comme les mères de cette époque sur une colonne brisée à l'entrée d'une forêt pâle ; la lampe de cuivre jaune fut reléguée au galetas, posée dans un coin, maladroite dans ses chaînes comme une hirondelle à terre.<sup>241</sup> (*CE*: 756)

La lampe de cuivre se balançait imperceptiblement au plafond comme une lampe de navire. Mais une seule lampe s'enfoncerait dans le sol sans se briser, celle de la frêle Galeswinthe dans le bosquet.<sup>242</sup> (*CE*: 778)

[D]ans une nuit mérovingienne [...], Théodore et sa sœur nous éclairaient d'une bougie le tombeau de la petite fille de Sigebert, sur lequel une profonde valve – comme la

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239 'It was said that a crystal lamp, suspended near Galeswintha's tomb on the day of her burial, had suddenly given way without any one's touching it, and had fallen on the marble pavement without breaking or going out; to complete the miracle, it was asserted that the spectators had seen the marble yield like a soft material, and the lamp sink half way into it. Such stories may make us smile, we who read them in old books written for men of another age; but in the sixth century, when these legends passed from mouth to mouth, as the living and poetical expression of the popular feelings and faith, those who listened to them became thoughtful, and wept'. See Thierry (1845 (1840): *Narratives of the Merovingian Times* (AD 561–568): 123).

240 Characters in Colomb's novels are often referred to as 'marionnettes' (*fantoches*) from the Guignol-style puppet theatre. See Colomb (1973 (8 September 1954): 35–40) Colomb herself notes that her characters are like '*fantoches*' (puppets). (*I.*)

241 Eng. 'Galeswinthe, the balsam, she was dead and now, as the mothers of that time, was on a broken column at the entrance to a pale forest; the yellow copper lamp was relegated to the garret, placed in a corner, clumsy with its chains like a swallow on the ground.'

242 Eng. 'The copper lamp swayed imperceptibly on the ceiling like a ship lamp. But only one lamp would sink into the ground without breaking, one of the frail Galeswinthe in the grove.'

trace d'un fossile – avait été creusée, disait-on, « par une lampe de cristal qui, le soir du meurtre de la princesse franque, s'était détachée d'elle-même des chaînes d'or où elle était suspendue à la place de l'actuelle abside, et, sans que le cristal se brisât, sans que la flamme s'éteignît, s'était enfoncée dans la pierre et l'avait fait mollement céder sous elle. »<sup>243</sup> (*La Recherche* I: 61)

The references to Thierry and Merovingian times appear when the Narrator describes the Combray church and the projections of the magic lantern. The church of Saint-Hilaire surrounds the village history with legend and persists through time. It is both space and time, 'an edifice occupying, so to speak, a four-dimensional space—the name of the fourth being Time'. ['[U]n édifice occupant, si l'on peut dire, un espace à quatre dimensions – la quatrième étant celle du Temps'.] (*Remembrance* I: 66; *La Recherche* I: 60) The Combray church's nave is the reminder of 'each successive epoch from which it emerged triumphant', and the crypt is 'thrusting down [...] into a Merovingian period'. Depiction of Combray in medieval terms reinforces its myth: it turns into the venue of fabulous childhood, of lost paradise. With its medieval atmosphere, Combray is also linked to the Narrator's fascination for the Guermantes. *Geneviève de Brabant* was an ancestress of the *Guermantes* family who were also the Abbots of Combray. The Guermantes family members seem to the child Narrator to be 'possessing Combray in the midst of their name, of their person' ['possédant Combray au milieu de leur nom, de leur personne']. (*Remembrance* I: 188; *La Recherche* I: 170) The magic lantern appears in connection with the Narrator's fear of sleeping in the new room. It projects the medieval story of Geneviève de Brabant, which seems 'wrapped in the mystery of the Merovingian age' ['enveloppées du mystère des temps mérovingiens']. (*Remembrance* I: 187; *La Recherche* I: 169)

We know that Colomb was inspired by Proust in her efforts to pay a tribute to her beloved grandmother and to overcome the loss through writing. She writes to Lady Ottoline Morrell: '*chaque fois que je pense à ma grand-mère, je pense à la façon dont Proust a parlé de la sienne*' ['every time I think of my grandmother, I think of the way Proust spoke of his']. (*L.*, 3 October 1927) As in *La Recherche*, time and memory are the central questions that Colomb deals with in her novels.

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243 Eng. '[I]nto a Merovingian darkness, [...] Théodore and his sister would light up for us with a candle the tomb of Sigebert's little daughter, in which a deep cavity, like the bed of a fossil, had been dug, or so it was said, "by a crystal lamp which, on the night when the Frankish princess was murdered, had detached itself, of its own accord, from the golden chains by which it was suspended on the site of the present apse and, with neither the crystal being broken nor the light extinguished, had buried itself in the stone, which had softly given way beneath it"'. (*Remembrance* I: 66)

The absence of the maternal figure is compensated by the reproduction of the legendary character of Galeswinthe in Colomb's life and *œuvre*; Proust integrated the legend in a half-forgotten life of Combray church and its surroundings, but without linking the legend to the absence of a maternal figure.<sup>244</sup>

Placing Merovingian tales in *La Recherche* and *CE* aims at representing the imaginary world of the past. Merovingian tales do not however display the legendary times in Proust's and Colomb's novels. Quite the reverse, what I posit is that Colomb's 'copper lamp' marks the experiences of separation with the past, erosion of objects, people and their values through time, while Proust's lantern (unlike the crypt of the Combray Church) highlights transformation of things and beings over time and in memory.<sup>245</sup> *La Recherche* and *CE* open up to events that take place at nighttime which might be illuminated, quite literally, by lamp-light. On the first pages of Colomb's novel, a young woman suffers from severe headache and dies during the night before a messenger brings the news to her parents. Jenny's parents, just as a relative who travels by night train, arrive 'too late.' (*CE*: 747–8) At the opening of *Swann's Way*, we are presented with the insomniac who reads at night in a partial wakefulness. The unconscious—nighttime fantasy and dreams—, and involuntary thoughts emerge in nocturnal obscurity. The nocturnal experiences of sleep and death in Proust's and Colomb's works respectively, provide a layout for tracing a now-almost-extinct and lost world in the abysses of time. Colomb's novels depict daily life and tensions within the fine houses of winegrower families on the shore of Lake Geneva. Family celebrations and receptions described in the first chapters of *CE* are replaced by the progressive vanishing of an older order and heritage: winegrowers harvest smaller and smaller crops year after year, glass factories replace vineyards, people leave their

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244 At various instances, Catherine Colomb writes that *CE* is inspired by her grandmother Louise Champ-Renaud who brought up the little Catherine after the death of her daughter. (Colomb was only five when her mother died.) In another letter, Colomb writes to Lady Ottoline Morrell that she started writing 'a book of filial affection.' (*L.*, 11 April 1936) Ten years later, on July 21 1946, she confirms to Éric de Montmollin that Galeswinthe truly represents her beloved grandmother: 'Quelle joie que [...] vous ayez découvert au milieu de ces fantoches [...] celle que je n'ai pas même osé nommer et pour qui j'ai écrit ce livre.' (Colomb, reproduced in *TCC*: 730) | 'What joy that you [...] discovered in the middle of these puppets [...] the one that I did not even dare to name and for whom I wrote this book.' For the analysis of the question of remembrance of Colomb's departed grandmother in *CE* see Maggetti. (*TCC*: 725–741)

245 For the purposes of this comparative study, we do not read a complex symbol of magic lantern at all levels (e.g., metaphorical, poetic, metatextual).

old jobs to go into the banking industry and trade; though, not everyone can adapt to a changing world in which old inheritances and worldview lose their value. In the industrial world of *CE*, ‘family ties are very distant, they are lost in the mists of time.’ [‘*[Les] liens de parenté sont bien éloignés, ils se perdent dans la nuit des temps.*’] (*CE*: 827) Likewise, places of memory, a standard of values and a set of beliefs held by the society in the initial part of *Swann’s Way*, Proust shows, have grown old and faded. The Narrator recalls the details of his parents’ and grandparents’ life in the village of Combray in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The everyday life of aunt Léonie is filled with restrictions, weird rituals and monotony. The society that aunt Léonie exemplifies has grown aged and mechanical, lives upon routine and shuts itself up from the surrounding world. Aunt Léonie’s lifestyle is static, without any hope, adventure, expectation, memory or regret. She remains in bed almost all the time and observes the passers-by from the window. Not only human characters and values, but also churches in the village of Combray, music, sculpture and paintings appear as places of unknown memories, ‘in a state in which they no longer exist’, [‘*[E]n un état qui n’existe plus aujourd’hui.*’] (*Remembrance I*: 18; *La Recherche I*: 164)– thus analogues to Colomb’s and Proust’s readings of Merovingian tales.<sup>246</sup>

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246 ‘[M]a grand-mère aimait à me donner des reproductions—comme ces gravures anciennes de la Cène ou ce tableau de Gentile Bellini dans lesquels l’on voit en un état qui n’existe plus aujourd’hui le chef-d’œuvre de Vinci et le portail de Saint-Marc.’ (*La Recherche I*: 164) | ‘[M]y grandmother was so fond of bestowing on me – as those old engravings of the Last Supper or that painting by Gentile Bellini, in which one sees, in a state in which they no longer exist, the masterpiece of Leonardo and the portico of Saint Mark’s.’ (*Remembrance I*: 181)

‘[D]u château des anciens Comtes de Combray qui au Moyen Age avait de ce côté le cours de la Vivonne comme défense contre les attaques des sires de Guermantes et des abbés de Martinville. Ce n’étaient plus que quelques fragments de tours bossuant la prairie, à peine apparents, quelques créneaux d’où jadis l’arbalétrier lançait des pierres, d’où le guetteur surveillait Novepont, Claire-fontaine, Martinville-le-Sec. Bailleaul’Exempt, toutes terres vassales de Guermantes entre lesquelles Combray était enclavé, aujourd’hui au ras de l’herbe, dominés par les enfants de l’école des frères qui venaient là apprendre leurs leçons ou jouer aux récréations ; —*passé presque descendu dans la terre.*’ (*La Recherche I*: 165) | ‘...of the castle of the old Counts of Combray, who, during the Middle Ages, had had on this side the course of the Vivonne as a barrier against attack from the Lords of Guermantes and Abbots of Martinville. Nothing was left now but a few barely visible stumps of towers, hummocks upon the broad surface of the fields, and a few broken battlements from which, in their day, the cross-bowmen had hurled their missiles and the watchman had gazed out over Novepont, Clairefontaine, Martinvile-le-Sec, Bailleau-l’Exempt, fiefs all of them of Guermantes by

Yet, Augustin Thierry's legendary tales also make way for the entry in the unknown world of memory that grants access to our past. What Colomb and Proust try to read through Merovingian tales is not only immemorial times, but also origin that need to be recovered. For, in Proust's and Colomb's cases, the creation of an artwork requires death and forgetting; for '[t]he true paradises are paradises we have lost'. [*les vrais paradis sont les paradis qu'on a perdus*.] (*Remembrance* IV: 140; *La Recherche* IV: 449) What matters for Proust, that we may also say about Colomb, is not actual experience but 'Penelope's weaving of a man's memory' for the 'restoration of the original, the first happiness' that is lost. (Benjamin (1968: 204)) If Proust and Colomb seek to explore what is dead, forgotten, lost and remote, it is because 'reality takes shape in the memory alone, the flowers that people show me nowadays for the first time never seem to me to be true flowers'. [*[L]a réalité ne se forme que dans la mémoire, les fleurs qu'on me montre aujourd'hui pour la première fois ne me semblaient pas de vraies fleurs*.] (*Remembrance* I: 201; *La Recherche* I: 182) For them, one can understand life only through memory.<sup>247</sup> That is why, there is no love at first sight in Proust's *œuvre*; quite the contrary, at first Odette de Crécy 'had struck Swann not, certainly, as being devoid of beauty, but as endowed with a kind of beauty

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which Combray was hemmed in, but now razed to the level of the grass and overrun by the boys from the lay brothers' school who came there for study or recreation—a *past that had almost sunk into the ground*. (*Remembrance* I: 182–3) (The italics are mine).

'... une pierre où jouait un reflet, un toit, un son de cloche, une odeur de feuilles, bien des images différentes sous lesquelles il y a longtemps qu'est morte, *la réalité pressentie* que je n'ai pas eu assez de volonté pour arriver à découvrir'. (*La Recherche* I: 177) | '...the play of sunlight on a stone, a roof, the sound of a bell, the smell of fallen leaves—beneath which the reality I once sensed, but never had the will-power to discover, and bring to light, has long since perished'. (*Remembrance* I: 196) (The italics are mine).

- 247 Proust writes: '...qui nous reste d'habitude à jamais inconnu, notre vraie vie, la réalité telle que nous l'avons sentie et qui diffère tellement de ce que nous croyons, que nous sommes emplis d'un tel bonheur, quand un hasard nous en apporte le souvenir véritable'. (*La Recherche* IV: 459) | '...which for most of us remains for ever unknown, our true life, reality as we have ourselves felt it and which differs so much from that which we had believed that we are filled with delight when chance brings us an authentic revelation of it'. (*Remembrance* IV: 148) 'Rien qu'un moment du passé ? Beaucoup plus, peut-être ; quelque chose qui, commun à la fois au passé et au présent, est beaucoup plus essentiel qu'eux deux'. (*La Recherche* IV: 450) | 'Nothing but a moment of the past? Much more perhaps; something which being common to the past and the present, is more essential than both'. (*Remembrance* IV: 141)

which left him indifferent, which aroused in him no desire, which gave him, indeed, a sort of physical repulsion. [‘[...] *était apparue à Swann non pas certes sans beauté, mais d’un genre de beauté qui lui était indifférent, qui ne lui inspirait aucun désir, lui causait même une sorte de répulsion physique.*’] (*Remembrance* I: 213; *La Recherche* I: 192–3).

He falls in love with her once he decides that Odette’s features conform to his aesthetic values and understands that ‘the great Sandro would have adored’ [‘[...] *eût paru adorable au grand Sandro.*’ (*Remembrance* I: 244; *La Recherche* I: 220)] her beauty. Likewise, overcoming illusions takes time in *La Recherche*. The revelation comes after many years of Swann’s jealousy and attachment to Odette: “‘To think that I’ve wasted years of my life, that I’ve longed to die, that I’ve experienced my greatest love, for a woman who didn’t appeal to me, who wasn’t even my type!’” [‘« *Dire que j’ai gâché des années de ma vie, que j’ai voulu mourir, que j’ai eu mon plus grand amour, pour une femme qui ne me plaisait pas, qui n’était pas mon genre !* »’] (*Remembrance* I: 415; *La Recherche* I: 375) *La Recherche*, as Antoine Compagnon notes, is a the ‘product of a vast procrastination’, (1989: 301) because it is a book that is ‘in search of the Truth’, as Proust himself suggests.<sup>248</sup>

Just like ‘a crystal lamp’ that illuminates ‘Galeswintha’s tomb, [...] without breaking or going out.’ (Thierry 1840: 352) Proust and Colomb are guided by the desire to unveil—via their novels of memory—the undiscovered ‘tomb’ of original contacts with the world and times until then immemorial. As what follows uncover, the exploration of rootedness and of original experiences suggests the research of body memory, sensations and experiences that demonstrate resilience over time.<sup>249</sup>

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248 ‘Mon livre est un ouvrage dogmatique et une construction...J’ai trouvé plus probe et plus délicat comme artiste de ne pas annoncer que c’était justement à la recherche de la Vérité que je parlais, ni en quoi elle consistait pour moi.’ (Letter of Proust to J. Rivière of 7 February 1914.) | ‘My book is a dogmatic work and construction... As an artist, I thought more honest and delicate not to state that it was precisely in search of the Truth that I started from rather than what it meant to me.

