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24: The Story of a Day in Modernism

By

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# 24: The Story of a Day in Modernism

By

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M.A., Emory University, 2007

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An abstract of
A dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of Emory University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
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2009

Abstract

24: The Story of a Day in Modernism
By Erin D. Sells

The story of one day is never only that. “24: The Story of a Day in Modernism” is the first to define and explore the subgenre of the twenty-four hour novel—an entire novel set in the time-frame of a single day—through its modernist origins and four transnational, modernist examples. The origination of the twenty-four hour novel during this period exposes and coalesces the modernist obsession with time as a both structural and relative principle. Defining the subgenre as such, as well as its conventions and parameters, I contend that these novels are examples of how diverse and dramatic cultural developments in the early years of the twentieth century lead to the origination of the unique narrative temporality of the subgenre. The traditional and natural division of time as a day structures the increasingly fragmented narratives of modernism that seek to interrogate other epistemological categories, including time itself. The communal and individual experience of time in the unit of a day becomes the ordering and controlling structure of these twenty-four hour novels, as time itself does for modernism as a literary movement.

The attentiveness of modernist literature to issues of time and space and their representation is exhibited in the number of novels from this period that take for their setting the space and time of a single day or night: twelve to twenty-four hours. *Ulysses* (1922) and *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925) are probably the most famous examples, but Richard Wright’s *Lawd Today!* (1937, 1963) and Nathan Asch’s *Pay Day* (1930) are two of American modernism’s contributions to the subgenre. Literally compressing lifetimes into the space of twenty-four hours, these novels illustrate an acute awareness of the narrative and stylistic possibilities of exploring the issues of time and space becoming increasingly prominent in the first half of the twentieth century. Combining distinctive urban settings with a multiplicity of stream of consciousness narratives and the liberating constraints of a twenty-four hour timeframe, these novels are literary demonstrations of the modernist preoccupation with exposing the microcosm that exists within what appears to be only a fragment.

# 24: The Story of a Day in Modernism

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Dedicated to my mother,
Janice Sue Sells,
who always believed I could, but wouldn’t love me any less if I never did.

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# Introduction

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"What, then, is time? If no one asks me, I know what it is. If I wish to explain it to him who asks me, I do not know." – Augustine

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The preoccupation of modernist writers with time and its accoutrements—consciousness, memory, history—is bound up in their preoccupation with finding new literary modes of representation for the movements of the human mind and body through the rapidly changing landscape of the world in the first half of the twentieth century. This rapidly changing landscape similarly binds these preoccupations to how the human mind and body move through space. In *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry Into the Origins of Cultural Change*, David Harvey argues that the modernist period is characterized by a compression of time and space that is the result (at least in part) of the organization of capitalism and its increasingly urban loci. Adding to this sense of time-space compression is the ever-increasing speed of communication, transportation, and industry as technological and scientific developments continued to change the shape and face of the world at a startling pace. It is the startling pace of these changes that lead many modernist writers to focus increasingly on the nature, philosophy, and representation of time. Developments in psychology and literature emphasized the movements of the human mind and consciousness, and works like Virginia Woolf's *The Waves* (1931), James Joyce's *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916), and William Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury* (1929) strove to portray the moment-by-moment movements of the human mind with an unprecedented accuracy and immediacy. The compression of space and time in these works occurs on the level of the quotidian

thought, emotion, and bodily experience of the individual (or of multiple individuals). As T. S. Eliot writes in *Four Quartets* (itself an extended meditation on the nature of time, memory, and history) "To be conscious is not to be in time." This quotation suggests that the human consciousness is able to transcend the ostensible limitations of time. Memory may be understood as the simultaneous compression of past and present, be it individual or communal, and transferable by the individual or community into the future. As such memory may be contained within the human consciousness, either individually or in conjunction with other individual human consciousnesses. History's relationship to memory, and the continual "visions and revisions" of both, constitute another rapidly changing phenomenon of modern life, perhaps best observed (or, perhaps only observable) through the portrayal of the human consciousness that has the ability to contain, transcend, adapt to and participate in the changes as they happen.

The attentiveness of modernist literature to issues of time and space and their representation is exhibited in the number of novels from this period that take for their setting the space and time of a single day or night: twelve to twenty-four hours. *Ulysses* (1922) and *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925) are probably the most famous examples (and contemporary participants in the same trope take some of their cues from these: Ian McEwan's *Saturday* (2005) and Ann Patchett's *Run* (2007) are two such), but Richard Wright's *Lawd Today!* (1963)[1] and Nathan Asch's *Pay Day* (1930) are two of American modernism's contributions to the subgenre. Literally compressing lifetimes into the space of twenty-four hours, these novels illustrate an acute awareness of the narrative and stylistic possibilities of exploring the issues of time and space becoming increasingly prominent in the first half of the twentieth century. Combining distinctive urban settings

[1] *Lawd Today!* was published posthumously in 1963, but written in the mid-1930s.

with a multiplicity of stream of consciousness narratives and the liberating constraints of a twenty-four hour time-frame, these novels are literary demonstrations of the modernist preoccupation with exposing the microcosm that exists within what appears to be only a fragment.

All of the examples of twenty-four hour modernist novels given above (*Ulysses, Mrs. Dalloway, Lawd Today!, Pay Day*) take place in distinctive urban settings. The metropolitan centers of Dublin, London, Chicago and New York provide an interesting comparative study in the political and cultural movements shaping these cities, nations, and people in the first half of the twentieth century. The narrative and thematic possibilities opened up buy the variety, diversity, multiplicity, and speed of the modern city are obviously significant in the choice of this particular type of setting. The bias against rural settings—particularly in the modernist era, when rapidly growing cities became symbols of commercial, industrial, cultural, artistic, political and sexual energy in the twentieth century—is certainly one probable reason for the dearth of modernist novels that take place within a similar time-frame but in a rural setting. The urban settings of these novels maintain the literal unity of place while exploring the multiplicity of characters, plots, themes, and images that the modern metropolis offers. The extreme mobility of the modern city and its inhabitants offers further opportunities for narrative and thematic diversity.[2] As the characters move through an urban setting, the portrayal of each character's consciousness unifies the inherent variety of the city confronting and

[2] The use of the stream of (multiple) consciousness narrative in conjunction particularly with an urban setting allows for representation of often marginalized identities. Mrs. Dalloway (on the surface) is an upper-class, leisured, white, imperial city-dwelling capitalist. Her walk through London, however, brings her story and consciousness into contact with countless other less clearly hegemonic characters. Beggars, shopkeepers, policemen directing traffic, passing strangers, poor elderly women, children—the novel becomes one vision of Iris Marion Young's "heterogeneous public" that makes up democratic city life. Similar arguments can be made for each of the novels considered in this project (Iris Marion Young, *Justice and the Politics of Difference* (1990) p. 227)

being absorbed and processed by that consciousness. The stream of consciousness narrative allows not just the unlimited movement of one consciousness, but the virtually unlimited movement of the narrative between multiple consciousnesses. The multiplicity of other individual consciousnesses one could possibly encounter during a single stroll through a city on any given day is the stuff of epic in a significantly compressed timeframe.