249 The term ‘*mémoire du corps*’ [Eng. ‘bodily memory’] is introduced in Bergson’s *Matière et Mémoire*. Bergson suggests that ‘*La mémoire du corps, constituée par l’ensemble des systèmes sensori-moteurs que l’habitude a organisés, est donc une mémoire quasi instantanée à laquelle la véritable mémoire du passé sert de base.*’ (Bergson (1959 (1896): 293)) | ‘The bodily memory, made up of the sum of the sensori-motor systems organized by habit, is then a quasi-instantaneous memory to which the true memory of the past serves as base’; see Chapter 3: ‘Of the Survival of Images. Memory and Mind’ in *Matter and Memory*. Bergson (1911: 170–231, 197)

#### 4.6.2 The body as an actualization of the *durée*

In *CE* and *La Recherche*, the human body participates in the representation of time. Colomb's characters bear a striking physical resemblance to their remote ancestors. We learn what common traits they share with their forebears as the narrative traces the ancestor in whom the trait arose. For instance, the shape of a young man's ears is a mark left by his father.<sup>250</sup> (*CE*: 853) In Colomb, we often discover bodily similarity at its extremity: not only within the family genealogy, but also between animals and the human body, between plants and the human body. For instance, 'Marianne looks like a guinea fowl'; [*Mariane...ressemblait à une pintade et parlait en fermant à demi ses yeux.*] (*CE*: 752) a certain 'doctor's wife' seems to have 'a guinea pig's big belly'; [*La femme du docteur...avait un estomac de cochon d'Inde.*] (*CE*: 753) Madame Angenaisaz has a body filled with 'abscesses' and 'cactus'; [*[L]a tante aux abcès, la tante aux cactus.*] (*CE*: 761.) vineyard workers bear a resemblance to the 'plesiosaurs';<sup>251</sup> (*CE*: 804.) 'she had rabbit teeth growing out from her lower lip... her hair matted on the forehead around a strand of horsehair; her legs, hidden for centuries under her navy-blue skirts, were white and soft'; [*Elle avait des dents de lapin qui avançaient sur sa lèvre inférieure... ses cheveux roulés sur le front autour d'un boudin de crin ; ses jambes, dissimulées depuis des siècles sous ses jupes bleu marine, étaient blanches et molles.*] (*CE*: 865) a houseowner's 'face was covered with wiry hair, his open mouth showed the dog teeth'; [*[V]isage se couvrit de poils durs, sa bouche s'ouvrit sur des dents de chien.*] (*CE*: 889) 'The magician has got the face of a cat with green eyes.' [*[L]a magicienne a la tête de chat aux yeux verts.*] (*CE*: 891) Human body thus bears a resemblance to animals and plants, in conformity with the Darwinian theory that places the origin of human life within the animal kingdom.<sup>252</sup> Explorations of prehistorical times in the novel parallel the breakthroughs in Psychology and anthropology. Colomb accepts a Darwinian perspective, one that insists on the 'survival' of parental traits and qualities in an offspring. (Darwin (1987 (1859)).

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250 Fr. 'décollée du père en fils'.

251 '[E]lles seraient sorties à deux heures du matin, auraient pataugé dans le ravin, aveugles et silencieuses, se seraient répandues dans les vignes comme des plésiosaures...'

252 The theory of evolution by natural selection was first formulated in Darwin's book *On the Origin of Species* in 1859. Darwinism is a theory of *biological evolution* developed by Charles Darwin in relation to the 'evolution of living organisms over long periods of time principally by the action of natural selection on heritable variations arising by chance among a population.' (*OED*)

The body in Proust is a 'faithful guardian of a past' [*gardien fidèle d'un passé*] (*Remembrance* I: 6; *La Recherche*, I: 6.) It holds 'the strand of hours, the order of years and worlds' [*le fil des heures, l'ordre des années et des mondes*]. (*Remembrance* I: 5; *La Recherche* I: 5.) Memories are stores in the body: 'The legs, the arms are full of blunted memories.' [*Les jambes, les bras sont pleins de souvenirs engourdis*]. (*Remembrance* IV: 5; *La Recherche* IV: 277.) The body in Proust works independently from and better than the mind. At the *overture* of *Swann's Way*, the Narrator's 'mind struggled in an unsuccessful attempt to discover where (he) was' because 'everything revolved around (him) through the darkness: things, places, years.' [*(...) esprit s'agitant pour chercher, sans y réussir, à savoir où j'étais, tout tournait autour de moi dans l'obscurité, les choses, les pays, les années*]. (*Remembrance* I: 6; *La Recherche* I: 6.) By contrast, his 'body (...) would endeavour to construe from the pattern of its tiredness the position of its various limbs, in order to deduce therefrom the direction of the wall, the location of the furniture, to piece together and give a name to the house in which it lay.' [*(Son) corps (...) cherchait à repérer la position de ses membres pour en induire la direction du mur, la place des meubles, pour reconstruire et pour nommer la demeure où il se trouvait*]. (*Remembrance* I: 6; *La Recherche* I: 6.) The body awakens not just to one moment and place, but a multiplicity of rooms at different times. 'Its memory, the composite memory of its ribs, its knees, its shoulder-blades, offered it a whole series of rooms in which it had at one time or another slept.' [*Sa mémoire, la mémoire de ses côtés, de ses genoux, de ses épaules, lui présentait successivement plusieurs des chambres où il avait dormi*]. (*Remembrance* I: 6; *La Recherche* I: 6.) The description of the awakening Narrator shows the body to see in the dark and perceive the invisible: 'even before my brain, lingering in cogitation over when things had happened and what they had looked like, had reassembled the circumstances sufficiently to identify the room, it, my body, would recall from each room in succession the style of the bed, the position of the doors, the angle at which the daylight came in at the windows.' [*Et avant même que ma pensée, qui hésitait au seuil des temps et des formes, eût identifié le logis en rapprochant les circonstances, lui, – mon corps, – se rappelait pour chacun le genre du lit, la place des portes, la prise de jour des fenêtres*]. (*Remembrance* I: 6; *La Recherche* I: 6.) Body memory is spontaneous. What the intelligence or voluntary memory tries to forget, the body remembers. Body memory seems to function better and longer than involuntary memory: 'My memory, the involuntary memory itself had lost its love for Albertine but it seems there must be an involuntary memory of the limbs, pale and sterile imitation of the other, which lives longer as certain mindless animals or plants live longer than man.' [*Ma mémoire, la mémoire involontaire elle-même, avait perdu l'amour d'Albertine*.



*Mais il semble qu'il y ait une mémoire involontaire des membres, pâle et stérile imitation de l'autre, qui vive plus longtemps, comme certains animaux ou végétaux inintelligents vivent plus longtemps que l'homme.*] (*Remembrance* IV: 4–5; *La Recherche* IV: 277.) If Colomb represents a human body to resemble plants and animals, Proust compares the duration of involuntary body memory to the long lifespan of primitive organisms.

Colomb's philosophy of time also reminds of Bergson's theory of 'Creative Evolution,' sharing Darwinian perspective about the evolution. (Bergson 1907) Bergson understands 'evolution' as 'the evolution of life as a whole, from its humblest origins to its highest forms, in as much as this evolution constitutes through the unity and continuity of the animated matter...' (Bergson 1911 (1907): 39) Colomb shares the sense in which Bergson uses the term 'evolution' insofar as we are constantly reminded of the origins of the current experience in *CE* and *ET*. We are reminded that a house standing there is built of stones brought from Meilleure.<sup>253</sup> Stones express something about the primeval times. So do other forms of consciousness such as 'pebbles' that are used as a leitmotif for César's love for Gwen in *ET*. The 'pebbles' sometimes express Hegelian 'static' time<sup>254</sup> in their stillness: 'Beyond the meadows of tiles, the grey lake rises to the base of the mountains, the light pink and blue pebbles are drifting in the depths.' [*Derrière les prairies de tuiles, le lac gris monte jusqu'au pied des montagnes, les légères pierres roses et bleues voguent dans les profondeurs.*] (*The Spirits*: 100; *ET*: 1019.) At other times, in their evolutionary movement and transformation, the 'pebbles' express Bergson's conception of time that is marked by forward movement and evolution: 'the blue, pink or green pebbles which, as they are rolled around by the waves, lose their weight little by little and evolve into flowers of the waters, had faded with the coming of autumn.' [*[L]es pierres bleues, roses ou vertes qui roulées par les vagues perdaient peu à peu de leur poids et se transmuiaient en fleurs des eaux, s'étaient fanées avec l'automne.*] (*The Spirits*: 8; *ET*: 953.)

Unlike Colomb, Proust displays more the experiences of loss, forgetfulness and alienation than of continuity. Even if there is a strong will to regain the past in

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253 '[L]a maison, elle, était faite de vieilles pierres que les barques apportèrent de Meilleure.' (*CE*: 834.)

254 Still life, i.e., time which does not flow, could be comprehended to embody the features of Hegelian idealism. Hegel belongs to the generation of German idealists (XIX c) whose philosophy Colomb was familiar with as her son Claude Raymond and Daniel Maggetti suggest. See (1). Raymond (11 June 1999) and (2). Maggetti (2017: 133–143).

its original form, to turn a marble into flesh,<sup>255</sup> and to disclose a deeper meaning such as an element of reality that has inspired the creation of an artwork, in *La Recherche*, Proust does not seem to share completely the Bergsonian thought stipulating that duration is *indivisible* if we take into account the essentially unstable and discontinuous markers of identity over a period of time. Over and over, we see how the transformations of the courtesan Odette de Crécy's (who is also Miss Sacripant, 'la dame en rose' [the 'Lady in pink'], Mme Swann, etc. at different times) body. The Narrator says at the end of the first part of *Within a Budding Grove*: 'It was not only the furniture of Odette's drawing-room, it was Odette herself whom Mme Cottard and all those who had frequented the society of Mme de Crécy would have found it difficult, if they had not seen her for some little time, to recognize. [*Ce n'était pas seulement l'ameublement du salon d'Odette, c'était Odette elle-même que Mme Cottard et tous ceux qui avaient fréquenté Mme de Crécy auraient eu peine s'ils ne l'avaient pas vue depuis longtemps à reconnaître.*]' (*Remembrance I*: 664; *La Recherche I*: 606). The more time passes, the younger Mme Swann looks (I: 606) At the end of *Time Regained*, her body is introduced as 'a miraculous challenge to the laws of chronology' [*un défi miraculeux aux lois de la chronologie*']. (*Remembrance IV*: 202; *La Recherche IV*: 526). It seems almost impossible for two of her separate temporal beings to conjoin.

In Proust's book, a multiplicity of *selves* is dispersed in time,<sup>256</sup> and an access to experiences separated by time is not immediately granted. By contrast, in Colomb, the narrative develops at the expense of simultaneous presentation of

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255 '[C]omme si les visages de pierre sculptée, grisâtres et nus, ainsi que sont les bois en hiver, n'étaient qu'un ensoleillement, qu'une réserve, prête à reflurir dans la vie en innombrables visages populaires, révérends et futés comme celui de Théodore, enluminés de la rougeur d'une pomme mûre.' (*La Recherche*, I: 149) | '[A]s though those carved stone faces, naked and grey as trees in winter, were, like them, asleep only, storing up life and waiting to flower again in countless plebeian faces, reverent and cunning as the face of Théodore, and glowing with the ruddy brilliance of ripe apples.' (*Remembrance I*: 165)

256 For Proust 'le roman ce n'est pas seulement de la psychologie plane, mais de la psychologie dans le temps. Cette substance invisible du temps, j'ai tâché de l'isoler, mais pour cela il fallait que l'expérience pût durer.' | 'The novel is not just plain psychology, but psychology in time. I tried to isolate this invisible substance of time, but for that, the experience had to last.' (Proust interviewed by Élie-Joseph Bois on 12 November 1913, a day before the publication of *Swann's Way* by Grasset. The interview was published in *Le Temps* on 13 November. See 'Swann expliqué par Proust', in *Contre Sainte-Beuve* (1971: 557).

temporally detached experiences, in the given case, by the projection of human body traits in the extended period of time:

Madame qui aurait été assez jolie si elle n'avait pas eu *un nez* parfaitement rond de quelque côté qu'on le regardât ; *ce nez*, elle l'avait hérité [...] du grand-père de Courrendlin qui l'avait pourtant [...] emporté dans son cercueil [...]. *Ce nez* rond avait passé avant sa mort déjà à son fils qui rapporta d'Afrique tant de bêtes à défenses, et à sa fille Élise ; il l'empêcha de se marier à Bâle. M. de Goson, petit et noir comme un singe et qui ferait de la diplomatie, pensa qu'en Chine une Européenne est toujours assez belle et l'épousa. Les *deux nez* précédents, depuis longtemps dépouillés de leur chair, étaient redevenus semblables à *tous les autres nez européens*.<sup>257</sup> (CE: 790–1)

We learn in humorous tone that several descendents of an ancestral lineage share a common trait, a 'round nose'. Son, daughter, granddaughter inherit the trait from the 'grandfather from Courrendlin'. Previous actions and experiences of characters are laid down in and kept alive by exploring a common trait. Since the common physical trait, i.e., the nose, encompasses earlier experiences not only of one particular subject, but of different generations, it allows us to perceive time independently of the mind; the times which consciousness cannot experience or remember. For focus is not on human characters in Colomb; a story does not develop around a character's experiences in CE, as in *La Recherche*.<sup>258</sup> Without the observing consciousness, as philosophy and psychology understand it, i.e., with no awareness of feelings, sensations, perceptions, ideas and memories of the body no longer cling to a particular moment in the present but,

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257 Eng. 'Madame who would have been quite pretty if she hadn't had a perfectly round *nose* on whatever side you looked at it. She had inherited *this nose* [...] from the grandfather from Courrendlin, [...] who had nevertheless carried it away in his coffin. [...] Before he died, he had passed *this round nose* to his son, who brought back so many tuskers from Africa, and his daughter Élise. He prevented her from getting married to M. de Goson in Basel. Mr. de Goson was small and black as a monkey and would do diplomacy. He thought that in China, a European is still quite beautiful and married her. *The two previous noses*, for a long time stripped of their flesh, had become similar to all other European noses.' (The italics are mine.)

258 As shown in previous chapters, a story shapes around a leitmotif in Colomb. But the leitmotif does not follow the character's life experiences. Nor does it bring into light different episodes in one and the same character's life in CE and ET. By contrast, a 'little phrase' of Vinteuil's sonata, which constitutes a main leitmotif in *La Recherche*, expresses only Swann's love for Odette. A character's experiences represent the basis for making a story in Proust's book. Accordingly, a leitmotif follows a character. While characters are not in the centre of attention, a leitmotif is the basis for story development in Colomb.

instead, escape in the past and the future. By dissolving boundaries between self and other, the living and the dead, the body also blurs distinction between now and then. The past is not only virtually available in the present in Colomb. It is also physically present when it expresses itself through the bodily features. In the above-given extract then, in Bergson's words, 'memory is there, which conveys something of the past into the present', (1911 (1907): 2) and the 'mental state, as it advances on the road of time, is continually swelling with the duration which it accumulates: it goes on increasing — rolling upon itself, as a snowball on the snow'. (*Ibid.*) The common physical trait is thus placed in a duration consisting of a series of moments, each corresponding to the life cycle, rather than given at some concrete moment. Thus, an enduring element can only be traced in the extended period of time, by placing the characters who lived in different times side by side in Colomb's narrative. As the above-given extract reveals, at each step, Colomb seeks connections between the recent experience and its origins and tries to establish its relation to the other mediated by time and grasp its continuity. We hereby learn that duration is an essential mark of existence in Colomb. Experience in her *œuvre* is taken in its duration.

Experience in *CE* thus parallels Darwin's conception of natural selection shared by Bergson; Colomb's and Proust's outlook on time complies with Bergson's theory of 'duration'. The human body embodies the temporal distance in *CE* and *La Recherche*. The bodily parts incorporate the *durée* in *La Recherche*: 'while still half-asleep, I called Albertine. I had not been thinking or dreaming of her, nor had I taken her for Gilberte'. [*encore à demi endormi j'appelai: "Albertine". Ce n'était pas que j'eusse pensé à elle, ni rêvé d'elle, ni que je la pris pour Gilberte.*] (*Remembrance IV: 4–5; La Recherche IV: 277*). The *durée* in *CE* is revealed by common, enduring elements found in the bodies of descendants and their ancestors.