Aristotle's conception of the unity of time is concerned with preserving a level of realism, mimesis—the representation of actions in 'real time.' While the occupation of much of modernist literature is with finding new narrative and stylistic methods of portraying the actual movements of the human mind and consciousness—another kind of realism and mimesis—the choice of the distinctive unit of time in a day has less to do with accurate representation of events as they occur in time, and more to do with observing quotidian experience. *Ulysses* is a story of a day in epic scale, commuting to the daily, quotidian experience of modern life the stature and significance (albeit, more often than not, with tongue firmly in cheek) of the heroic tale, the timeless and time-exceeding story transcribed into a relatively small and contained unit of time. The great paradox of stories like these—whether they are Aristotelian dramas or Joycean epics—is that no story is bound by the time in which it is set, no matter what level of realism is that story's aim. The travels of modernist narrative through the streams of its characters' consciousnesses and into times past, present, and future in memory, history, and experience demonstrate the ample means of evading the ostensible limits of time. The transmission of stories through time—in the time-bound and time-evading activities of reading and writing (or performance)—are just another example of the ways in which

these narratives cannot, by definition, exist in only one time. The story of only one day is never only that.

In this dissertation I will study the four examples of transatlantic modernist novels that adopt a twelve to twenty-four hour timeframe for the stories told. I will use my analysis of these novels to examine the relationship between changing conceptions of time (philosophically, scientifically, technologically, historically, and culturally) during this period and the changing modes of narrative and exposition observable in the modernist novel. The definition of the twenty-four hour or day-long novel as a subgenre and its analysis as such—as well as its modernist origins—has never before been examined. I aim to establish and define the parameters of the twenty-four hour or day-long novel as a subgenre, as well as to argue how this subgenre and its modernist origins change the way we understand the novel, time, and exposition in a rapidly changing world.

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These four earliest examples of the twenty-four hour or day-long novel subgenre provide vital insight into a particularly modernist vision and revision of many centuries' philosophy about time and how to tell a story in and through time. In A. A. Mendilow's foundational *Time and the Novel* (1952), he distinguishes between "tales of time" and "tales about time." In his three volume treatise, *Time and Narrative* (1983, 1984, 1985), Paul Ricoeur explains Mendilow's distinction as follows:

> All fictional narratives are "tales of time" inasmuch as the structural transformations that affect the situations and characters take time.

> However only a few are "tales about time" inasmuch as in them is the very experience of time that is at stake in these structural transformations. (Ricouer II 101)

The twenty-four hour or day-long novel subgenre consists of "tales about time." Because the timeframe of the novels in this subgenre is the ordering structure of the narratives, the experience of time is both the structure and the subject of the stories told. For this reason, the twenty-four hour or day-long novel is a nearly perfect example of what Frank Kermode refers to as "concord fictions;" fictions that help us "to make sense of our lives from where we are, as it were, stranded in the middle […] we need fictions of beginnings and fictions of ends, fictions which unite beginning and end and endow the interval between them with meaning" (Kermode 190). Stranded in the middle of the great expanse of history and the relatively limited expanse of our lifetimes, the day is a perfect fiction of beginning and end—from dawn to sunset, from rising to rest—with which to endow meaning to the often indefinite experience of time.

Elsewhere in the seminal *The Sense of an Ending* (1967), Kermode explains how the sound of a clock's *tick-tock* is the perfect model of a plot, or "an organization that humanizes time by giving it form; and the interval between *tock* and *tick* represents purely successive, disorganized time of the sort that we need to humanize" (Kermode 45). If all plots seek to humanize time, the day-long or twenty-four hour novel plot does this even more so, by making the interval between the *tick* of the novel's beginning and the *tock* of its ending a much shorter expanse, and, more often than not, making the actual *tick-tock* of time passing throughout the day a prominent aspect of the narrative[3].

[3] This is the case in all of the examples of twenty-four hour novels examined in this dissertation, where clocks both public and private, as well as the time-clocks of the industrial workplace, the movements of the

Kermode describes "the interval between *tock* and *tick*" as the novel's "temporal horizon," and an important function of a plot that successfully humanizes time is to make it fit within the "temporal horizon" with the use of "fictional devices" (Kermode 45). The "temporal horizon" of a day is obviously a ready fit—the experience of living a day is common, repetitive, short, traditional, and, indeed, daily—but this is also a problem. For as Kermode explains, "*Tick* is a humble genesis, *tock* a feeble apocalypse; and *tick-tock* is in any case not much of a plot" (Kermode 45). In other words: the stuff of an ordinary day is *boring*, and would not make for a very interesting story. The day-long or twenty-four hour novel can only come into being with the turn of the twentieth century, when the intersection of technological innovations, pervasive media culture, psychology, relativity, and modernist literary experiments make it possible to take the stuff of an ordinary day and create an extraordinary story.

Stephen Kern's *The Culture of Time and Space, 1880-1918* (1983) examines how dramatic technological and institutional shifts around the turn of the twentieth century changed the way people understand and experience time:

> From around 1880 to the outbreak of World War I a series of sweeping changes in technology and culture created distinctive new modes of thinking about and experiencing time and space. Technological innovations includes the telephone, wireless telegraph, x-ray, cinema, bicycle, automobile, and airplane established the material foundation for this reorientation; independent cultural developments such as the stream-of-consciousness novel, psychoanalysis, Cubism, and the theory of

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sun and stars, and the schedules of public transportation, cinema showtimes, and the newspaper press all function as timepieces marking the passing minutes and hours.

> relativity shaped consciousness directly. The result was a transformation of the dimensions of life and thought. (Kern 1-2)

These cultural developments were not necessarily independent from the technological innovations that occurred at about the same time—if for no other reason than that they worked together to create the transformation in life and thought Kern describes. Further, the technological innovations in many ways become fictional devices of the kind Kermode describes—new literary elements that, in combination with the cultural developments Kern lists above, enable authors to compress the scope of the novel into the timeframe of a single day.

Kermode goes on to explain how one endows the interval between *tick* and *tock* with meaning and significance. To do this one must

> defeat the tendency of the interval between *tick* and *tock* to empty itself; to maintain within that interval following *tick* a lively expectation of *tock*, and a sense that however remote *tock* may be, all that happens happens as if *tock* were certainly following. All such plotting presupposes and requires that an end will bestow upon the whole duration and meaning. To put it another way, the interval must be purged of simple chronicity, of the emptiness of *tock-tick*, humanly uninteresting successiveness. It is required to be a significant season, *kairos* posed between beginning and end. It has to be, on a scale much greater than that which concerns psychologists, an instance of what they call 'temporal integration'—our way of bundling together perception of the present, memory of the past, and expectation of the future, in a common organization. Within this

> organization that which was conceived of as simply successive becomes charged with past and future: what was *chronos* becomes *kairos*. This is the time of the novelist, a transformation of mere successiveness which has been likened, by writers as different as Forster and Musil, to be the experience of love, the erotic consciousness which makes divinely satisfactory sense out of the commonplace person. (Kermode 45-46)

It is also that which makes "divinely satisfactory sense" out of the commonplace *day*. The "temporal integration" of the twenty-four hour novel is what allows the scope of a novel to fit the "temporal horizon" of a single day in such a way that a complex and sophisticated narrative unfolds from the quotidian. Into one's consciousness of the present is folded past and future, through memory and expectation. Trauma and awareness of mortality complicate the experience of past, present, and future, memory and expectation. The integration of multiple consciousnesses through a shared, if limited, temporality (or experience of common time) adds yet more layers to the relatively limited "temporal horizon."[4]

Immanuel Kant's 1781 *Critique of Pure Reason* explored the subjective nature of time and space, arguing that all perception has a temporal structure that combines the present and memory. Hegel and other nineteenth century thinkers like Darwin and Marx developed theories of history that all living things—including governments, societies, religions, and philosophies—transform themselves over time and are shaped by the

[4] Kermode's "erotic consciousness" is another example of how "temporal integration" works within the "temporal horizon" of the twenty-four hour or day-long novel. The limited temporality of the subgenre is similar to the experience of erotic consciousness in the moment of orgasm. In the chapters on *Ulysses* and *Mrs. Dalloway* I explore how the experience of orgasmic time is a model for how the temporality of these novels compresses meaning and significance into moments that are expansive if brief.

transformations of the past. By the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries philosophers were ever more interested in exploring this subjectivity. Edmund Husserl refuted the Cartesian claim that perception occurs in the mind and instead argued that it exists as a relationship between the perceiver and the perceived. Freud's theories and experiments in human psychology emphasized both the persistence of the past in shaping consciousness and unconsciousness, and the compulsion in human behavior to repeat. In 1903—the year before *Ulysses* is set—philosopher Henri Bergson published his *Introduction to Metaphysics*. It was Bergson's belief that mental life exists in the medium of time rather than space, and that mental life is characterized by constant movement and flux. The condition of human existence in time he termed "duration" or *durée*. For Bergson, time was the essence of life itself, and his metaphysics implied an ethical requirement to live and acquire knowledge of reality through intuitive experience of time. Freedom comes from our ability to integrate the past and the present (Kern 46). Bergson's ideas were highly influential in many circles, and affected shifts in understanding everything from political revolutions to historical methodology. The new narrative experiments in stream of consciousness and direct interior monologue fit well with his idea of *durée*, and the non-linear, constantly fluctuating movements of the mind through time. By the time Heidegger begins his unfinished studies of the relationship between Being and Time in the 1920s, the question he attempts to answer is whether Being actually *is* Time.

The subgenre of the twenty-four hour or day-long novel is the tale that modernism tells about time. The origination of the subgenre in the modernist period is the result of centuries of thinking about the nature of time and the nature of human existence in The

increasing willingness to think outside of absolutes and entertain the possibilities for subjectivity and transformation even in categories once thought to be unmoving and unchanging certainties changes the way people understand much more than time. It changes the way they understand thought, memory, history, consciousness, history, politics, government, psychology, travel, mortality, class, sex, race, religion, theology, geography, communication, science, and art. Then, it changes the way we are able to tell stories about life in this rapidly changing world.

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The following are five general hallmarks useful in defining the parameters and characteristics of the twenty-four hour or day-long novel as a subgenre.

1. The main action of the novel occurs within the timeframe of a day or approximately twenty-four hours, and is not merely a frame plot.

A frame plot encases the main action of a novel within another (and often contingent) story. Frequently the frame plot uses the trope of one character telling the story of the main action to another character. In this instance, the main action of the novel unfolds within the trope of a story being told. Famous examples of this include *Wuthering Heights* and *Absalom, Absalom!*. In the case of the twenty-four hour novel, however, the day-long timeframe of the novel pertains to the main action of the novel, and not to a frame plot. This is an important distinction for understanding how the twenty-four hour or day-long novel compresses the scope of a novel into the extremely limited timeframe. The defining characteristic of the subgenre is not that the main action may feasibly be related in the timeframe of a single day, but that the main action itself unfolds within the timeframe of a single day. In order to achieve the scope of a novel

within this limited temporality, the day-long novel must focus on the interior lives of its characters and the contingencies between them, as well as upon the background and characterization established by remembered experience.

2. The day-long or twenty-four hour novel relies upon interiority, and focuses on narrating the consciousness of one or several characters.

With this focus upon the interior lives of characters comes an emphasis on mimicking thought and consciousness. The non-linearity of these depictions increases the fragmentation of the narratives. Characterization is achieved through piecemeal accumulation of details, and plot and setting often unfold similarly. The modernist period during which the subgenre originated accounts both for this tendency towards fragmentation, and the origination of the stream of consciousness mode that enables the necessary interiority of the twenty-four hour or day-long novel.

3. The day-long or twenty-four hour timeframe provides the ordering structure in narratives that are often highly fragmented.

With the fragmentation of such traditional elements of the novel as plot, characterization, and setting and their compression into an extremely limited timeframe comes the necessity of finding some other way to stabilize and structure the narrative. T.S. Eliot famously identified the mythical structure of *Ulysses* as the ordering element of the novel, but I argue that it is the compressed timeframe itself that provides the structural stability of this paradigmatic twenty-four hour novel and others that follow. The idea of the day as a unit of time is familiar, traditional, and provides a ready metonymy for expanding the significance of the day's events and symbolism beyond its limited timeframe.