However, Darwin's and Bergson's evolutionary model is not applied to the lives of Proust's and Colomb's characters. What Colomb tries to show is not quite 'the evolution of life as a whole, from its humblest origins to its highest forms...' (Bergson 1911 (1907): 39) In the first place, in Colomb, various forms of consciousness express time in its 'vertical vertige', (Roud 1997 (1945): 51) i.e., the movement that goes backward towards the genesis, digging the very root of nature and origin of memory. In many cases, Colomb goes beyond Darwin's theory that shows how organisms change over time by pointing at the enduring, immutable qualities of inherited behavioural or physical traits. In such cases, a human body is apprehended as a container of the elements of non-human species such as the 'onions': [*Madame, Sémiramis*] *plantait aussi, arrachait la pelle au jardinier qui restait là tout pensif, posait sur la bêche son gros pied bosselé*

*d'aignons*. ['She was also planting, grabbing the shovel from the gardener who was standing there pensively, placing her big bunion-embossed foot on the spade.'] (*ET*: 1076; *The Spirits*: 182) This and other allusions outline the primitive markers sealed in the human bodies, introducing the characters as prehistorical creatures rather than as mythical and civilized figures, thus, dismissing the idea of evolutionary time as it was understood by Darwin.

As Georges Poulet writes, 'human beings do not develop' in *La Recherche*, even if the novel depicts a journey from boyhood to adulthood as in a *Bildungsroman*.<sup>259</sup> (1964: 22) Proust's and Colomb's characters have no future. Biological and social degradation are in focus in *CE* and *La Recherche*. Time alters bodily features. From the Chapter VI of *CE*, a series of diseases (of J. Laroche, Mme Angenaisaz) and accidents as well as representation of aging can be read as a *momento mori*. Likewise, the Narrator suffers from insomnia and Baron Charlus—from mental depression in Proust. Aunt Léonie, like the Narrator in his old age, is confined to her bedroom in a state of 'complete inertia'. ['*I*']*nértie absolue*']. (*Remembrance* I: 54; *La Recherche*, I: 50.) The body in Proust holds the power over life and death independently of the mind. (Henry 2004: 241–243) The Narrator's grandmother is defeated in her private struggle with death. Sickness and disease make people alienated from their bodies: 'It is in moments of illness that we are compelled to recognise that we live not alone but chained to a creature of a different kingdom, whole worlds apart, who has no knowledge of us and by whom it is impossible to make ourself understood: our body'. ['*C'est dans la maladie que nous nous rendons compte que nous ne vivons pas seuls mais enchaînés à un être d'un âge différent dont des abîmes nous séparent, qui ne les connaît pas et duquel il est impossible de se faire comprendre : notre corps*']. (*Remembrance* II: 408; *La Recherche* II: 594.) These instances reveal the change and mortality rather than continuity and 'indivisibility'.

Time does not simply leave its marks on the human body from the outside. Rather the bodies 'exteriorize [...] time'. (*Remembrance* IV: 183.) With their aged bodies and altered physiognomy, the characters whom the Narrator has known in the first six volumes become unrecognizable in the episode known as '*Le Bal des têtes*'. At the house of the princess *de Guermantes*, the Narrator finds people he had not seen for a long time dramatically changed by old age and disease as in a theatrical performance 'which seemed to assign the limits within which the transformation of the human body can operate'. ['*U*']*n spectacle qui semblait reculer les limites entre lesquelles peuvent se mouvoir les transformations*

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259 Fr. '[J]amais chez Proust les êtres ne se développent'.

*du corps humain*.] (*Remembrance* IV: 182; *La Recherche* IV: 501.) The Prince of Guermantes, 'seemed to be representing one of the ages of man. His mustache was whitened as though the hoar-frost in Tom Thumb's forest clung to it.' [*Ses moustaches étaient blanches aussi, comme s'il restait après elles le gel de la forêt du Petit Poucet*.] (*Remembrance*, IV 180; *La Recherche* IV: 499.) The Narrator 'only recognise[s] him by reasoning out his identity with himself from certain familiar features'. [*(...) ne le reconnus qu'à l'aide d'un raisonnement, et en concluant de la simple ressemblance de certains traits à une identité de la personne*.] (*Remembrance* IV: 180; *La Recherche* IV: 499.) M. d'Argencourt, the Narrator's 'personal enemy' had 'reached a condition so different from himself that [the Narrator] had the illusion of standing before another as amiable, disarming and inoffensive as the Argencourt of former days was supercilious, hostile and nefarious'. [*[I]l était arrivé à être tellement différent de lui-même que j'avais l'illusion d'être devant une autre personne aussi bienveillante, aussi désarmée, aussi inoffensive que l'Argencourt habituel était rogue, hostile et dangereux*.] (*Remembrance* IV: 181; *La Recherche* IV: 501.) The guests of princess de Guermantes look like 'pathetic puppets, comics who are broken or weighed down by age, who will already be unconscious when death comes knocking at their door'. (Henry 1983: 52) Looking at them makes the Narrator think that 'a human being could undergo metamorphoses as complete as those of certain insects'. [*L'être humain pouvait subir des métamorphoses aussi complètes que celles de certains insectes*.] (*Remembrance* IV: 182; *La Recherche* IV: 501.) He has the 'impression of observing through the glass of a showcase in a natural history museum what the sharpest and most stable features of an insect had turned into'. [*(...) l'impression de regarder, derrière le vitrage instructif d'un muséum d'histoire naturelle, ce que peut être devenu le plus rapide, le plus sûr en ses traits d'un insecte*.] (*Remembrance* IV: 182; *La Recherche* IV: 501.)

The body in Proust is an incarnation of time: 'Time usually invisible, (...) to attain visibility seeks and fastens on bodies to exhibit wherever it can, with its magic lantern'. [*Le Temps qui d'habitude n'est pas visible, (...) pour le devenir cherche des corps et, partout où il les rencontre, s'en empare pour montrer sur eux sa lanterne magique*.] (*Remembrance* IV: 183; *La Recherche* IV: 503.) 'M. d'Argencourt was a revelation of Time by rendering it partially visible'. [*M. d'Argencourt était là comme la révélation du Temps, qu'il rendait partiellement visible*.] (*Remembrance* IV: 183; *La Recherche* IV: 503.) The Narrator sees the characters not just at some specific moment in the present, but acquires an integral vision of their bodies, 'the relationship between the present and the past' [*le rapport qu'il y avait entre le présent et le passé*]. (*Remembrance* IV: 184; *La Recherche* IV: 504.) He gets 'a view not of a monument but of a person placed in the modifying perspective of

Time.' [ '(...) *la vue non d'un monument, mais d'une personne située dans la perspective déformante du Temps.*' ] (*Remembrance* IV: 184; *La Recherche* IV: 504.) The altered physiognomy suggests becoming the other not 'in the zoological sense (...), but in the social and moral sense' [ '*dans un sens zoologique, (...), c'est dans un sens social et moral.*' ] (*Remembrance* IV: 183–184; *La Recherche* IV: 504.) Swann's body keeps records of painful love experiences even when his mind tries to forget them. His far-rooted love for Odette extends well beyond his physical affections, daydreamings, thoughts and actions. It reaches every part of his body in such a way that only death may strip 'this disease' from him: 'And this malady which Swann's love had become had so proliferated, was so closely interwoven with all his habits, with all his actions, with his thoughts, his health, was so utterly inseparable from him, that it would have been impossible to eradicate it without almost entirely destroying him; as surgeons say, his love was no longer operable.' [ '*Et cette maladie qu'était l'amour de Swann avait tellement multiplié, il était si étroitement mêlé à toutes les habitudes de Swann, à tous ses actes, à sa pensée, à sa santé, à son sommeil, à sa vie, même à ce qu'il désirait pour après sa mort, il ne faisait tellement plus qu'un avec lui, qu'on n'aurait pas pu l'arracher de lui sans le détruire lui-même à peu près tout entier : comme on dit en chirurgie, son amour n'était plus opérable.*' ] (*Remembrance*: I: 336; *La Recherche* I: 303.)

Colomb's characters also seem to have deformed bodies: 'She was tall and deaf with black curls on her forehead and apparently fake teeth.' [ '*Elle était grande et sourde avec des boucles noires sur le front et de fausses dents visibles.*' ] (*CE*: 770); 'Carolyne, short-sighted...struggled to distinguish the morels that she did not like by touching their skin and spat them out like a lama.' [ '*Caroline, myope... s'efforçait de distinguer au toucher les morilles de la peau qu'elle n'aimait pas et qu'elle recrachait comme un lama.*' ] (*Ibid.*) The passage of time seems to speed up deformation of bodies: 'By talking about herslef, Galeswinthe wished to help others, to show that she too was aging like a house, like Rosalie's armchair which had lost a bit of the curved rose on its back or Élise who grew old all at once: bumps started to grow on her forehead, shadows became darker on her face; the older we grow, the more varied we become: a piece of yellow skin hanging here, a fragment of demaged vein there, brown hair, yellow, white curls, the neck divided like a labyrinth.' [ '*[Galeswinthe] avait voulu, en parlant d'elle-même, seulement venir à la rescousse, montrer qu'elle aussi était touchée par l'âge, comme la maison, comme le fauteuil de Rosalie qui avait perdu un fragment de la rose sculptée au dossier, comme Élise qui vieillissait d'une façon singulière ; des bosses apparaissaient sur son front, les ombres s'accroissaient sur son visage ; en avançant en âge, on devient plus varié : un bout de peau jaune, un fragment de couperose, des cheveux bruns, fris jaune, blancs, le cou divisé par un lacis de traits.*' ] (*CE*: 836) Hence, the passage

of time does not bring progress in Proust and Colomb as opposed to Darwin's and Bergson's philosophy. In addition, considering series of disjunctions and interruptions in Colomb's narratives, we do not exclusively have to do with a Bergsonian outlook on time in her fiction; because, for Bergson, time is the flow of moments, all interpreting one another; and by rejecting a spatialized view of time, he also rejects time as marked by interruptions. (1989: 74–78)

A comparative examination of Proust's and Colomb's representations of body memory reveals the power of time to transform their human characters into indistinct, unrecognizable creatures. Such a vision of time and personality casts further doubt on the individuality of human beings. The body in Proust embodies time and a succession of selves. In *La Recherche*, a multiplicity of selves that come into being and die continue to lay within the same body as 'an involuntary memory of the limbs' [*une mémoire involontaire des membres*']. (*Remembrance IV*: 5; *La Recherche IV*: 277.)

#### 4.6.3 The *Durée* of Experience

The previous section studied the sensible actualization of the *durée* by the body. Not only the human body but also an experience embodies the *durée* within Proust's and Colomb's works. Intimate connections are drawn between two or more experiences separated by time. In Colomb, the ancient and modern times are blended when the remains of roman architecture and railway-hauls scrap metal are brought close to each other: 'The dead are disturbed there by the Roman stones which swim slowly in the depths and by the ferruls that a train drags along as it approaches to cities.' [*L*es morts y sont dérangés par les pierres romaines qui nagent lentement dans les profondeurs et par les ferrules que le train traîne avec lui quand il approche des villes.']. (*CE*: 750) This analogy further draws attention to the unsustainable patterns of modern railway technology. In other cases, the *durée* is revealed by apparently insignificant details; such as footprints on the road can remain even after many years: 'She went up the courtyard, pressing cobblestones in her path; we can still see the traces after so many years.' [*E*lle remonta la cour enfonçant des pavés sur son passage ; on en voit encore la trace après tant d'années.']. (*CE*: 888)

Proust's characters, who live in different times, have similar love experiences. The composer Vinteuil, the Narrator, and Charles Swann undergo the experiences of love, jealousy, and sufferings in contact with vulgar and courtesan lesbians Mlle Vinteuil (the composer's daughter), Albertine and Odette, respectively. Swann and the Narrator suffer because of the ill-reputed women, the '*demi-monde*'. (*La Recherche I*: 185; *Remembrance I*: 205.) Swann tries to decode the signs encrypted



in Vinteuil's work, to dispel the illusion of love. The way leading Swann to this discovery is long. He suffers from jealousy and constantly changes his mood as time passes.

Apart from the parallel love stories of Swann and Odette, the Narrator and Albertine, Proust also introduces parallel scenes of sexual masochism and sexual sadism in the first and last volumes of *La Recherche*. In 'Combray', the Narrator who witnesses the cruelty of Mlle Vinteuil and her lesbian friend towards recently deceased father Mr Vinteuil, assumes that Mlle Vinteuil 'came at length to see in pleasure itself something diabolical, to identify it with Evil'. [*F*]inissait par trouver au plaisir quelque chose de diabolique, par l'identifier au Mal'.] (*Remembrance* I: 180; *La Recherche*, I: 162.) The scene is presented as a ritual of sadism, in which Mr Vinteuil's portrait is used as a key object for 'ritual profanations' and a 'liturgical' dialogue. (*La Recherche*, I: 160.) The Narrator imagines that he watches a theatrical play 'behind the footlights of a Paris theatre and not under the homely lamp of an actual country house', [*À*] la lumière de la rampe des théâtres du boulevard plutôt que sous la lampe d'une maison de campagne véritable'.] (*Remembrance* I: 178; *La Recherche* I: 161.) because it is unusual 'to see a girl encouraging a friend to spit upon the portrait of a father who has lived and died for her alone'. [*Q*]u'on peut voir une fille faire cracher une amie pour le portrait d'un père qui n'a vécu que pour elle'.] (*Remembrance* I: 178; *La Recherche* I: 161.) Mlle Vinteuil is painted as a sadist 'in Mlle Vinteuil's habits the appearance of evil was so absolute that it would have been hard to find it exhibited to such a degree of perfection save in a convinced sadist', [*D*]ans les habitudes de Mlle Vinteuil l'apparence du mal était si entière qu'on aurait eu de la peine à la rencontrer réalisée à ce degré de perfection ailleurs que chez une sadique'.] (*Remembrance* I: 178; *La Recherche* I: 161.) as 'an artist in evil' [*L*]artiste du mal'.] (*Remembrance* I: 179; *La Recherche*, I: 162.) who has her own methods for 'mourning' his dead father. This scene is paralleled by the masochistic ordeals of Charlus in Jupien's male brothel described in *Time Regained*. The Narrator hears Charlus in a male brother 'like Prometheus bound to his rock, squirming under the strokes of a cat-o'-nine-tails, which was, as a fact, loaded with nails, wielded by Maurice, already bleeding and covered with bruises which proved he was not submitting to the torture for the first time'. [... et là, enchaîné sur un lit comme Prométhée sur son rocher, recevant les coups d'un martinet en effet planté de clous que lui infligeait Maurice, je vis, déjà tout en sang, et couvert d'écchymoses qui prouvaient que le supplice n'avait pas lieu pour la première fois, je vis devant moi M. de Charlus'.] (*Remembrance* IV: 96; *La Recherche* IV: 394.) The Narrator secretly witnesses these same-sex scenes: he sees the first scene as a child and the second one in his later years.

Hence, in Colomb and Proust, the characters who have lived in different times are connected through their experiences. An experience is apprehended as a bridge between the past and the present in their works. Proust's book makes it clearer than Colomb's novel that 'our habits do, indeed, in large measure, enable even our organisms to accommodate themselves to an existence which at first seemed impossible.' [*[E]n effet nos habitudes nous permettent dans une large mesure, permettent même à nos organes de s'accommoder d'une existence qui semblerait au premier abord ne pas être possible.*] (*Remembrance* IV: 238; *La Recherche* IV: 574.) The specific becomes general in the length of time: the Narrator's love for Albertine parallels Swann's love for Odette; so that a painful love experience is not only one man's story or rather an event in the life of one man, but a type of analogy, also experienced by others in art and human history.

As such, people and things are often 'liberated from the order of time' (*Remembrance* IV: 142; *La Recherche* IV: 451.) in Proust's and Colomb's novels. They are not subject to the laws of time, just as feeling the original taste of Proust's madeleine does not depend on time and context. 'A minute snatched from time' [*Une minute affranchie de l'ordre du temps.*] is also 'a fragment of time in the pure state.' [*un peu de temps à l'état pur.*] (*Remembrance* IV: 142; *La Recherche* IV: 451.)