4. The compressed timeframe of the novel is metonymic.

The familiar and traditional idea of the day stands in for several different conceptions of time, from Time in general, to a lifetime, and such moments of significance as that of death, birth, transformation, orgasm, cataclysm, and epiphany. This metonymy is another important aspect of the novel's ability to compress the scope of the novel genre into the extremely limited temporality of the day-long timeframe. A day is representative of both much broader temporalities and those that are even more limited. As such, a day is capable of encompassing the many paradoxes of time, from mortality to memory to simultaneity. What might otherwise be far too mundane and quotidian to constitute the plot of a novel becomes the stuff of a philosophical contemplation of existence in time.

5. The proliferation and increasing speed of communications media during the early twentieth century enables a contingency, immediacy, and interconnectedness that is necessary to the dynamism and success of the twenty-four hour or day-long novel.

The combination of the innovation of stream of consciousness narrative and a multitude of technological innovations around the turn of the twentieth century helped to create a world ripe for being portrayed through the subgenre of the twenty-four hour novel. The automobile, the airplane, and the increasing speed of transportation in general connected people and parts of the world that had previously known little about one another. The increased speed of transportation increased the frequency and immediacy of print media, and the innovations of telephone, telegraph, cinema, and radio created a common cultural experience for those separated by great distances. The standardization

of time according to Greenwich Mean Time in 1884[5], and later Universal Time in 1928, meant that the daily act of personal and civil timekeeping served as a connection to parts and people of the world it never had before. All of these innovations play a part in the crafting of the day-long novel, where extremely internal narratives are connected to other narratives on an individual, city-wide, regional, national, global, and historical scale through the use of such technological innovations as automobile, subway, airplane, radio, cinema, and newspaper.

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The four novels examined in this dissertation are the first examples of the subgenre of the twenty-four hour or day-long novel. They are all modernist novels, and as such adhere in many ways to the tropes and trends of the modernist movement as well as the subgenre. Each addresses a unique cultural moment and point of cultural crisis in the story of the day. Each makes time both the medium and the subject of its tale. In all four examples the minutiae and detail of the daily is transmuted from the mundane monotony of ordinary life into the realm of significance. Just as days add up to years and lifetimes and epochs, the seemingly insignificant details of the quotidian accumulate a message and a meaning far beyond the measure of mere moments. In these small pieces of lives in time are the fragments in which exist whole worlds unto themselves.

[5] It is also important to note that the railroad was the original impetus for standardizing time, as railway timetables were all but useless without a standard mean time across geographical areas connected by rail.

## Chapter One: *Ulysses* and Possibilities: The Paradigmatic Twenty-four Hour Novel

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"Time present and time past
Are both perhaps present in time future,
And time future contained in time past.
If all time is eternally present
All time is unredeemable.
What might have been is an abstraction
Remaining a perpetual possibility
Only in a world of speculation.
What might have been and what has been
Point to one end, which is always present." – T.S. Eliot, "Burnt Norton," *Four Quartets*

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In what is perhaps the most famous of twentieth century novels, James Joyce compresses the scale, detail, and magnitude of the epic genre into less than twenty-four hours. In the *Odyssey* of Homer from which Joyce derives his title, it takes the epic hero a total of twenty years to make his cyclical journey home again from the Trojan War. Leopold Bloom's epic day in Dublin takes about that many hours. In eighteen episodes roughly drawn from stages of Odysseus's journey, Bloom makes his away around the turn-of-the-century city, from his front door at 7 Eccles Street and back again. Published in 1922, Joyce's day-long novel is the earliest (in composition, publication, and setting), and the other modernist examples examined in the following chapters owe an undoubted debt to Joyce's project and premise. Virginia Woolf was reading *Ulysses* as she began to write *Mrs. Dalloway*, and critics (both literary and moral) of Nathan Asch's *Pay Day* were quick to recognize the similarities between the two novels[6]. The scope of Joyce's

[6] Because Richard Wright's *Lawd Today!* was written in the 1930s but not published until 1963, critics did not have the opportunity to observe the similarity in premise between Joyce's and Wright's novels until much later in the century. While some has been written about what is often referred to as this early

project is part of what sets it apart from its successors in the subgenre he founded—by taking the largest and most comprehensive of narrative genres, combining it with the modernist novel, and compressing the whole thing into the timeframe of a single day, Joyce's day-long novel is melding genres, innovating a narrative style, and writing literary history in its typically 600-plus pages.

Set on June 16, 1904 (a day important to Joyce for symbolic reasons from his own life), *Ulysses* establishes the trend of selecting a very specific date for a day-long novel. Whereas Richard Wright and Nathan Asch chose the specific dates for their day-long novels for purposes of historical symbolism and historical events, Joyce's choice of a day was nonetheless meticulously researched for historical accuracy if not for historical significance. In many ways, Bloom's day in Dublin is very ordinary—a weekday in which he gets up in the morning, attends a funeral, goes about his work, befriends a troubled young man, and returns home to his wife at the end of the day. It is the ordinariness of Bloom's day as well as the fact that it is only a single day that makes Joyce's choice of the epic genre for the novel's frame a commentary on the significance and speed of modern life.

Bloom's Telemachus-like son figure and mirror in the novel is Stephen Dedalus, recently returned to Dublin from Paris and, before that, from the pages of Joyce's earlier novel, *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1914). Stephen's artistic sensibilities and erudite ruminations set him apart from his older and much more down-to-earth counterpart, but also make our glimpses into his thought processes glimpses into a highly

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'apprentice stage' in Wright's career, the body of his letters and manuscripts from this period have not been published.

philosophical if esoteric mind. When Stephen Dedalus thinks of the nature of time it is in predictably obscure and arcane terms:

> Fabled by the daughters of memory. And yet it was in some way if not as memory fabled it. A phrase, then, of impatience, thud of Blake's wings of excess. I hear the ruin of all space, shattered glass and toppling masonry, and time one livid final flame. What's left us then?... (*U* 20)

Stephen's thoughts constitute a philosophical meditation on the nature of time, memory, and history. By contrast, Bloom's meditations on similar themes are much more closely connected to the world around him and the events and circumstances of the day:

> I was happier then. Or was that I? Or am I now I? Twentyeight I was. She twentythree. When we left Lombard street west something changed. Could never like it again after Rudy. Can't bring back time. Like holding water in your hand. Would you go back to then? Just beginning then. Would you? Are you not happy in your home you poor little naughty boy? Wants to sew on buttons for me. I must answer. Write it in the library. (*U* 137)

By setting the streams of Bloom and Stephen's consciousness side by side in the novel, Joyce crafts a contrapuntal commentary on the day in Dublin. The differences and similarities between the two men and the ways in which they see and understand the same day lived in the same city creates a composite and highly relative picture of the day, its events, and the time and space in which they take place.

Although it is set in 1904, *Ulysses* was composed during the First World War and the years most immediately following it. Of the four novels studied in this project, it is the one most distant in time from the date of its setting to the date of its composition and

publication. As such it is a particularly interesting example of a historical novel. Couched in all of its stylistic, narrative, and generic innovation is an examination of a time and place not long past that is nonetheless rapidly disappearing from the world. Dublin as Joyce knew it when he expatriated in 1904 was not the same place as Dublin when *Ulysses* was finally published in 1922—not least because of the events of Easter 1916 and its aftermath. *Ulysses* is a novel documenting a day in the history of a colonized city, but is written from the vantage-point and with the historical perspective of one who knows it is documenting a city on the verge of becoming the capitol of a young nation. It is a novel written between colonial and postcolonial moments, in nationalist time—the time period during which a nation is conceived as such and eventually born as a nation in its own right.

Leopold Bloom and Stephen Dedalus are the clearest doubles in the novel, a father-son pairing who act as both mirrors and foils to each other's characters. The examples given above of the differing currents in their streams of consciousness is analogous to the ways in which they approach the issues of time, history, and memory that confront each of them during this day. Stephen Dedalus is a history teacher instructing young boys in the facts of ancient battles and wars as he wrangles with his guilt over the death of his mother, and Leopold Bloom is an ad salesman and amateur astronomer trying to make sense of parallax as he avoids confronting his wife's infidelity and the loss of his son. For Dedalus, time becomes a "room of the infinite possibilities"—a play on Aristotelian metaphysics in the constant presence of past and future in every moment. For Bloom, time also becomes subject to the principles of parallax, and Joyce applies the many facets of parallactic measurement to his narrative technique as a way of

giving the story of a day the scope of an epic. However, it is the temporal experience of Bloom's wife, Molly, that holds the clearest illustration of the day-long novel paradigm Joyce is establishing with *Ulysses*. Her resoundingly affirmative ending to the novel rounds out the parallactic views of Molly's complex and enigmatic character as it is viewed by many different perspectives throughout the novel. The bedroom from which she hardly moves during the hours of June 16, 1904 becomes its own "room of the infinite possibilities" in which Joyce ends—and, in many ways, begins—his foundational work in a new temporal method for the novel.

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Episode Two in the Telemachiad, "Nestor," contains the famous Dalkey school-room episode in which we sit in on the end of the history class Stephen teaches. In the following short passage Stephen is considering, as he so often does, the nature of time and history:

> Had Pyrrhus not fallen by a beldam's hand in Argos or Julius Caesar not been knifed to death? They are not to be thought away. Time has branded them and fettered they are lodged in the room of the infinite possibilities they have ousted. But can those have been possible seeing that they never were? Or was that only possible which came to pass? Weave, weaver of the wind.
>
> --Tell us a story, sir.
>
> --Oh, do, sir, a ghosstory. (*U* 21)

The story Stephen chooses to have the boys read is an interesting choice for a "ghosstory"—he has them read from John Milton's *Lycidas* of 1638, a pastoral elegy

written after the drowning death of Milton's college classmate, Edward King. Probably not the thrilling tale his students had in mind, but it is a telling choice, nonetheless. Commemorating the death of a fellow young man, Milton's elegy (as most elegies do) recognizes the problem of mortality, the futility of human accomplishment, and the meaning of all of the unfulfilled promise in a short life. But the young poet Milton departs from the traditional elegiac contemplation of mortality and death to also make this elegy an announcement of his poetic ambition. The mastery of the pastoral elegy is a key step in Milton's ascension to the throne of national poet, strategically situated between the lyric and the epic in the program for becoming a great poet in the tradition of Virgil and Spenser. Like Milton, Stephen is preparing himself for the vocation of national poet, a young man on the verge of answering his calling to the role of artist. Also like Milton, who is offering a new vision of the pastoral genre in *Lycidas*, Joyce is offering a new vision of the epic—significantly, the final step in the poet's progress—in *Ulysses*. Milton's new vision of the pastoral introduces considerable discord into the traditionally harmonious genre. The songs of the shepherd are constantly interrupted, nature offers symbols of death and waste, the good perish while the evil prosper, and the drowned Lycidas's body can't be retrieved for a proper funeral. In Milton's version of the pastoral elegy, the harmony of the genre is restored to Lycidas in the perfect pastoral setting of heaven, and only there does he finally get to sing his song. The part of the elegy Stephen's students recite is from the poem's coda, the last twenty-eight lines in which the raised Lycidas sings in heaven. After he completes his song, the elegy ends with these lines, which the boys do not recite:

> Thus sang the uncouth swain to th'oaks and rills,

> While the still morn went out with sandals gray;
> He touched the tender stops of various quills,
> With eager thought warbling his Doric lay:
> And now the sun stretched out all the hills,
> And now was dropped into the western bay;
> At last he rose, and twitched his mantle blue:
> Tomorrow to fresh woods, and pastures new. (Milton, lines 186-193)

Milton's new vision of the pastoral elegy ends with the setting of the sun in the west, looking forward with hope represented by the singing shepherd's blue mantle to another day and "pastures new." As a significant parallel to Joyce's twenty-four hour novel, Lycidas's song has taken one full day to sing.