Past and present can exist simultaneously within the Proustian experience of reminiscence and Colomb's associanism, as Chapter 2 illustrates. Proustian reminiscences consist of the abyss of time penetrating and vanishing into the single occurrence of a timeless sensation, offering a simultaneous view of distinct times such as in the episodes of *Swann's Way* in which the tea-soaked cake is reminiscent of summers spent in the country house, and of *Time Regained* in which the uneven paving stones is reminiscent of Venice or again, the sound of the spoon against the plate restores to the Narrator the memories of a train journey. In previous chapters, we also called 'simultaneous' to Colomb's representation of distinct fictional worlds and time frames and saw a number of cases when different events in her novels are brought close by their simultaneity. Simultaneity is not only a thematic feature in Colomb, as in Proust; but it is also a crucial term in her aesthetics. Leitmotif, *'liaison'* and the recurrence of images that represent distinct times and locations as simultaneous constitute the material of which Colomb's novels are composed. Juxtapositions of different moments in *La Recherche* and *CE* or *ET* parallel the conception of simultaneity updated by the Special Theory of Relativity. In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the notions of a relativistic time and simultaneity have been found important by many, including Bergson, whose comments on Einstein's theory are provided in the monograph *'Durée et Simultanéité: à propos de la théorie d'Einstein'*, published in

1922. Einstein showed that when two objects moved at speeds near that of light, they appeared to have their own system of time instead of being simultaneous. Likewise, two events that appeared to occur at the same time were only apparently simultaneous. 'Now' and 'then' acquired new meanings. Colomb's associations and Proustian reminiscences combine distinct times as well as locations which Einstein tried to show through his theory of simultaneity.

While referring to connections between Proust's and Colomb's works, it is important to articulate differences between the two writers with regard to the comprehension of distance between memory and current experience. The crucial difference, as what follows also reveals, lies in the fact that the temporal distance means the separation in connections with the self and the others in *La Recherche*; whereas, in Colomb, what connects people and experiences to one another is the spatial-temporal distance, thereby, demonstrating that the connectedness in Colomb's novels is achieved in distance.

The beloved woman renders a new form of life desired and inaccessible in *La Recherche*. Odette, for Swann, (or a woman that the Narrator sees in his dream on the first pages of Proust's book,<sup>260</sup> among many) is remote and unattainable. Proust's characters suffer when they come across a distant world of the lover: 'a thin spiritual border... prevent[s the Narrator] from ever touching its substance directly.' [ '[U]n mince liséré spirituel.. m'empêchait de jamais toucher directement sa matière.' ] (*Remembrance* I: 90; *La Recherche*, I: 83.) To Swann and the Narrator, Odette's and Albertine's world is unknown and beyond their reach. Separation with the beloved provokes sufferance (Narrator's with his mother). The more distant and the beloved is, the more she is desired.<sup>261</sup> The

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260 'Quelquefois, comme Ève naquit d'une côte d'Adam, une femme naissait pendant mon sommeil d'une fausse position de ma cuisse. Formée du plaisir que j'étais sur le point de goûter, je m'imaginai que c'était elle qui me l'offrait. Mon corps qui sentait dans le sien ma propre chaleur voulait s'y rejoindre, je m'éveillais. Le reste des humains m'apparaissait comme bien lointain auprès de cette femme que j'avais quittée, il y avait quelques moments à peine.' (*La Recherche*, I: 4-5.) | 'Sometimes, too, as Eve was created from a rib of Adam, a woman would be born during my sleep from some strain in the position of my thighs. Conceived from the pleasure I was on the point of consummating, she it was, I imagined, who offered me that pleasure. My body, conscious that its own warmth was permeating hers, would strive to become one with her, and I would awake. The rest of humanity seemed very remote in comparison with this woman whose company I had left but a moment ago.' (*Remembrance* I: 4-5.)

261 We refer here to the separation with the beloved person [Fr. 'l'être aimée']; because, though in rare cases, distance is still mounted between original and repeating sensations (as in the famous episode of Madeleine), and between objects: the Narrator

hidden meaningful inner life and memories of external reality lodged within the body may remain permanently alien to the subject in *La Recherche*. Even the *involuntary memory* of the madeleine taste that the Narrator's body conserves only partially brings the childhood memories back. (Tadié 2012: 87)

As the previous chapter illustrates, the world and characters are not framed by temporal and spatial boundaries in Colomb's novels. Therefore, we are not able to find our way in spacetime. Generally, it is considered 'unnatural' to have several events going together in the written word.<sup>262</sup> For a series of events and groups of people cannot be described at once, in an instant of time (although it is the case, for instance, in Homer's *Iliad* or Joyce's *Ulysses*). In *CE*, a crowd is described in the framework of independent events namely the christening banquet and the reception for the Shah while also introducing groups of people from different times as contemporaneous. As a result, there is a series of parallel events in Colomb, whereas one thing is narrated at a time in *La Recherche*.

If Colomb expresses the contemporaneity of events dispersed in spacetime, Proust, by contrast, never brings together the experiences separated by time. As Chapter 2 of this thesis explains, the point of chronological narration in *La Recherche* is to remind us that similar incidents occur at different times, emphasizing temporal distance between separate events, as opposed to the contemporaneity of events producing the effect of simultaneity in Colomb. Similar experiences namely the Narrator's love for Albertine and Swann's love for Odette are not presented side by side, rather in a chronological sequence. Charles Swann's love affair with Odette de Crécy (in *Un Amour de Swann*) is told much

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notices how the two steeples of Martinville-le-Sac and the distant third steeple, Vieuxvicq are drawn together and turn into 'une seule forme noire, charmante et résignée'. (*La Recherche*, I: 180.) [Eng. 'A single dusky shape, charming and resigned'. (*Remembrance* I: 198.)] as the Narrator and his parents return home in a carriage. The distance gives the illusion of perceiving all three steeples at once as one complete form: 'Sans me dire que ce qui était caché derrière les clochers de Martinville devait être quelque chose d'analogue à une jolie phrase, puisque c'était sans la forme de mots qui me faisaient plaisir, que cela m'était apparu'. (*La Recherche*, I: 179.) | 'Without admitting to myself that what lay hidden behind the steeples of Martinville must be something analogous to a pretty phrase, since it was in the form of words which gave me pleasure that it had appeared to me'. (*Remembrance* I: 197.)

262 In his article about Woolf, Auerbach explains how the written word cannot compete with the cinema for achieving the effect of simultaneity. (1974 (1946): 525–553) In his analysis of Joyce's 'Ulysses' Daiches also suggests that 'the absolutely contemporaneous presentation of different themes as in music is impossible in literature.' See Daiches (1970: 112)

earlier than the story of the Narrator's love for Albertine, which is recounted in *The Fugitive* (also published as *Albertine disparue*). Likewise, another main event in *La Recherche* namely the comprehension of grandmother's death by the Narrator occurs in the length of time rather than at once:

Dès la première nuit, comme je souffrais d'une crise de fatigue cardiaque, tâchant de dompter ma souffrance, je me baissai avec lenteur et prudence pour me déchausser. Mais à peine eus-je touché le premier bouton de ma bottine, ma poitrine s'enfla, remplie d'une présence inconnue, divine, des sanglots me secouèrent, des larmes ruisselèrent de mes yeux. L'être qui venait à mon secours, qui me sauvait de la sécheresse de l'âme, c'était celui qui, plusieurs années auparavant, dans un moment de détresse et de solitude identiques, dans un moment où je n'avais plus rien de moi, était entré, et qui m'avait rendu à moi-même, car il était moi et plus que moi (le contenant qui est plus que le contenu et me l'apportait). Je venais d'apercevoir, dans ma mémoire, penché sur ma fatigue, le visage tendre, préoccupé et déçu de ma grand-mère, telle qu'elle avait été ce premier soir d'arrivée; le visage de ma grand-mère, non pas de celle que je métais étonné et reproché de si peu regretter et qui n'avait d'elle que le nom, mais de ma grand-mère véritable dont, pour la première fois depuis les Champs-Élysées où elle avait eu son attaque, je retrouvais dans un souvenir involontaire et complet la réalité vivante.<sup>263</sup> (*La Recherche* III: 152–3.)

In this extract, as in most cases, in Proust's *bildungsroman*, an experience does not reveal its significance at once. What the passage from the second chapter of *Sodom et Gomorrah* in *La Recherche* highlights is that we rarely and hardly have access to memory. The Narrator experiences the reminiscence during his second stay in Balbec, where, quite unexpectedly, he discovers the death of his

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263 Eng. 'On the first night, as I was suffering from cardiac exhaustion, trying to master my pain, I bent down slowly and cautiously to take off my boots. But no sooner had I touched the topmost button than my bosom swelled, filled with an unknown, a divine presence, I shook with sobs, tears streamed from my eyes. The person who came to my rescue, who saved me from barrenness of spirit, was the same who, years before, in a moment of identical distress and loneliness, in a moment when I was no longer in any way myself, had come in, and had restored me to myself, for that person was myself and more than myself (the container that is greater than the contents, which it was bringing to me). I had just perceived, in my memory, bending over my weariness, the tender, preoccupied, dejected face of my grandmother, as she had been on that first evening of our arrival, the face not of that grandmother whom I was astonished—and reproached myself—to find that I regretted so little and who was no more of her than just her name, but of my own true grandmother, of whom, for the first time since that afternoon in the Champs-Élysées on which she had had her stroke, I now recaptured, by an instinctive and complete act of recollection, the living reality'. (*Remembrance* III: 101.)

grandmother with full awareness and in its real meaning for him. Until then, he had known that his grandmother was dead, but the true meaning of her death had always escaped him. He is at first touched by his grandmother's death as he tries to take his shoes off during his first night in Balbec. An experience of loss causes the Narrator to suffer only when he returns to Balbec where he had been earlier with the grandmother. He thus needs to come back to the same place to realize that he has lost her forever. (*Ibid.*, 154–5) Hence, an experience reveals its significance over time rather than immediately. For Proust, memories come back by chance.

Hence, body keeps memories in Proust, but it is not always in the power of body to break down the divisions of spacetime and remember all of its experiences. It would be wrong to think that 'our body, which we may compare to a jar containing our spiritual nature [...] leads us to suppose that all our inward wealth, our past joys, all our sorrows, are perpetually in our possession.' [*[N]otre corps, semblable pour nous à un vase où notre spiritualité serait enclose, qui nous induit à supposer que tous nos biens intérieurs, nos joies passées, toutes nos douleurs sont perpétuellement en notre possession.*] (*Remembrance* III: 102; *La Recherche* III: 153–154.) It is neither in the power of the mind to bring the memories kept in the body back to life, because if the past impressions 'remain within us, it is, for most of the time, in an unknown region where they are of no service to us, and where even the most ordinary are crowded out by memories of a different kind, which preclude any simultaneous occurrence of them in our consciousness.' [*[R]estent en nous, c'est la plupart du temps dans un domaine inconnu où elles ne sont de nul service pour nous, et où même les plus usuelles sont refoulées par des souvenirs d'ordre différent et qui excluent toute simultanéité avec elles dans la conscience.*] (*Remembrance* III: 102; *La Recherche* III: 154.) The 'intermittences of the heart' establish 'the self that originally lived them' [*[L]e moi qui les vécut*] (*Remembrance* III: 102; *La Recherche* III: 154.) in the above-given passage, which, in Samuel Beckett's view, 'is perhaps the greatest passage that Proust ever wrote.' (1931: 25)

While the hidden memories can only be dissimulated by chance in *La Recherche*, they establish authority over 'now' in *CE*. In Colomb's novel our current view of present is already unsettled: 'now' might become 'before' at any time: 'Rim's desk was very slowly returning to its tree state.' [*[L]e bureau de Rim revenait tout doucement à sa condition d'arbre.*] (*The Spirits*: 83; *ET*: 1007.) 'Now' lacks stability, for present and past may swap places at any time. Thus, Colomb's experiments with time do not only include the frequent and effortless rendering the past as present. They also highlight the instability of the present *vis-à-vis*

what is already past; because the present state of being fully relies on the past and memory in her novels.

The 'chance' is referred to as 'involuntary memory' [Fr. 'la *mémoire involontaire*'] in *La Recherche* which alone allows us to enter into the intimate relationships of the earlier and current selves at once (see Chapter 2). By contrast, in Colomb, an immediate experience only presents itself in relation to the past. A memory brings back a chain of memories, diverse moments and people. Unlike Proust, Colomb makes no distinction between memories. There are no memories more privileged than others in *CE*, corresponding to Proust's definitions of 'voluntary memory' and 'involuntary memory'.<sup>264</sup> What the narrative of *CE* mimics in its expansion is, as Proust puts it, 'the vast structure of recollection.' ['[L]édifice immense du souvenir'.] (*Remembrance* I: 51; *La Recherche*, I: 46.) In Colomb's novel, diverse memories with no distinction meet outside time and context, and transform into the artist's canvas—into the book. As for Proust, only involuntary memories provoked by some taste or smell remind us of the past in 'different circumstances'. (Interview, 1913) Only involuntary memory can revive the time long gone in its continuity and richness. It alone allows us to have the experience of integral being. More importantly, involuntary memory helps us overcome fear of death, anxiety and worry around what might happen, and all that depends on time.<sup>265</sup>

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264 Proust makes a distinction between 'voluntary memory' and 'involuntary memory' in the interview with Élie-Joseph Bois in 1913 (in the Journal *Le Temps*): 'Pour moi, la mémoire volontaire, qui est surtout une mémoire de l'intelligence et des yeux, ne nous donne du passé que des faces sans vérité ; mais qu'une odeur, une saveur retrouvées, dans des circonstances toutes différentes, réveille en nous, malgré nous, le passé, nous sentons combien ce passé était différent de ce que nous croyions nous rappeler, et notre mémoire volontaire peignait, comme les mauvais peintres, avec des couleurs sans vérité.' (Quoted in Dreyfus (1926: 287–289).)

265 'Mais pourquoi les images de Combray et de Venise m'avaient-elles à l'un à l'autre moment donné une joie pareille à une certitude et suffisante sans autres preuves à me rendre la mort indifférente ?' (*La Recherche* III: 703.) 'But how was it that these visions of Combray and of Venice at one and at another moment had caused me a joyous certainty sufficient without other proofs to make death indifferent to me?' (*Remembrance* III: 137.)