In Joyce's new vision of the epic, Stephen is a young artist working out his artistic vision and its implications. The figure of the drowned man is recurrent throughout the novel, including the drowned man whose body is being retrieved off Sandycove, so the story of *Lycidas* is a timely one for the events of the day. But Stephen's students specifically request a "ghosstory." For Stephen, who is haunted by the persistent memory of the mother who died fifty-one weeks ago, it may be that the story of any death or mourning is ghostly enough. However, the boys requesting their teacher tell them a "ghosstory" may already be in one themselves. As Robert Spoo points out in "'Nestor' and the Nightmare: The Presence of the Great War in *Ulysses*," the deaths of these young boys on the fields of France in a just a few years may be one of the many ghosts haunting the school-room in Dalkey. It is likely that Joyce completed 'Nestor' in Switzerland in

November of 1917, in the middle of Europe during some of the darkest days of World War I. As Spoo points out:

> …the boys Stephen teaches in 1904—most them from well-to-do families with English or Scottish names like Cochrane, Talbot, and Armstrong—will be officer material in ten years. They were being killed as Joyce created their fictive counterparts. Just as the 1904 setting contains the horror of 1917, so the boys in Deasy's school carry their future tragedy within them, implicitly and potentially. (Spoo 113)

As Stephen prods the boys for details of ancient battles recounted in the "gorescarred" history book and then sends them out for a hockey game described in violent and battle-like terms, it may be that the young artist is considering his ambition not only in the light of bloody and often Pyrrhic history, but also in the light of a roomful of boys who, like Lycidas and Milton's classmate Edward King, will die with the unfulfilled promise of their youth.

The implicitness and potentiality in the futures of Stephen's young students is both part of the day-long temporal frame of the novel and Stephen's contemplation of history in the passage. As Spoo again points out:

> Joyce could only gesture at such explications of the implicit, since he had restricted himself, on the naturalistic level, to the narrative of a single day. *Ulysses* is committed to symbolically intensive rather than temporally extensive revelations of plot and character, and it relies upon symbol and theme to gesture toward potentialities when character development is forced to recede. The narrative present therefore becomes saturated with

> the past and the future, in some cases overdetermined by them, so that the present naturalistic moment is never quite itself and cannot be taken at face value. Stephen's students are both hockey players and infantrymen, schoolboys and victims. (Spoo 113-114)

The saturation of the present with the past and future is what makes the 24-hour novel work as a temporal frame and as a subgenre. I would argue, however, that it is not simply a reliance upon the gestures of symbols and themes toward potentiality that allows the day-long novel to expand beyond its limited temporal frame, but rather the intensity of the human experience of memory and of time as expanded upon in the narrative portrayal of consciousness. No moment, naturalistic or otherwise, is ever quite itself or can be taken at face value, whether one is considering a moment in *Ulysses* or any other.

The saturation of the present with the past and future is also what tortures and haunts Stephen, and what he contemplates in the passage from 'Nestor' quoted earlier. When Stephen considers what might have been "Had Pyrrhus not fallen by a beldam's hand in Argos or Julius Caesar not been knifed to death?" he questions the potentiality inherent in two very dramatic historical events. He questions their potentiality in spite of their historical factuality. "They are not to be thought away," he thinks, as though to remind himself that their existence in historical fact, a fact for which he daily drills his students, does not undo their existence in the same kind of saturated present in which he himself now exists. "Time has branded them and they are fettered"—their saturated present is now the past fact that saturates Stephen's present, and they are marked and bound by their existence in the particular circumstances of their lives in historical time—but their branding and fettering reminds Stephen that they were not always so marked and

so constrained. Pyrrhus and Caesar remind Stephen that every event, every action—every day—bears a potentiality but also a profound consequence.

Pyrrhus and Caesar are "bound" and "fettered" by time, but that is not the end of the sentence, or of Stephen's reflections: "Time has branded them and they are fettered they are lodged in the room of the infinite possibilities they have ousted." This is the point at which Stephen's thinking—or Joyce's writing of Stephen's thinking—both invokes and takes artistic liberty with the philosophy of Aristotle. Stephen's "room of the infinite possibilities they have ousted" is drawn from Aristotle's *Metaphysics* and the antithesis of "potential" and "actuality." In Aristotle's discussion of this antithesis, potential is dynamic—it can move and effect movement. Actuality is static—it cannot move, or, as Don Gifford points out, be "dislodged." As Fran O'Rourke explains in her transcription of Joyce's collection of Aristotle quotations acquired by the National Library of Ireland in 2002, Joyce blurs (perhaps deliberately) the philosophical difference between "potential" and "possibility." Simply put, all potentialities are possible, but not all possibilities are potentialities. Joyce substitutes "possibility" for "potential" in Stephen's contemplation, O'Rourke suggests because "possibility" sounds so much better. At any rate, "possibility" is Stephen's word for "potential" in this Aristotelian arrangement. At any given moment, there are virtually innumerable "possibilities" (or Aristotle's "potentialities") for what will occur in the next moment. Only one of those possibilities/potentialities will become actuality—the rest are, as Stephen puts it, "ousted." And so we are all branded and fettered by time, with every passing moment, action, and decision.

Or are we? “But can those have been possible seeing that they never were? Or was that only possible which came to pass?” Stephen asks himself. This is another question derived from Aristotle, this time from the *Poetics*, and another antithesis—this time between poetry and history:

> …the poet’s function is to describe, not the thing that has happened, but a kind of thing that might happen, i.e., what is possible as being probable or necessary. The distinction between historian and poet…consists really in this, that the one describes the thing that has been, and the other a kind of thing that might be. (Aristotle 8:4-9:2)

This is an interesting distinction, especially for a young artist teaching history. In this antithesis, the historian would seem to be the one who is bound and fettered by time, limited to “the thing that has been” in what he is permitted to describe. But the poet may be seen to be bound and fettered in the opposite way—limited to the possible “thing that might be” and not the “thing that has happened.” The Dalkey school-room episode in itself is a sufficient example for illustrating the artificiality of this distinction. But what this passage of Stephen’s musings on history illustrates is the dominant role of potentiality not only in the work of the poet, but also in the work of the historian. Pyrrhus and Caesar may be bound and fettered by their historical existence in time, but they are still, significantly, “lodged in the room of the infinite possibilities they have ousted.” Their historical existence is a living, evolving room in the house of history, a room where young men like Stephen still enter and subjectively consider both the implicit freedom and the implicit slavery of human existence in time. Even the long-dead live on in the room of their ousted possibilities, affecting the potentiality of the still-living.

Stephen ends this collection of his thoughts with a phrase recalling the ancient Irish tradition that connects the act of weaving to the act of prophecy: “Weave, weaver of the wind.” Turning from Greek philosophy to native tradition, from the paralyzing awareness of the import of every choice and action, to the idea that there may be some who can see through time and beyond potentiality to future actuality—what will be and not only what has been—Stephen considers the possibility of a sacred intervention into the human experience of time, a foretelling of what our room of the infinite possibilities we will oust looks like. He is then interrupted by his students clamoring to be told a “ghosstory,” but this sudden shift in his consideration of the nature of time and history reveals a possibility in Stephen’s room that he has not yet ousted—the possibility that there are perspectives and traditions that can see through the present saturated with the past and future to the future beyond it.