'Cette cause je la devinais en comparant ces diverses impressions bienheureuses et qui avaient entre elles ceci de commun que je les éprouvais à la fois dans le moment actuel et dans un moment éloigné, jusqu'à faire empiéter le passé sur le présent, à me faire hésiter à savoir dans lequel des deux je me trouvais [...]. Cela expliquait que mes inquiétudes au sujet de ma mort eussent cessé au moment où j'avais reconnu inconsciemment le goût de la petite madeleine, puisqu'à ce moment-là l'être que

Reminiscences of Proust are known to embrace two *moments* and two *selves* of human life. It has already been articulated that they connect the present sensation to the past sensation. With regard to the episode of the madeleine, Jean-Yves Tadié notes that the only thing that the Narrator can remember from his childhood is a drama of going to bed. This memory overshadows all the rest.<sup>266</sup> (2012: 87) Whereas, for Kristeva, a taste of madeleine brings more than one concret moment back to life. The taste helps the Narrator recall a series of ‘spatial’ images including the ‘native places: the old gray house, the town square, the country roads, a garden of flowers, Swann’s park, the water lilies on the water of the Vivonne, the good folk of the village, and the Combray church.’<sup>267</sup> (1994: 35) However, a Proustian reminiscence extends well beyond one man’s experience. Beckett writes that ‘the whole of Proust’s world comes out of a teacup, and not merely Combray and his childhood. For Combray brings us to the two ‘ways’ and

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j’avais été était un être extra-temporel, par conséquent insoucieux des vicissitudes de l’avenir. Cet être-là n’était jamais venu à moi, ne s’était jamais manifesté, qu’en dehors de l’action, de la jouissance immédiate, chaque fois que le miracle d’une analogie m’avait fait échapper du présent. Seul il avait le pouvoir de me faire retrouver les jours anciens, le temps perdu, devant quoi les efforts de ma mémoire et de mon intelligence échouaient toujours.’ (*La Recherche* III: 706) [‘And I began to discover the cause by comparing those varying happy impressions which had the common quality of being felt simultaneously at the actual moment and at a distance in time, because of which common quality the noise of the spoon upon the plate, the unevenness of the paving-stones, the taste of the madeleine, imposed the past upon the present and made me hesitate as to which time I was existing in. That explained why my apprehensions on the subject of my death had ceased from the moment when I had unconsciously recognised the taste of the little madeleine because at that moment the being that I then had been was an extra-temporal being and in consequence indifferent to the vicissitudes of the future. That being had never come to me, had never manifested itself except when I was inactive and in a sphere beyond the enjoyment of the moment, that was my prevailing condition every time that analogical miracle had enabled me to escape from the present. Only that being had the power of enabling me to recapture former days, Time Lost, in the face of which all the efforts of my memory and of my intelligence came to naught.’ (*Remembrance* III: 140–1)

266 [L]e Narrateur n’a gardé de sa petite enfance qu’un seul souvenir, le drame de se coucher. Tout le reste a été refoulé, comme détruit par ce souvenir unique qui cache le reste.’ See Tadié (2012: 87)

267 [D]emeures natales : la vieille maison grise, la place du village, les chemins alentour, les fleurs du jardin, le parc de Swann, les nymphéas de la Vivonne, les bonnes gens du village et l’église de Combray.’ See Kristeva (1994: 35)



to Swann, and to Swann may be related every element of the Proustian experience and consequently its climax in revelation.' (1931: 21)

To Proust's definition of 'voluntary memories' correspond the dead, sterile images that the new visual technology of photography produce in *CE*. Voluntary memory, for Proust, is 'arbitrary' [Fr. 'arbitraire'] (*La Recherche* IV: 458) and can be deceiving just as photographs, which, according to Geinoz, cannot constitute memorials that they have been invested in, revealing instead loss and oblivion. (2019: 29) Involuntary memories and photographs cannot recover the forgotten past in Proust's and Colomb's novels, respectively. Proust associates the 'memory of the intelligence' (i.e., 'voluntary memory') with the sense of sight: 'Voluntary memory is for me, above all, a memory of the intelligence and eyes.' (Interview 1913) Proust compares the effect given by the 'voluntary memory' to a visual image: 'the memory of a particular image is but regret for a particular moment; and houses, roads, avenues are as fugitive, alas, as the years.' [*Le souvenir d'une certaine image n'est que le regret d'un certain instant ; et les maisons, les routes, les avenues sont fugitives, hélas ! comme les années.*] (*Remembrance* I: 462; *La Recherche* III: 420–1).

The sight of furniture in the room does not awake the Narrator's memories in Proust. The voluntary memory does not offer him a sense of reality in the opening passage of *La Recherche*: 'I could not even be sure at first who I was; I had only the most rudimentary sense of existence, such as may lurk and flicker in the depths of an animal's consciousness; I was more destitute than the cave-dweller.' [*J]e ne savais même pas au premier instant qui j'étais ; j'avais seulement dans sa simplicité première, le sentiment de l'existence comme il peut frémir au fond d'un animal ; j'étais plus dénué que l'homme des cavernes.*] (*Remembrance* I: 5; *La Recherche* I: 5.) The memory of the intelligence partially recovers the past. Vision does not really come back to life and is 'dead' [Fr. 'morte']: 'Permanently dead? Very possible.' [*Mort à jamais ? C'était possible.*] (*Remembrance* I: 47; *La Recherche* I: 43.) The past is not recovered by sight or a photographic eye, rather by such intermediaries as taste. A photographic view does not reveal a hidden meaning: 'The sight of the little madeleine had recalled nothing to my mind before I tasted it; perhaps because I had so often seen such things in the meantime, without tasting them, on the trays in pastry-cooks' windows, that their image had dissociated itself from those Combray days to take its place among others more recent.' [*La vue de la petite madeleine ne m'avait rein rappelé avant que je n'y eusse goûté ; peut-être parce que, en ayant souvent aperçu depuis, sans en manger, sur les tablettes des pâtisseries, leur image avait quitté ces jours de Combray pour se lier d'autres plus récents.*] (*Remembrance* I: 50; *La Recherche* I: 46.) Swann's love affairs 'born of the sight' [*né[es] de la vue.*] (*Remembrance* I: 213; *La Recherche* I: 192.)

are temporary and lack in depth;<sup>268</sup> while Odette, the woman he falls deeply in love with, did not attract him at first. Interestingly, Colomb also criticizes the knowledge that derives from the visual apparatus in one of her articles, entitled, *Les aveugles à la scène* (25 April 1920), published more than two decades before *CE*. In this article, Colomb reflects on the missing element of spirituality and the dominance of rational thought in 20<sup>th</sup> century art. The knowledge that derives from rational thinking is uncertain, according to Colomb, in particular, in the age of cinematography when eyesight ‘most excitingly corresponds to the function of intelligence.’ (*Les aveugles à la scène*: 141) Remarkably, for Bergson too, the whole difficulty of the problem that occupies us comes from the fact that we imagine perception to be a kind of photographic view of things.’ (Bergson 1910 (1889): 31) To resist the idea about all-perceiving eyesight, Colomb rejects photography in favour of memory in *CE*. Yet, if photography is an object of critique in *CE*, as Geinoz (2019: 27–64) suggests, it also comes into play on the level of character presentation. Colomb’s characters appear ‘instantly and eternally’ (Roud 1997 (1945): 50) as in a photograph (see Chapter 1). Besides, Colomb is known to have used the old family photographs as mediums of her novelistic production (see Colomb’s speech about her characters in Chapter 3).

In conclusion, it is into memory—which Augustin Thierry’s ‘crystal lamp’ is emblematic of—that time is traced in *CE* and *La Recherche*. Time makes a mausoleum out of our undiscovered life. What we also learn from this comparative

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268 ‘[C]hacune de ces liaisons, ou chacun de ces flirts, avait été la réalisation plus ou moins complète d’un rêve né de la vue d’un visage ou d’un corps que Swann avait, spontanément, sans s’y efforcer, trouvés charmants, en revanche quand un jour au théâtre il fut présenté à Odette de Crécy par un de ses amis d’autrefois, qui lui avait parlé d’elle comme d’une femme ravissante avec qui il pourrait peut-être arriver à quelque chose, mais en la lui donnait pour plus difficile qu’elle n’était en réalité afin de paraître lui-même avoir fait quelque chose de plus aimable en la lui faisant connaître, elle était apparue à Swann non pas certes sans beauté, mais d’un genre de beauté qui lui était indifférent.’ (*La Recherche* I: 192–3) | ‘[E]ach of these liaisons, or each of these flirtations, had been the realisation, more or less complete, of a dream born of the sight of a face or a body which Swann had spontaneously, without effort on his part, found attractive, on the contrary when, one evening at the theatre, he was introduced to Odette de Crécy by an old friend of his, who had spoken of her as a ravishing creature with whom he might possibly come to an understanding, but had made her out to be harder of conquest than she actually was in order to appear to have done him a bigger favour by the introduction, she had struck Swann not, certainly, as being devoid of beauty, but as endowed with a kind of beauty which left him indifferent.’ (*Remembrance* I: 213)

study is that Colomb tries to confer sensibility to the presence and remembrance of memories in their original forms; whereas Proust outlines more the absence and forgetfulness of what we have loved and known. For, as Benjamin suggests, *La Recherche* is more a novel of oblivion than of memory. (Benjamin 1985 (1928): 171–254) Memory can blur the devisions of spacetime in search of a total unity in Colomb; which is rarely the case in Proust. The moment almost always escapes in Proust; whereas 'now' has no life independently of memory, granting a unifying vision in Colomb's *œuvre*.

#### 4.7 Modern physics and Colomb's and Woolf's weaving a 'web of time' in the perceived and unperceived worlds

We do not always think of the infinity of space and the relativity of time while serving 'chicken'; but we are invited to consider the link between them when reading Colomb: 'Chickens with morels were brought to this point of the planet.' [*On apportait sur ce point de la planète les poulets aux morilles.*] (*CE*: 769) The smell of 'chicken with morels' seems to be everywhere at once, joining an immense distance. The imperceptible times are also reached: 'a breeze came from the west, from the Fort l'Écluse holes, the breeze which at any other time would bring rain on this first day of the sun no clouds were yet loaded.' [*[U]ne brise venait de l'ouest, de la trouée de l'Écluse, une brise qui à toute autre époque apporterait de la pluie mais dans ce premier jour de soleil ne se chargeait encore d'aucun nuage.*] (*CE*: 825) The gentle breeze takes us to the distant past and brings us back to the present. The 'clocks' of vast spaces of the universe display the same time: 'It was spring everywhere, on all planets.' [*C'était le printemps partout, sur toutes les planètes.*] (*Ibid.*) The daily life stands out against the remote places of cosmos opened up for the scientific investigation of Earth's place in the universe in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The everyday reality as well as the aquatic, the earthly, and the heavenly worlds, with their own temporal mechanisms, are presented next to one another in *ET*, as shown in Chapter 3. Colomb connects the interstellar space to the nearest places: ancestral houses, the lake Lemane, the Jura Mountains, and vineyards in *CE* and *ET*. She further relates the human to the non-human, the earthly creatures to the underworld and blurs a dividing line between the living and the dead, as noticed again in Chapter 3.

The infinity of space as well as the simultaneous introduction of different levels of consciousness and time in Colomb may be linked to science. After Einstein, 'simultaneity [is] a crucial term within Modernist aesthetics'. (Whitworth 2001: 690) For 'Einstein challenged the idea that there was a universal frame of spacetime to which all events could be referred'. (*Ibid.*) His relativity theory

popularizers often presented ‘a past event on earth [...] as if it were happening in the present moment—the Battle of Waterloo was frequently used as an example’ (*Ibid.*, 691) In response to the idea that the light from stars and galaxies travels for many years, Colomb imagines César’s experience of lying on the beach as seen through the ‘first sunlight of the world’. (*The Spirits*: 41; see Chapter 3). In addition to working out the connections between temporally different events, the spatially distinct locations are blended. China and the canton of Vaud are presented as neighbouring places: ‘a current of air going up to China sticking a sweat-soaked blue jacket to a Chinese man’s bare chest’. [‘*Un courant aérien s’en allant jusqu’en Chine plaquer sur le torse nu d’un Chinois sa veste bleue trempée de sueur*’.] (*CE*: 900) A family house and the sun are also brought close to each other: ‘The house sees the sunrise and sunset’, [‘*La maison voit le lever et le coucher du soleil*.] (*CE*: 801) in conformity with the theory of relativity positing that if two events are removed from each other in space their distance in time would also differ.<sup>269</sup> The images of the far-away planets and the smallest visible moving creatures on earth further provide literary examples to popular scientific theories of her time,<sup>270</sup> allowing us to see that Colomb’s novels reflect the science and the fast-changing intellectual consciousness of her time.

Modern physics taught people to doubt the appearance of the physical world by rejecting the universality of time-space. Colomb holds that ‘people die more often than what is recorded in the civil registry’. [‘*Chacun meurt plus de fois que ne l’enregistre l’état civil*.] (*CE*: 908) As a result, the characters’ experiences of time are subjective in *CE*. Galeswinthe’s and James Laroche’s internal clocks measure different times. The former mostly stays still. Her body escapes from time, while time goes fast for James Laroche who is in constant motion. For Woolf, ‘The true length of a person’s life, whatever the *Dictionary of National Biography* may say, is always a matter of dispute’. (*Orlando*: 211) Colomb’s and Woolf’s references to the subjective experience and sense of time brings Einstein’s *Special Theory of*

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269 In the popular expositions, the Relativity theory was often presented as such: ‘In Relativity, when an object goes fast, time slows down’ or ‘In Relativity, as an object approaches the speed of light it shrinks’. See Maudlin (2015: 67).

270 As in the following passage: ‘Une guêpe indolente sortant de l’obscurité de l’hiver se traînait sur la grève, les sphères se traînaient ainsi sur le seuil, se réchauffaient au premier soleil du monde et s’élevaient lourdement, les pattes engluées, prendre leur place dans l’univers’. (*ET*: 976) | ‘An idle wasp emerging from the winter darkness was lingering on the beach, the spheres were likewise lingering on the threshold, warming themselves in the front sunlight of the world before flying heavily upwards, their legs sticky, in order to take up their positions in the universe’. (*The Spirits*: 40–41)

*Relativity* (1905) to mind. The theory reveals that different objects have their own system of time. It has replaced the conventional notion of a Newtonian absolute time that could be measured in the same way for everyone with the conception of time that flows at different rates for those moving at different speeds.<sup>271</sup> Einstein suggests that 'every reference body (co-ordinate system) has its own particular time' (Lawson 1920: 26) and different gravitational fields of the universe are 'variable with respect to time', (*Ibid.*, 70) i.e., have their own clocks.<sup>272</sup> Moments and locations of an event in space, for Einstein, is measured differently when looked at from two or more observational perspectives moving at different speeds or in different directions. What Einstein's theory thus posits is that time does not move forward in a homogenous way contrary to 19<sup>th</sup> century optimistic idea of progress. Not only time, but also space measurement depends on the frame of reference in Einstein's physics, as opposed to a Newtonian universal space. He shows that the number of moving spaces in the universe is infinite. (Lawson 1920: 55–56) In Einsteinian physics then the world is 'atomized' with individualized temporality and spatiality, where the values of time and space are subject to the place of the observer.<sup>273</sup>

Einstein asserts the existence of subjective reality, but not always. 'It is basic for physics that one assumes a real world existing independently from any act of perception. But this we do not *know*. We take it only as a programme in our scientific endeavours.' (Einstein, quoted in Fine (1986: 95).) Hence, Einstein assumes the existence of objective realism. He 'believe[s] that an underlying reality exist[s] in nature that [i]s independent of our ability to observe or measure it'. (Isaacson 2007: 169)

Yet, who can tell how clocks measure time in the universe that extends beyond the human eyesight? What does the world look like independently of its observation? Or in Woolf's words, how can we imagine 'a kitchen table...when [we]'re not there'. (*TL*: 25) This puzzling philosophical inquiry of Mr. Ramsay into 'subject and object and the nature of reality' (in 'The Window' section) anticipates the world without consciousness and the existence of object without subject in

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271 'Now before the advent of the theory of relativity it had always tacitly been assumed in physics that the statement of time had an absolute significance, i.e. that it is independent of the state of motion of the body of reference'. See Lawson (1920: 27).

272 '[I]n every gravitational field, a clock will go more quickly or less quickly, according to the position in which the clock is situated (at rest). For this reason, it is not possible to obtain a reasonable definition of time with the aid of clocks which are arranged at rest with respect to the body of reference'. See Lawson (1920: 81).

273 See (1). Lawson (1920); (2). Isaacson (2007) (3). Maudlin. (2015)

the novel's middle section. 'There was scarcely anything left of body or mind by which one could say, 'This is he', or 'This is she.' (*TL*: 144) Woolf's introduction of rupture in *TL* brings with it her concern with the passage of time in the absence of consciousness, the observed without an observer. The middle section clarifies 'how we [human beings] know nothing and the sea eats away the ground we stand on.' (*TL*: 50)

In the following pages, we shall see that Colomb and Woolf attempt to explore the nature of spacetime both in the presence and absence of a perceiving subject in their novels as did physicists in their scientific explorations. The unity of time-space within their works is not something to be taken for granted, the present section shows, but achieved only under certain conditions. To know what the world looks like in the absence of an observer, this section relates Colomb's and Woolf's novels to the physics of their time. I posit that Woolf's world is chaotic without a perceiving subject. The organized world requires feminine consciousness in Woolf's writings. Much desired unity can only be achieved by an observing consciousness that is feminine in *TL* and *MD*. Momentary revelations, connectedness between the human beings, between the human and the non-human require the existence of the observer and the observed, of a 'subject' and of an 'object' in Woolf's work. By contrast, the unity of time-space is achieved without a perceiving subject in Colomb's novels as we shall see later. What we ultimately learn from this study is that Colomb's idea that the organized world may exist without the observer finds its confirmation in Einstein's faith in the 'reality [that exists] independent[ly] of our ability to observe or measure it.' (Isaacson 2007: 169) As in the previous chapter, Colomb's *CE* and *ET* and Woolf's *TL* and *MD* will be used in this discussion.