Robert Spoo takes issue with T.S. Eliot’s famous pronouncement of myth as the ordering force controlling the chaos of the world Joyce created in *Ulysses*:

> The more we recognize the variety and complexity of historical textures in *Ulysses*, the harder it is to accept unquestioningly Eliot’s view that Joyce’s “mythical method” provides a way “of controlling, of ordering, of giving a shape and significance to the immense panorama of futility and anarchy which is contemporary history.” Such a method would require a static conception of history in which present and past are distinct from one another and observable by an ordering consciousness (a mind “manipulating a continuous parallel between contemporaneity and antiquity”). But if past and present, or history and not-yet-history, are

> observable, then from what vantage, at what remove, are they to be observed? How can we get sufficiently outside the futility and anarchy to bring history and tradition to bear upon them? How, in short, can we rouse ourselves from the nightmare of history in order to begin to apprehend other, saner perspectives? (Spoo 120)

The sanity of any perspective aside, this is an apt assessment of the complexity and dynamism of history and its function in *Ulysses*. I would answer Spoo here by suggesting that in Joyce's epic novel the "vantage" or "remove" from which "past and present," "history and not-yet-history" are to be observed is the present moment itself—a present saturated with past and future, a present equally affected by both actuality and potentiality. In *Ulysses,* Joyce has used the limited temporality of the 24-hour or day-long timeframe to create a "room of the infinite possibilities." It is a single room, a single day, but it is full—saturated—with past and future, actuality and potentiality, history and not-yet-history. As the young artist and history teacher turns these reflections over in his mind he is surrounded by the evidence of such saturation in his young students. As he has them recite the day-long song of the young, drowned shepherd, Lycidas, Stephen hears the "ghosstory" being lived out in every moment of every day—the constant, haunting presence of past and future.

Eliot's well-known assessment of *Ulysses* and myth has served to obscure the more essential temporal structure of a novel that establishes an important paradigm and subgenre. The method Joyce employs in *Ulysses* is not strictly mythical—it is primarily temporal. The timeframe of a single day unifies and structures a highly fragmented narrative, drawing together and clarifying the numerous perspectives and styles

represented in the novel through a limited, compressed, and familiar frame. The quotidian is traditional in many of the same ways myth is—repetitive, relative, and so full of time in its expansiveness and evolution that it is, in a sense, timeless. The timeframe of a daylong novel offers time as the ultimate mythical construct and method. Time is given shape and universality in the idea of a day—a natural phenomenon shaped into a meaningful unit through limited human experience and perception of it. A day is simultaneously the most temporary and most eternal experience of time—passing so quickly, but ceaselessly repeating, and experienced by all the living simultaneously and yet in such a diversity and relativity of experiences and perceptions. The possibilities for a day are even greater than their number.

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In their brief but very influential 1965 essay, "Astronomical Allusions, Their Meaning and Purpose, in *Ulysses*," Mark E. Littmann and Charles A. Schweighauser define "parallax" as "a trigonometric distance-measuring system whereby the revolution of the earth furnishes a slightly different angle for observing a star and thus permits distance measurement" (Littman, Schweighauser 245). Avrom Fleishman in his 1967 paper, "Science in Ithaca," further explains the principle as "the degree to which the star's position varies in relation to other stars as our point of observation changes with the rotation of the earth. Two bodies seen from one position will be in a different spatial relation from that taken from another position, and when the angles of these observations are measured, the distances between these bodies can be calculated by trigonometry" (Fleishman 380). These are specifically definitions of terrestrial parallactic measurement.

A more generalized definition of the term is offered by the Oxford English Dictionary as "the effect whereby the position or direction of an object appears to differ when viewed from different positions, e.g. through the viewfinder and the lens of a camera" (OED). This definition relates parallax to the idea of stereoscopic vision, which Myra Glazer Schotz explains as "the two-and-a-half inch separation between the eyes [that] means that the right eye and the left, [from] different points of observation, perceive different aspects of the 'same' reality. These two views are fused by the brain so that rather than seeing double, we see one image in stereoscopic depth" (Schotz 489). We owe our ability to perceive depth to the principle of parallax at work through our eyes and brains.

Parallax was discovered by the Babylonians and used to calculate land distances. The Greeks further refined the use of parallax for measurement of celestial and terrestrial distances, measuring the circumference of the earth within 200 miles of accuracy (Carter 90). Royal Astronomer James Bradley further explored the principles of stellar parallax in the eighteenth century, and the nineteenth century saw the exploration of solar parallax that spawned a kind of national rivalry and vociferous public debate analogous to the twentieth century race to the moon (Fleishman 380). Amateur astronomers like James Joyce and his character Leopold Bloom would have certainly been cognizant of these astronomical explorations and controversies taking place around the turn of the twentieth century.

Many critics have recognized Joyce's use of parallax as a structural principle in *Ulysses*. In her essay, "Parallax as a Metaphor for the Structure of *Ulysses*," Barbara Stevens Heusel explains that Joyce's use of the two main perspectives of Bloom and

Stephen results in a kind of stereoscopic perception of depth for the reader of Joyce's novel:

> The parallactic phenomenon (eight literal references clustered in six places) simulates the experience of the reader as he sees one visual field and then another; it makes concrete Joyce's method of subtly forcing the reader to synthesize the shifting perspectives. If a reader has the ability to remember Joyce's use of the imagery pattern in earlier chapters, he sees three-dimensional views throughout the reading process. Since Joyce's method is ambiguous, we never know for certain the outcome of the meeting between Stephen and Bloom, but we are convinced that the novel by its very structure reveals the difficulty of perception and, therefore, the complexity of viewing life. The significance of Stephen's meeting Bloom is that the reader experiences "depth perception." Joyce's strategic placing of the parallax images suggests that the chief points of view, Stephen's and Bloom's, are subtly superimposed until the urination scene in which literal convergence of their creations, water, foreshadows a fuller vision of life. (Heusel 135)

Heusel argues here that parallax is a metaphor for the kind of reading Joyce's requires of his readers. In this metaphor, the synthesis of perspectives comes about for the reader in the same way Schotz explains how the views of two separate eyes are synthesized into one stereoscopic vision by the human brain. The result of this kind of reading experience is ostensibly a perspective of greater intensity, depth, and realism; a kind of multi-dimensional reading, that for Heusel reaches full development when the perspectives of

Stephen and Bloom are united in Episode 17, "Ithaca." Other critics have seen the principle of parallax as a kind of ordering method akin to T.S. Eliot's famous prescription in his 1923 essay, "Ulysses, Order and Myth," where myth is "simply a way of controlling, of ordering, of giving and shape and a significance to the immense panorama of futility and anarchy which is contemporary history" (Eliot 177). Barbara DiBernard takes this view, and in "Parallax as Parallel, Paradigm, and Paradox in *Ulysses*," explains that "Joyce used [parallax] as a structural element when it suited his purposes, much as he used the *Odyssey*" (DiBernard 69).