Catherine Colomb acknowledges the limitations of our mundane experiences and perception of the physical world communicated by the Special Theory of Relativity (Colomb's 1926 letter to Lady Morrell). Einstein's theory, for Colomb, expresses humanity's irrelevance in the face of the universe, leading men to finally re-think their place in the world and cosmos. It brings to light that 'there are ignored worlds, stars that stupidly light up empty universes.' ['*Quand on pense qu'il y a des mondes ignorés, des étoiles qui bêtement éclairent des univers vides, et je continue à parler des travaux des vignes.*'] (Colomb, quoted in Seylaz (1967: 133)) Science and technology do not however help to further the life process in Colomb (and in Woolf); rather, they lead it into deadlocks and interruptions, as a fragmented narrative, multiple deaths and the images of 'chaos', 'ruin' and traumatizing war experiences. (Barbakadze 2021: 163–176) The broken discontinuity in Colomb's narrative, like in a number of modernist texts, is in line with the discovery of the discontinuous property of atom and

nuclear radiation in modern physics as much as the reader cannot predict what comes next in her narrative and how long the present phase of consciousness may last, just as the physicists in quantum mechanics cannot determine the 'position' and 'momentum' (i.e., place and time from the reference point) of sub-atomic particles prior to an experiment. Defining the location of electrons in an atom, independently of each other, is as denied as 'think[ing] out the problem of the future, or some mathematical problem,'<sup>274</sup> (*Night and Day*: 270) and a chronological arrangement of separate pieces within the Modernist artwork. The idea that reality is uncertain (according to the 'Uncertainty Principle') finds further expression in the quick and unexpected transitions or in the apparent absence of transition from event to event, from character to character, in the frequently shifting viewpoint, but also in the confusion about what is past and what is present within Colomb's and Woolf's works (see Chapter 3). At a given moment of history, Colomb wishes 'to tell the story of the radical change in social mores that [she] witnessed, to talk about the time when the franc seemed to the winegrowers of the Côte as stable a value as the measurement of Metre'. [*J'ai envie de raconteur la révolution des mœurs à laquelle j'ai assisté, de parler de ce temps où le franc paraissait aux vignerons de la Côte une valeur aussi stable que la mesure du mètre.*] (Colomb, quoted in Favrod (2000).) Science and war bring the world back to the primitive and the prehistoric state in Colomb's and Woolf's work, challenging the certainty of civilization. That is why there is no narrative of future in Colomb; and if there is one in Woolf (in *TL*), future is uncertain, and its vision is 'tragic'. (Banfield, *Tragic Time* (2000: 43–75)) Like Proust, although Colomb makes references to the mythical times, she does not assign the narrative ordering to the myth. (Chapter 4: sect. 4.6)

For apart from the breakthroughs in philosophy, psychology and science, novelists also sought to develop a renewed vision of fictional art, which included turning their back on an omniscient vision and a withdrawal from the external world to focus on the inner world of introspection that consisted in the blending of memories, multiplication of perspectives, variation of mood (from reveries to private illuminations) and states of consciousness. Einstein renewed Newton's description of gravitation as an attracting force between bodies by positing that gravitation is a warping of space-time curvature by matter. (Schilpp 1949) Such view is paralleled by the depiction of human life as a 'solitary' experience in which each individual follows his own individual path. Representations of the inner life

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274 According to Ann Banfield, 'the whole of *To the Lighthouse*, even its title, is organized around the problem of the future'. See Banfield, *Tragic Time* (2000: 45).

of men by Colomb, Woolf, and Proust place emphasis on the individual's loneliness. The private consciousness of their characters is often reflected in the midst of parties and social gatherings. Religious rituals such as wedding and christening bring Colomb's numerous characters together; Woolf's heroines, Mrs. Dalloway and Mrs. Ramsay, seek ways to create a harmonic environment in an attempt to draw people together; Proust displays social gestures elaborated in the world of the Parisian salons. Yet, their characters still suffer from loneliness and long for genuine communication and understanding. Galeswinthe, a central character in *CE*, is haunted by the memories of her childhood and of her younger brother Paul as, many years later, she attends the christening banquet of her daughter Marguerite. César, a central character in *ET*, refuses to pretend that communal drinking and social gestures of conviviality open pathways to unity and communication. Proust reminds us that group loyalties are based on exclusion and in its extremity, on persecution, as he shows the dramatic components of the life of salon. The stories of Swann's love affair with Odette and of the Narrator's with Albertine further suggest that it is almost impossible to become part of other people's lives and gain access to their private world. Likewise, even if Woolf's novels are driven by the desire of unity, through their focus on private consciousness, they more expose despair and loneliness than establish real contacts between people. The emotional distance keeps Mrs. Ramsay's guests apart notwithstanding the belief that they are 'making a party together in a hollow, on an island.' (*TL*: 111) Clarissa Dalloway wonders whether she might join others in death at the party she hosts. The fundamental illusion of commonality has made Septimus Smith enrol in the army; he has survived the war but is driven to suicide.

Later developments in cosmological physics and philosophy must have shaken the universally accepted system of values, thereby, rendering it difficult for 20<sup>th</sup> century novelists to transmit their standard of values after the collapse of all public sense of significance.<sup>275</sup> However, we may also see it as what has encouraged transcending the limitations of physical geography and the universality of 'clock-time' within a novel.<sup>276</sup> Woolf's art recalls the vision held by modern physicists according to which moment and location of an event in space (i.e., the observed object) is not absolute but depends on the observer's (i.e., the subject's)

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275 Einstein's discovery of the 'universe without a center' suggests, for Craige, that *self* is not definite. See Craige (1982: 45)

276 David Daiches (1960) and Wyndham Lewis (1927) evaluate the consequences of Einstein's and Bergson's theories on a novel.



reference frame. After Banfield's significant studies, Woolf's art is known to carry a dualistic perspective on the plurality of possible worlds in response to the 'unobserved sensibilia' or 'the dualities of matter and mind', (*The Phantom Table* (2000: 52–3; 59–241)) which Russell theorized, and in conformity with Fry's visual aesthetics with a particular focus on dual ways of apprehending reality.<sup>277</sup> (*The Phantom Table* (2000: 245–357)) For Banfield, it is Russell's 'strange notion of unobserved sensibilia [that] motivates Woolf's equally strange 'world seen without a self', (*The Waves*, 287) an unseen vision which reflects the abolition of the subject, but not of its object'. (*The Phantom Table* (2000: 52–3)) The duplicity of perspective and the plurality of possible worlds in Woolf's fiction remind of the new conceptions of spacetime in Physics towards which Russell and other Cambridge apostles drew attention.<sup>278</sup> Woolf mentions Einstein in two of her novels *MD* (1925) and *Between the Acts* (1941), and in *TL*, she imagines the world in which the singularity has disappeared in keeping with the philosophy of modern physics which relies on the infinite frames of reference (rather than on the single frame) in its apprehension of reality.<sup>279</sup> The world is observed from multiple points of view rather than from the single fixed perspective. Subsequently, Woolf's reader simultaneously follows the spatially and temporally distant events within different characters' subjective realities in the first and last parts of the novel (see Chapter 3). Furthermore, Woolf makes an explicit reference to Einstein's Special Theory of Relativity in *TL*. She writes that '[i]n the failing light they all looked sharp-edged and ethereal and divided by great distances [...] over the vast space (for it seemed as if solidity had vanished altogether)'. (*TL*: 83) Woolf's mention of disappearing 'solidity' and 'ethereality' seems to be intricately woven into the concern of scientists in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century that the Special Theory of Relativity brought with it. Einstein's theory meant for them the collapse of conviction held after Newton about the presence of *ether* in the universe, which was a 'conceivable mode of connection between bodies'. (Magie 1912: 291)

As for Colomb's innovative engagement with scientific theories, it is revealed by the adoption of vocabulary and ideas introduced by modern physicists in the early decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Colomb's characters discuss the most

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277 See 4.4 Woolf's negotiations with Russell, Fry & Einstein.

278 Following Einstein's inventions, Bertrand Russell published *The ABC of Atoms* in 1923 and *The ABC of Relativity* in 1926. Another Cambridge Apostle and Woolf's friend A.N. Whitehead draws attention to relativity and quantum mechanics in his book *Science and the Modern World* (1926) as well.

279 See 3.7 Simultaneity of multiple time frames.

contemporary scientific discoveries in the factories and vineyards: ‘The men were talking about the discovery of Mercury in Bembet’s field. [*Les hommes parlaient de la nouvelle découverte dans le champ des Bembet, un Mercure.*]’ (CE: 771) Such terms as: ‘a ray’ [Fr. ‘*un rayon*’], (CE: 761) ‘a planet’ [‘*une /la planète*’], (CE: 761, 769, 883) ‘the whole planet’ [‘*la planète entière*’], (CE: 890) ‘the earth’ [‘*le globe terrestre*’], (CE: 762) ‘planetary beings’ [‘*des êtres planétaires*’], (CE: 799) etc. are found both in science and CE (written between 1938–1945). Modern physics further seem to provide Colomb with a rich system of concepts and imagery that she applies to her art:

La planète, boule d’acier ornée de dessins en relief, roulait au milieu de terribles nuages qui s’en allaient seuls sur fond noir et qui n’avaient plus rien à voir avec la ceinture de tempêtes du monde.<sup>280</sup> (TA: 1177)

[L]es cartes étalées sur la table anéantissaient les quatre points cardinaux et l’univers lui-même.<sup>281</sup> (CE: 772)

[I] restait dans un fauteuil près de la fenêtre, regardant obstinément le rectangle bleu de la nuit, sentant et respirant la guerre sur la planète entière.<sup>282</sup> (CE: 890)

[L]a grande fourmilière qui concentrait en ce jour froid de mars la chaleur du printemps et la rayonnait avec l’inconscience d’une planète.<sup>283</sup> (CE: 761)

[L]es jambes écartées comme un marin pour ne pas mettre le pied dans les bouses qui parsèment le globe terrestre.<sup>284</sup> (CE: 762)

Il pleuvait, l’asphalte reprenait sa couleur noire du milieu du globe (terre ! terre !)<sup>285</sup> (ET: 957)

[L]e baptême commande le pays tout entier ; le soleil se lève entre la Dent-de-Jaman et les Dents-du-Midi ; il se couche entre Genève et la Dôle et aucun obstacle fait de main

280 Eng. ‘The planet, a steel ball adorned with relief designs, rolled in the midst of terrible clouds that went alone on a black background and had nothing to do with the storm belt of the world.’

281 Eng. ‘The cards spread out on the table disappeared in the four cardinal directions and in the universe itself.’

282 Eng. He stayed in an armchair by the window, stubbornly gazing at the blue rectangle of night, smelling and breathing war on the entire planet.

283 Eng. ‘A large anthill collected the heat of spring on this cold March day and radiated it with the unconsciousness of a planet.’

284 Eng. ‘The legs spread like a sailor so as not to set foot in the dung that strews the whole globe.’

285 Eng. ‘It was raining, the asphalt was again taking on its black colour from the centre of the globe (Earth! Earth!)’ (*The Spirits*: 15)

humaine ne le dérobe aux yeux dans sa course. La maison est du Jura comme l'arche sur le Mont Ararat.<sup>286</sup> (CE: 794)

La maison voit le lever et le coucher du soleil.<sup>287</sup> (CE: 801)

[C]e matin d'août que le lac brassait ses vagues le long de la rive, rayonnait comme une planète la chaleur du jour passé.<sup>288</sup> (CE: 883)

True, Einstein's physics revealed more the detachment of bodies from space than connectivity, but it also shows that time and location of bodies have only a relative meaning in relation to other bodies. The parallels between Einstein's Special Theory and Colomb's novel are obvious in light of the above passages which can be read as a demonstration of relativity. The whole planet is squeezed into the size of family home where all the inhabitants meet. ('The planet, a steel ball adorned with relief designs, rolled in the midst of terrible clouds that went alone on a black background and had nothing to do with the storm belt of the world.' (TA: 1177)) To be outside space means to be outside time for a modern physicist; for time and space are no longer considered as separate.<sup>289</sup> Colomb links the most remote, such as the far-away planets to the most proximate: 'The cards spread out on the table disappeared in the four cardinal directions,' (i.e., north, east, south and west), 'and in the universe itself.' (CE: 772) The experience of the First World War and the weather on the Earth are related to the cosmic realities: for instance, the 'smell of war' reaches the entire world, including those who quietly sit in their armchairs by the window and gaze 'the blue rectangle of night'; (CE: 890) 'a large anthill collects heat as the sun shines on one of those cold March days,' (CE: 761) emitting energy to the whole earth as in the process of Thermal radiation. Local experiences seem to have global effects. For example, we learn that the christening is celebrated on the whole 'planet.' (CE: 791) It is also said in a humorous tone that someone is trying hard to prevent the 'dung that strews the whole globe' from getting to his feet. (CE: 762) The asphalt becomes as black as Earth's core during rainy weather. (ET: 957 | *The Spirits*: 15) The sun

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286 Eng. 'The Christening orders the whole 'planet'; the sun rises between *Dent-de-Jaman* and *Dents-du-Midi* and sets between Geneva and *la Dôle*, and no obstacle caused by the human hands can stand in its path.'

287 Eng. 'The house sees the rising and setting sun.'

288 Eng. 'The previous day continued to emit the heat as a planet while the lake waves washed the shore on this August morning.'

289 As mentioned earlier, modern physics establishes the notion of a 'four-dimensional manifold' consisting of three space co-ordinates and a time co-ordinate. See Lawson (1920: 55–57)

risers somewhere between *Dent-de-Jaman* and *Dents-du-Midi* and sets between Geneva and La Dôle. (*CE*: 791) Both the rising and the setting sun can be seen from one small place on earth—a ‘house’—as if nothing lay between them. (*CE*: 801) The preceding days are still emitting the radiant heat on earth, (*CE*: 883) thus suggesting that past moments penetrate into the present moments.

In general, Colomb, like Woolf, accords great value to the idea of communality and attempts to reinvent means—memory—to regain the now lost interconnection between human beings that was once assumed by the strong family ties. The gatherings of family, friends and relatives affect the form of their novels. Funerals, dinners and marriages function as the experience of communality in *CE* and *MD*. But the experience is not confined to those who attend them. It also spreads into the community of dead ancestors in *CE* (see Chapter 1), just as the party becomes the indirect medium of connection between Clarissa and Septimus Smith, who has just committed suicide. Juxtaposition and association are used to blur the distinction between different periods of time and places in *CE* and *MD*, and to place emphasis on the communal past of various figures. Colomb’s fascination with body memory, i.e., the bodily traits that survive through time (see sect. 4.6) invites the reader to reflect on the shared experience, on ‘the common life which is the real life’ (*AROO*: 61) as Woolf explains. For Colomb, the body appears as the primeval source of communality (see sect. 4.6). Condensing of past and present to bring the physical resemblance of ancestors and their descendants into light establishes a common life.

In the passages given above, we also notice that the distant past meets the present time and the world’s most remote distances are perceptible from the family house. However, in Colomb, we also find references to a time when humans did not exist and to places where humans have never stepped. For instance, we read in *CE* that there are brontosaurus in Eugene’s gardens. Likewise, the pebbles left on the beach display the time before humans: ‘he was fingering a few pink and grey pebbles that the March waves had washed ashore.’ (*The Spirits*: 40) Such a vision of time parallels the theory of relativity according to which what is assumed ‘past’ in one frame might be ‘future’ in another. If there are people, they are confined within the four walls of their homes, ‘while the whole world extends around the castle, the angels flap the shore with their mighty wings’, [*T*]andis que le monde entier s’étend autour du château, que les anges battent la rive de leurs ailes puissantes’] (*TA*: 1223) and ‘a sheep, like a wave, is attracted by the crescent moon.’ [*U*n mouton [...], pareil à une vague, [est] attiré par la croissant de lune.’] (*Le Troupeau de moutons*: 202)

The local and global are drawn together in search of the total unity through Colomb’s literary engagement with memory but without a perceiving subject.

By contrast, it is only in the human consciousness that, for Woolf, the exterior world makes sense. Woolf apprehends the world as a series of disconnected impressions that the creative feminine mind receives in the form of 'shower of innumerable atoms' ('Modern Fiction': 160) and assembles them at its best into the 'moments' rather than in linear, mechanical coherence. The Woolfian 'moment' shapes order out of 'chaos' through the effort of consciousness (see Chapter 3). The chaotic reality is then what cannot be reached by the conscious mind. Peter Walsh thinks that '[n]othing exists outside us except a state of mind.' (*MD*: 88) Charles Tansley assumes that 'nothing had shaped itself at all,' (*TL*: 103) unless Mrs. Ramsay interferes. But what does the world look like in the absence of an observer? In the most comprehensive sense, 'Time Passes' is about 'how "you" and "I" and "she" pass and vanish' (*TL*: 204) and how the world exists without a subject. Things fall apart in a vacant house, in the absence of any human occupancy and subjectivity. The spatial and temporal distance is covered with the female observer in Woolf (such as in *MD* and *TL*) and without the human observer in Colomb. We see a movement towards impersonality in Colomb's narrative that Woolf develops in her later novel *The Waves*. But in *MD* and *TL*, the spatial and temporal distance may only be overcome in consciousness, in search of a sense of communality. The car and the airplane need to be seen through the human gaze to be recognized as the medium of connections in *MD*.<sup>290</sup> It is through the sight of these moving machines that Londoners share their day with each other. The old woman singing close to Regent's Park tube station need to be heard by Septimus Smith and Peter Walsh for a virtual contact to be established between them (see Chapter 3).

In the preface to the Modern Library edition of *MD* (1928), Woolf explains that Septimus Smith and Clarissa Dalloway are 'one and the same person.'<sup>291</sup> (*MD* 1928 (1925)) The central idea of the novel thus lies in the recognition of their relationship rather than in the expression of their individualized personalities. But a sense of loneliness prevents Clarissa and Septimus to communicate with each other in this life. After the war and his friend Evans's death, Septimus is incapable of seeing anything but the reality of his emotion: 'something failed him; he could

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290 'Away and away the aeroplane shot, till it was nothing but a bright spark; an aspiration; a concentration; a symbol (so it seemed to Mr. Bentley, vigorously rolling his strip of turf at Greenwich) of man's soul; of his determination, thought Mr. Bentley, sweeping round the cedar tree, to get outside his body, beyond his house, by means of thought, Einstein, speculation, mathematics, the Mendelian theory—away the aeroplane shot.' (*MD*: 41)

291 All other references to *MD* are to *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925). London, Paris: Albatros, 1947.

not feel'. (*MD*: 128) A fragmentary view of reality leads him to suicide. Isolation means solitude for Clarissa as well. Even parties and gathered people leave her with a sense of loneliness. That sense may only be overcome by momentary illuminations. If unlike Septimus, Clarissa could 'survive' 'somehow in the streets of London, on the ebb and flow of things, here, there', (*MD*: 14) it is because she can connect herself with the outside world—being merged even with unknown people—and see her life in its totality by abolishing the distinction between past and present as she does when she *plunges* into the morning air, like in her youth at Bourton, once she leaves her house in London. Though rarely, Clarissa still has a sense of 'being part, she was positive, of the trees at home; of the house there, ugly, rambling all to bits and pieces as it was; part of people she had never met'. (*MD*: 14) Yet most of her lifetime, 'she's been sitting all the time [in her room, alone]; mending her dress', (*MD*: 60) in her daydreaming and fear to be swallowed by the fluid reality that Shakespeare's lines oppose: 'Fear no more the heat o' the sun / Nor the furious winter's rages'. (*MD*: 14) They recur several times through Clarissa's thoughts, in her moments of solitude. Clarissa's and Septimus's 'embrace' is only possible 'in death', (*MD*: 272) not in this life. After Septimus's death, Clarissa feels 'somehow very like him—the young man who had killed himself. She felt glad that he had done it; thrown it away'. (*MD*: 275) For without Septimus's death, Clarissa would not have had her moments of vision: she would not have known that she and Septimus are one.

A sense of community is assumed by Mrs. Ramsay in Woolf's other novel *TL*. Mrs. Ramsay desires to create bonds between people when she calls a disparate society of friends and family together for a dinner party. 'They [all] sat at table beneath [Mrs. Ramsay's] eyes'.<sup>292</sup> (*TL*: 204) In their ceaseless struggle against time, Mrs. Ramsay advises others to rely on such unifying bonds as marriage. While measuring a stocking against James's leg, she comes to 'an admirable idea' that 'William and Lily should marry' (*TL*: 29) and at other times, 'insist[s] that [Lily] must, Minta must, they all must marry'. (*TL*: 56) Mrs. Ramsay thus wishes to bring unity and order in the contacts among people. In 'The Window' section, the unity of separate rooms and the communication between the residents of the house is assumed by Mrs. Ramsay: 'this coming into the dining-room after breakfast, which they did every day of their lives, was a positive event to them', (*TL*: 67) whereas 'the atmosphere of lecture-rooms', where women and children are not admitted, 'was stuffy and depressing to [Mrs. Ramsay] beyond endurance

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292 Mrs. Ramsay's experience of 'triumphant' vision while she sits with her guests at the dinner table is discussed in Chapter 3.

almost'. (*TL*: 80) 'Not as oneself', Mrs. Ramsay thinks, 'did one find rest ever'; (*TL*: 71) but 'there rose to her lips always some exclamation of triumph over life when things came together in peace'. (*Ibid.*) Lily remembers how Mrs. Ramsay 'resolved everything into simplicity' and 'brought together this and that and then this, and so made out of that miserable silliness and spite [...] something [...] which survived, after all these years [after Mrs. Ramsay's death] complete'. (*TL*: 82–83)

Like Mrs. Ramsay, Lily Briscoe tries to achieve order in Mrs. Ramsay's portrait. For a long time, Lily struggles to transform 'a triangular purple shape' (*TL*: 59) into the artist's canvas. During dinner, as Lily looks at the salt cellar on the table, she comes to the idea that by moving 'the tree further in the middle', (*TL*: 96) she can 'avoid that awkward space' (*ibid.*) and gain unity in her painting. Lily finishes her picture ten years later. She achieves the order and unity she desires by drawing a line 'in the midst of chaos' (*TL*: 183) and creating permanent patterns out of 'this eternal passing and flowing'. (*Ibid.*) All parts are brought together through her vision. When she completes the picture, Lily says that she had her final 'vision'. (*TL*: 238) The relevance of 'vision' in *TL* is further validated by placing it as the last word in *TL*.

If Lily Briscoe has an artist's unifying vision, Mrs. Ramsay and Clarissa Dalloway organize human relations. They gather people at their parties. But apart from forming connections via forms accepted by society—through marriages, dinners and parties—, Clarissa and Mrs. Ramsay also establish the contact with others in rather unconventional ways: the former forms a deeper bond with the lower-middle class person and war-veteran Septimus Smith, while the latter feels her identity knit together with the lighthouse beam. Remarkably, it is Clarissa who feels a connection with Septimus and not the reverse: she receives no recognition from him. In *TL*, the connections are formed not only between human beings but also between the human and the non-human. Mrs. Ramsay had a feeling of 'some exclamation of triumph over life when things came together in this peace, this rest, this eternity; and pausing there she looked out to meet that stroke of the Lighthouse, the long steady stroke, the last of the three, which was her stroke, for watching them in this mood always at this hour once could not help attaching one-self to one thing especially of the things one saw'. (*TL*: 71) But the connection is not reciprocal. The connection with the lighthouse and its beam is projected from Mrs. Ramsay's standpoint: 'Often she found herself sitting and looking, sitting and looking, with her work in her hands until she became the thing she looked at—that light, for example'. (*TL*: 72) She can achieve the sense of oneness with the lighthouse beam. So, we need a subject—human consciousness—to have a sense of oneness and connection with others—whether

with people or objects. 'If we escape a little from the common sitting-room and see human beings not always in their relation to each other but in relation to [...], the sky, too, and the trees or whatever it may be in themselves [...we see] our relation is to the world [...] and not only to the world of men and women.' (AROO: 112.)

What we thus learn from Woolf's novels is that we need the feminine consciousness —types of Mrs. Ramsay, Clarissa Dalloway and Lily Briscoe—to give order and unity to the world. Even if reality is apprehended through the framed perception (curiously, part 1 is entitled 'The Window') of each character such as Mr. Ramsay, Charles Tansley, William Bankes, Augustus Carmichael and the children (in 'The Window' section), it is mostly the feminine vision that grants order to the fluid and chaotic world.<sup>293</sup> Each character attempts to create the solid surface in order to give coherence and integration to the fluid reality, which is defined as a mass of moving particles by modern physicists. In search of order and coherence, Mr. Ramsay tries to 'repeat the whole [philosophical] alphabet in order, twenty-six letters in all, from start to finish.' (TL: 37) Augustus Carmichael desires to acquire a coherent view of reality as a poet, by his artistic perception. Mr. Bankes 'live[s] for science' (TL: 27) that is coherent by nature. As for Andrew Ramsay, 'his gift for mathematics was extraordinary.' (TL: 66) But a unifying vision is only attained by Mrs. Ramsay in the first section; and by Lily Briscoe—in the last section, even if at first it was denied to her. Clarissa Dalloway's and Mrs. Ramsay's 'fleshing [their] needles' (TL: 42)—a gesture that offers togetherness and unification as it knits together isolated fragments and people—is contrasted by the masculine knives emblematic of 'slicing and cutting' just as the chiming of Big Ben. Mr. Ramsay is said to be 'lean as a knife, narrow as the blade of one'; (TL: 4) in his older age, Peter Walsh also presents himself to Clarissa while playing with a knife like a young man. Whereas Mrs. Ramsay's and Lily's vision is comparable to a natural phenomenon of gravity that attracts different bodies towards the centre: all parts are brought together on the canvas through Lily's unifying vision; Clarissa and Mrs. Ramsay also bring close disparate lives and organize daily impressions within the 'moment'.

Woolf's human characters are thus consciously bound to each other and to the world. Consciousness is crucial to order the chaotic unobserved world. By contrast, individuals, objects and places seem to all connect without the characters' mental efforts, thus, outside consciousness in Colomb's *œuvre*.

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293 See more in Chapter 3 on how Mrs. Ramsay creates the lasting patterns of significance out of the experience of moments and by fostering human relations.



[À] cet endroit où l'ouest devient l'est, les lignes parallèles se rejoignent, la voici avec sa pèlerine de laine ! Et la petite Jacqueline crie « maman », le chien peut désormais mourir.<sup>294</sup> (*TA*: 1162)

Mrs Ramsay saying, 'Life stand still here'; Mrs Ramsay making of the moment something permanent (as in another sphere Lily herself tried to make of the moment something permanent)—this was of the nature of a revelation. In the midst of chaos there was shape; this eternal passing and flowing (she looked at the clouds going and the leaves shaking) was struck into stability. Life stand still here, Mrs Ramsay said. 'Mrs Ramsay! Mrs Ramsay!' she repeated. She owed it all to her. (*TL*: 183)

[T]he trees standing there, and the flowers standing there, looking before them, looking up, yet beholding nothing, eyeless, and so terrible. (*TL*: 154)

Global stability depends on the presence of a perceiving subject in *TL*. The 'dehumanized' world of 'Time Passes' turns into a chaotic place, leading us to think that no natural balance may be achieved independently of the human ability to observe it. If 'the trees standing there, and the flowers standing there... behold [...] nothing' and look 'terrible', it is essentially because of the missing human characters, of heroines like Mrs. Ramsay and Lily Briscoe both of whom are in fact artists in vision: Mrs. Ramsay can skilfully connect a disparate group of people, 'making of the moment something permanent' in the social circle just as Lily does it in a drawing room. The world of 'Time Passes' is without meaning in the absence of human life and an artist's unifying power against the actuality of time. Sentences are unfinished, questions fragmentary or unformulated. The arrangement of parts, in *TL*, further attests the above-said. The first section entitled 'The Window' may be understood as 'an image associated [...] with the individual's vision of life', as John Graham puts it, 'the second, "Time Passes", portrays the assault of time on the integrity of that vision; and in the third, "The Lighthouse", the vision is triumphantly reaffirmed.' (Graham 1970: 33) It is the visionary struggle that Mrs. Ramsay leads against the cruelty of time. The darkness of time is vanquished, 'barbarity was tamed, the reign of chaos subdued' (*TL*: 54) not through Mrs. Ramsay's and Mr. Ramsay's love but through Mrs. Ramsay's as far-reaching and synthesizing vision as the lighthouse beams. This kind of vision is what gives the power to Mrs. Ramsay, on the one hand, to create the lasting *Now* and transform the short-lived moment into an experience of 'eternity' (*TL*: 120) by instantly giving sense to the totality of human life; on the other hand, to achieve the integration of humanity that the dispersed society

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294 Eng. 'At this place where west becomes east, the parallel lines meet, here she is with her woolen cape! And little Jacqueline shouts 'mum', the dog can now die.'

of individuals in the Ramsays' summer-house on the Hebrides stand for. 'Does the progress of civilization depend upon great men?' (*TL*: 48) the philosopher Mr. Ramsay wonders. It does not seem so; for Mrs. Ramsay too, 'the average human being' (*ibid.*)— an upper-middle-class housewife and mother of eight— as she is, 'ha[s] the whole of [mankind] under her protection,' (*TL*: 6) and tries to guide it against the tyranny of time just as a lighthouse (which is the key symbol of Woolf's book) guides the seamen over the waves. In *TL*, 'the whole effort of merging and flowing and creating rest[s] on' (*TL*: 95) a human being. Although Ramsay's house is full of people in 'The Window', as opposed to the middle part, 'all the rooms of the house [...]—the drawing-room; behind the drawing-room the kitchen; above the kitchen the bedrooms; and beyond them the nurseries' still need to 'be filled with life.' (*TL*: 42) For people are dispersed: Charles Tansley 'had been reading in his room, and now he came down and it all seems to him silly, superficial, flimsy.' (*TL*: 97) Mr Banks wishes 'he had refused to come' to dinner; 'it is a terrible waste of time.' (*TL*: 101) Space is fragmented as a 'strange no-man's land where to follow people is impossible.' (*TL*: 96) Yet, if there are observers, they can 'at least [...] follow [the dispersed people and objects] with their eyes.' (*Ibid.*) Mrs. Ramsay organizes this 'no-man's land' and connects dispersed people to each other at the dinner table.

Without Mrs. Ramsay's unifying vision, the house is 'full of unrelated passions.' (*TL*: 168) Unlike the first and the last sections of *TL*, human existence is discontinued, and the human sphere abandons the centre of the stage through the alchemy of time in the middle section. That middle section no longer offers the unity Mrs. Ramsay desires in the initial section because human observers are missing. In 'The Window', 'Life [seems to be] made of little separate incidents which one lived one by one,' (*TL*: 53), even if Mrs. Ramsay needs sometimes to 'give [...] herself the little shake that one gives a watch that has stopped, the old familiar pulse began beating, as the watch begins ticking—one, two, three, one, two, three.' (*TL*: 95) The 'experience [of time] is atomized, not continuous' (Banfield, *Tragic Time* (2000: 54)) in the human world. Contrary to Bergson's idea about time, of the *durée*, Woolf offers moment-by-moment presentations of experiences and scenes in 'The Window.' She sees reality as a 'shower of atoms', thus adopting a rather scientific term (Whitworth 2001: 109) to interpret time as a phenomenon composed of discrete moments as opposed to Bergson's outlook onto time. The reality is primarily disintegrated and chaotic in Woolf and the 'moment' is the means to hold chaos in shape.<sup>295</sup> But 'the experience' is no longer

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295 For Woolf's retrieving the 'chaos' into the 'moment(s)', see section 3.8 A story within

'atomized' (Banfield, *Tragic Time* (2000: 54)) in the non-human world of 'Time Passes.' The section rather depicts a gradual process of decay as Bergson would understand it: death, nothingness and emptiness dominate 'an empty house, [with] no people's characters.' (*Diary* 3: 76)

The distance is overcome outside the character's consciousness in Colomb's *œuvre* rather than in consciousness as in *TL*. The renewal of physical laws governing spacetime grants more freedom to Colomb in her articulation of the experiences of modernity. It allows not only the juxtaposition of spatially distant events, as explained above, but also an interchangeability of time and space. 'East and west', 'past and present' become interchangeable in the above lines. Our conceptual distinctions between 'here' and 'there', between past and present seem arbitrary in light of Colomb's representation of time. Her 'here' and 'now' is not what are commonly meant by 'here' and 'now'.<sup>296</sup> Her blurring of clear distinctions between temporal and spatial dimensions demonstrates her interest in recent scientific discoveries. It seems to resonate with Einstein's radical revision of the concepts of spacetime which reveals that temporal relations are not absolute. In modern physics two events happening at different places in space are not simultaneous for every system of reference; their distance in time depends on the frame of reference. As in Einstein's physics, Colomb abandons the notion of an absolute 'here' and 'now'.<sup>297</sup> Her 'here' means not only some given place where the event occurs; but it also includes every part of the universe: 'At this place where west becomes east, the parallel lines meet'; [*À cet endroit... l'ouest devient l'est, les lignes parallèles se rejoignent.*] (*TA*: 1162.) 'César...confounding east and west, past and future.' [*César...confondait l'est et l'ouest, le passé et l'avenir.*] (*The Spirits*: 40–41; *ET*: 976) Colomb's 'here' is 'heterotopic': any single real place has a function in relation to other spaces.<sup>298</sup> Likewise, her 'now' is 'heterochronic', combining different times, as it encompasses the events deemed 'past', 'present' and 'future', outside the observing mind.

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Colomb's leitmotif & Woolf's 'moment' of Chapter 3.

296 In the introduction of *The Spirits of the Earth* (*Les Esprits de la terre*), John Taylor notes: "The narrative "here and now" is [...] remarkably dense because 'here' is not just here and 'now' is not merely now: they are multidimensional." (*The Spirits*: xiv.)

297 See 3.7. Simultaneity of multiple time frames.

298 Michel Foucault's spatial theory of 'heterotopias' elaborated in *Des espaces autres* [Eng. Other Spaces] (1984 (1967)) describes realities within realities in difference to the idea of utopia as an unreal space.

Unperceived objects and missing subjects are found in *TL* as well.<sup>299</sup> In ‘The Window’ section, subjects lose their objects: Minta Doyle ‘grandmother’s pearl brooch’ is out of sight, lost on a beach; Mrs. Ramsay is once again ‘looking for her spectacle case among the pebbles,’ (*TL*: 224) as she has already lost ‘thousands [of them] every summer’; (*TL*: 225) ‘Mr Bankes saying, “The vegetable salts are lost”’. (*TL*: 56) While objects are deprived of subjects in the middle section: a house loses its residents. ‘[A] pair of shoes, a shooting cap, some faded skirts and coats in wardrobes’ have been left by human beings; ‘the looking glass’ no longer holds ‘a face’ or ‘a world...in which a figure turned, a hand flashed, the door opened.’ (*TL*: 147) Mrs. Ramsay ‘was not there,’ (*TL*: 124) ‘the step where she used to sit was empty’; (*TL*: 170) ‘the empty drawing-room steps, the frill of the chair inside, the puppy tumbling on the terrace, the whole wave and whisper of the garden became like curves and arabesques flourishing round a centre of complete emptiness.’ (*TL*: 203) The world order is not disturbed by the lost objects. But the reality is chaotic if objects happen to lose their possessors. For the presence of a perceiving subject is a condition of order and stability in Woolf’s novel.

If Woolf is not ‘in search of lost time’ and memories like Proust and Colomb, she is at least writing about ‘lost time’ by focusing on the missing subjects and misplaced objects that may exist independently of their observation. Minta cannot find what she has lost; but the *brooch* is located ‘half-hidden by some stone’ (*TL*: 116) on a beach, existing regardless of its observation. The now vacant house, ‘the bare legs of tables, saucepans and china already furred, tarnished, cracked,’ (*TL*: 147) and all ‘what people had shed and left’ (*Ibid.*) conserve memories, reminding of the times when ‘they were filled and animated.’ (*Idem.*) But the memories cannot bring the past back in Woolf.

Memory is self-organized in Colomb’s work; so is consciousness in Woolf. Memory in Colomb and consciousness in Woolf single out from chaotic, at first sight meaningless associations and perceptions some specific quality or substance by questioning its permanence in spacetime. If Woolf’s mirroring of ever-changing state of mind allows reading characters’ past experiences in their present life and reshaping different daily impressions into the ‘moments’, Colomb’s literary engagement with memory helps draw the distinct locations and times together outside the characters’ mental efforts. Memory is what grants a unifying vision. Colomb’s dealing with time and memory results in the

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299 Ann Banfield discusses this point with regard to Woolf’s novels in one of her sections entitled: ‘Beyond the Private World: Lost Objects and Memories’, in *The Phantom Table*. (2000: 134–139)

construction of a universe that extends beyond the human eyesight. The conception of time in Colomb's work cannot be summed up by the scientific interpretation of it; because the act of bringing together 'before' and 'now', 'here' and 'there' within her novels also highlights that memory not only escapes the physical laws of spacetime, but also keeps things alive over time.



## Conclusion

We perceived time as a deep and significant reality which shapes the subject of Colomb's novels and gives them its charm. By 'time' we have meant Colomb's, Proust's, and Woolf's literary representations of subjective time perception marked by distortions in its duration, and anticipations, remembering, immortalisation in its sequentiality; narrative temporality altering the order of the story and of History, narrative breaks, juxtaposition of events, accelerations or slowing down pace; grammatical time (the time adverbs and verbal tenses); non-human time (objects or 'inanimate creatures' in *La Recherche*, objects and the natural world in Colomb and Woolf). We also detected cosmic time, relativistic time, biological time (the births, the aging and death), chronological or clock-time, calendar time, historical time (representations of the world wars and other historical events), Prehistory, fairy-tale time, legendary times, and dream time. Furthermore, we considered time not only as a textual dimension, but also as a reader's mental construct. Such vision of time was the most suited to the modern temper.

This study opened by tracing the relationship between the handling of time and narrative development in Catherine Colomb's 1945 novel to explore, on the one hand, the extent to which it departs from a chronological ordering of events and, on the other hand, how her experimentations with narrative contributed to enriching the sense of time. We studied the question of time in parallel with the principles of narrative development to interpret it as an aesthetic element. By focusing on the limits imposed by the novel *CE* in its uses of tenses, intentional repetitions, and character presentation, we challenged a popular belief, suggesting that Colomb's style is exceptional and does not share anything with her contemporaries'. The following chapters then developed this challenge by showing what Colomb shares with her predecessors Proust and Woolf. In Chapter 1, the focus on Colomb's experimentations with narrative time deriving from her uses of the technique of '*liaison*' and a point-of-view representation was also well-suited to think of them as innovative in her novel writing. It helped us to turn our attention to Proust's and Woolf's writings in the study of time in Colomb.

In bringing the question of time to the fore, I have pointed out the importance of memory and representation of consciousness that Colomb's work shares with Proust's and Woolf's, respectively. More precisely, in drawing parallels between the representations of time by Colomb and Proust, Colomb and Woolf, I have put

forward the hypotheses that Colomb's novel writing is similar to Woolf's, while her philosophical perspectives about time are more Proustian than Woolfian. It should come as no surprise that much attention was devoted to the analyses of memory in the study of Proust's and Colomb's vision of time, whereas Colomb and Woolf were discussed together regarding the narrative point of view. We interpreted time as an aesthetic element in Colomb's narrative of memory (compared to Proust's novel of memory and Woolf's 'multiple-point-of-view-novel' (Leaska 1970) progressing via associations of thought, '*liaison*', leitmotifs, repetitions, and a point-of-view representation; and we placed her simultaneous representation of different spacetimes in the philosophy of *air du temps*.

The focus on memory as a theme and a structural element provided a useful way of observing the aesthetics of time, on the one hand, in Colomb's *CE* and *ET* and, on the other hand, in Proust's *La Recherche*. It was further motivated by a desire to understand Colomb's dialogue with Proust in terms of the representation of time by means of memory. Chapter 2 revealed both commonalities and differences between Proust's and Colomb's uses of memory. The commonalities included memory recordings by Proust and Colomb, producing a sequence-defying narrative in their novels. Yet, memory altered a chronological ordering of events with varying degrees in Colomb's and Proust's narratives. Or, the complexity of narrative time in Colomb was resulting from the game of association—the activity of memory. We learned that although Colomb's narrative had a linear sequence in few cases, it mainly developed around the memory processes and was marked by a discontinuous structure. By contrast, apart from few exceptions, the events in Proust's narrative followed the chronological sequence. There are lesser temporal changes in the narrative of *La Recherche* than in *CE* and *ET*, because the first offers more of an event-driven and a character-driven story while Colomb only describes characters and events by the details recalled and invented by memory. If Colomb chooses an experimental form of writing that stems from the impulses of memory, *La Recherche* is not entirely made up of reminiscences and remembrances.

These interpretations have proved appropriate to my investigation of Colomb's associations and Proustian reminiscences side by side. It revealed that, in comparison with *La Recherche*, Colomb's texts rely on intuitive writing. Therefore, while memories are organized around some events or characters in Proust, they cannot shape a story in *CE* and *ET*. We also saw that, unlike Proust, Colomb does not describe characters and events with the utmost accuracy. Nor does she follow, like Proust, a well-established plan in her search of time and memories. As a result, memories are only recalled by details in Colomb rather than in details as in *La Recherche*.



In bringing together the Proustian experiences of reminiscence and Colomb's associationism, I have sought to lay emphasis on how time is represented in their works. Has the past truly vanished forever? Or, can it be restored by memories? How is time experienced in memory? How does a narrative of memory progress? I posited that if Proust's reminiscences restored the forgotten past in the present, Colomb's associations consisted in fusing separate memories as parts of a single experience. Or, the first represents one experience with two temporalities, whereas the second introduces different experiences as one. By weaving together different temporalities, both represent time as multifold. But if *La Recherche* does not represent reminiscences on all its three thousand pages, Colomb's novels are centrally made out of associations. Proust highlights detachment with the past in many instances. Therefore, he lengthens a moment by expanding the characters' stories and events across many pages. Whereas there are few independent moments in Colomb. They bind with other moments. Episodes and character presentations are also made short to reduce the spatiotemporal intervals between different experiences, introducing them as simultaneous.

Through the analysis of the representations of time, consciousness, shifts in point of view and of a vertical narrative this study has pointed out the significance of Colomb's *œuvre* in 20<sup>th</sup> century literature next to Woolf's fiction and contributed to Woolf and Proust studies. Chapter 3 explained how Colomb's and Woolf's narratives capture the sense of time as it operates in the human awareness and beyond. Time was traced more as a structuring device than as a theme in Woolf's and Colomb's experimentalism. In our study of Colomb's and Woolf's dialogue, we have referred to a number of cases where the past colours the present when recalled by both conscious and unconscious efforts of memory. Yet, we have avoided using the term 'memory' with regard to Woolf's narrative and sought to explore the workings of consciousness and perception rather than of memories. By unraveling the complexity of Colomb's enunciative and temporal experiments in comparison to Woolf's with focus on the workings of consciousness and perception, we have also noticed that Colomb comes closer to Woolf than to Proust. Being like Woolf's writing concerned with psychological associations, Colomb's ultimately looks similar to Woolf's canvas.

Yet, in a comparative study of Woolf and Colomb, I also put forward the hypothesis that their projects are markedly different. To start with, we saw that Colomb's 'French' novel develops independently from Woolf's 'English' novel and in line with the formal properties of the 1930s '*roman poétique*'. A number of other elements such as Colomb's negotiations with German culture (especially in her uses of 'leitmotifs') further helped us to see how Colomb transcends Woolf's alleged influence. We also learned that even if Colomb's

novels represent both 'stream' (of interruptions) and 'consciousness', they do not provide us with Woolfian 'stream of consciousness'. Also, Woolf's use of 'the moment' as a structuring element in the processes of creation is contrasted by 'the leitmotif' in Colomb (even if both are comparable to the domestic gesture of knitting or embroidery with their capacity to construct a story out of fragments of memories). Moreover, while both experiment with point of view, it is much easier to identify who speaks or thinks in Woolf than in Colomb. As such, Woolf's novels have served as more linear and understandable models to explain Colomb's temporal and enunciative experiments in *CE* and *ET*. In my reading of Colomb's *CE* and *ET* and Woolf's *TL* and *MD*, I further made a distinction between Colomb's and Woolf's conveying the reality of time in fiction. We saw that unlike Woolf, Colomb mirrors less the characters' mind. Instead, she represents time via perception. The representation of memory processes gives temporal and enunciative depth to her narrative. If Woolf represents space as a labyrinth in *MD*, Colomb does so with time: the past is all-pervasive in the present. Woolf's representation of urban environment in the technological age, her uses of Big Ben and city transport as binding elements are further contrasted with Colomb's references to the Swiss landscapes and all what can stand the test of time. More importantly, we saw that Woolf manages to make a story by illustrating the characters' present life and revealing memories from their past in a strictly defined time-frame (in *MD*); while, there is no story as such in *CE* due to two main reasons. Firstly, memories escape all chronology and temporal limits in Colomb. Secondly, Colomb perpetually seeks to express the reality, as revealed by memories only. Unlike Woolf, she only focuses on the past and avoids using the narrative present in *CE*. Even if the memories may form the basis of a story, they do not provide sufficient material to report the events of someone's life in detail. In recollection, only few memories may return to us out of our forgotten past. (This claim is supported by Bergson. In his book *Matter and Memory*, Bergson explains that only few memories are retrieved from the past.) Unlike Colomb, Woolf reveals the characters' past existences through their memories, but she also describes their present life. She constantly focuses on the role played by memories as living forces in our daily lives.

But Woolf and Colomb have also many points in common. Both represent time in the absence of the human psyche to reflect a turn of consciousness in their contemporary world. Leitmotif and moment, shifting perspectives and interruptions discussed in this chapter are not merely formal issues for Colomb and Woolf but are tightly connected with their considerations of fragmentary and mutable nature of early 20<sup>th</sup> century culture and history. Their negotiations with the paradoxes of modern life are spelled out not only in the content, but also

in the form of their novels. We saw, for instance, Colomb's and Woolf's symbolic uses of the images of a knitting woman (female handwork) who is not a survivor in the age of the knitting machines (mechanical labour), their references to the catastrophes of the World War and to family life at the edge of extinction. Moreover, Colomb's and Woolf's substitution of a linear narrative and the omniscient Narrator by a curving and interrupted stream and a polyphony of voices highlights their modernist scepticism. They search to reconstruct a story out of a lost past to give meaning to the present. Colomb's and Woolf's novels thus stem from a sense of loss.

We have further gained an access into Colomb's, Woolf's and Proust's thought—with respect to the questions of time, perception and memory—in the last chapter. If the first three chapters focused on the formal experiments to interpret their representations of time as an aesthetic achievement, the fourth chapter discussed time as a philosophical perspective in their works. In a comparative study of *La Recherche* and *CE*, we focused on the psychology of memory along with the philosophy of time. Without arguing extensively about a possible direct Proustian influence on the Swiss novelist, the chapter also unraveled Colomb's conversations with the spirit of the age and examined how Colomb and Proust trace time into memory. Since there is much to say about the affinities between Colomb's and Proust's dealings with time and memory, I have limited this investigation to the following hypothesis: for Proust, distance means separation in connections with the self and the others; whereas in Colomb, it is the spatial-temporal distance what connects people and the world, suggesting that connectivity depends on distance. In a comparative study of Colomb and Woolf in the last chapter, I related their outlook about time in the perceived and the unperceived worlds to Einstein's physics.

Overall, the key message of the thesis is that Colomb has more in common with Woolf than with Proust when it comes to the aesthetics of time or the centrality of such elements as consciousness, point-of-view narration and of spatially ordered narrative in the production of the sense of time; whereas Colomb shares more with Proust than with Woolf with regard to the philosophy of time and psychology of memory. Acknowledging, on the one hand, Colomb's and Proust's search of the original contact with the world by tracing time into memory and on the other hand, Colomb's and Woolf's weaving a 'web of time', it suggests that not only does Colomb dialogue with Proust and Woolf, but also with the *air du temps*. Her modernist, avant-gardist and poetical representation of themes of central contemporary relevance, her connections with Proust and Woolf, and with the broader culture of her time make Colomb a major novelist of our age.



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