Joyce's use of parallax in *Ulysses* is an essential element in its success as a paradigmatic twenty-four hour or day-long novel. Joyce uses the ideas of parallax to combine the principles of scientific, astrological, and personal knowledge into a model of novelistic epistemology[7] that mirrors the use of the day as a temporal frame for the action of the novel. The defining limits of perspective become revelatory when they are multiple and combined through the principles of parallax, and the defining limits of a single day can accomplish the same kind of revelation when they combine a multiplicity of perspectives, stories, memories, dialogues, and—particularly in the case of *Ulysses*—styles. These parallactic principles at work in the novel bring the story of a day into the scope of epic.

The first of six explicit uses of the term "parallax" in the novel is in Episode 8, "Lestrygonians," as Bloom wanders about Dublin during the lunch hour. Turning from the troublesome possibility that his wife's paramour, Blazes Boylan, could have a

[7] "Novelistic epistemology" is a term I have coined to refer to the systems and theories of knowledge that apply specifically to novelistic narratives.

venereal disease, Bloom raises his eyes and sees the ball on The Ballast Office dropped to indicate 1:00 p.m. Greenwich time[8]:

> Mr. Bloom moved forward, raising his troubled eyes. Think no more about that. After one. Timeball on the ballastoffice is down. Dunsink time. Fascinating little book that is of sir Robert Ball's. Parallax. I never exactly understood. There's a priest. Could ask him. Par it's Greek: parallel, parallax. Met him pike hoses she called it I told her about the transmigration. O rocks!" (*U* 126)

Sir Robert Ball's 1885 book, *The Story of the Heavens* is later revealed in Episode 17, "Ithaca," to be a volume in Bloom's personal library[9]. An extremely popular book, "a layman's textbook of astronomy," it was over five-hundred pages and full of elaborate illustrations (O'Connell 300). In "Bloom and the Royal Astronomer," Daniel O'Connell explains that Sir Robert Ball was a Dublin native and the Royal Astronomer during the time of *Ulysses*. The preface to Ball's *The Story of the Heavens* is dated, "Observatory, Dunsink, Co. Dublin, 12th May, 1886," one likely reason for Bloom's connection between "Dunsink" and the "little book of Sir Robert Ball's." O'Connell also points out that if Bloom "never exactly understood" parallax, it was through no fault of Ball's, whose explanation is "lucid, and illustrated" (O'Connell 300). It is not uncommon for Bloom's contemplation of the various scientific principles that often consume him to be a

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[8] Don Gifford explains that The Ballast Office was the headquarters of Dublin Harbour, and that its clock was controlled by a direct wire to the Dunsink Observatory. The ball Bloom sees was set to drop at 1:00 p.m. Greenwich time. Dunsink time was the standard time of Ireland, twenty-five minutes behind Greenwich time. Bloom can't see The Ballast Office clock from where he stands, so he wrongly calculates the time to be after 1:00, when it is actually closer to 12:35 (Gifford 160). He later corrects himself.

[9] In "Bloom and the Royal Astronomer," Daniel O'Connell explains how Charles Stewart Parnell also had a passionate interest in astronomy, and in her 1914 two-volume biography, *Charles Stewart Parnell—His Love Story and Political Life*, Kitty O'Shea revealed that he avidly read Ball's books: "'Finding how he devoured the little book of Sir Robert Ball's, I got several of the latter's interesting works for him.'" O'Connell suggests that this is another "among the many Bloom-Parnell analogies" (O'Connell 301-302).

bit confused and garbled, but his contemplation of parallax in particular is connected with his contemplation of his wife's adulterous behavior. His confusion over the exact meaning of parallax reminds him of the conversation he had with Molly earlier in the day, in which he attempted to explain "metempsychosis" and "transmigration" to her at her request, along with her frustrated exclamation at the complexity of his explanations: "O rocks!" The idea of parallax only distract him from Molly for a few lines before his thoughts return to her. Just a few pages later in "Lestrygonians," Bloom's thoughts return to parallax, and are abruptly sidetracked by more troublesome thoughts of Molly's infidelities with Boylan (*U* 8:560-593; 136-137). The idea of parallax seems to provide only brief distraction from the thoughts that dog him through the city. His confusion over the term's exact meaning dogs him as well; a parallel to his unwillingness to confirm and confront Molly's adultery.

When the term "parallax" returns in Episode 14, "Oxen of the Sun," it has acquired more threatening overtones and some apocalyptic imagery.

> "The voices blend and fuse in clouded silence: silence that is the infinite of space: and swiftly, silently the soul is wafted over regions of cycles of generations that have lived. A region where grey twilight ever descends, never falls on wide sagegreen pasturefields, shedding her dusk, scattering a perennial dew of stars. She follows her mother with ungainly steps, a mare leading her fillyfoal. Twilight phantoms are they, yet moulded in prophetic grace of structure, slim shapely haunches, a supple tendonous neck, the meek apprehensive skull. They fade, as sad phantoms: all is gone. Agendath is a waste land, a home of screechowls and the sandblind

> upupa. Netaim, the golden, is no more. And on the highway of the clouds they come, muttering thunder of rebellion, the ghosts of beasts. Huuh! Hark! Huuh! Parallax stalks behind and goads them, the lancinating lightnings of whose brow are scorpions. Elk and yak, the bulls of Bashan and of Babylon, mammoth and mastodon, they come trooping to the sunken sea, Lacus Mortis. Ominous revengeful zodiacal host! They moan, passing upon the clouds, horned and capricorned, the trumpeted with the tusked, the lionmaned, the giantantlered, snouter and crawler, rodent, ruminant and pachyderm, all their moving moaning multitude, murderers of the sun." (*U* 338)

In this passage, parallax becomes Parallax, a herdsman who "stalks behind and goads" the "ghosts of beasts" through the omen-filled wasteland of Agendath Netaim—a Zionist farm colony. The "ghosts of beasts" Parallax herds recalls the sacred cows of Helios, killed by Odysseus's men in *The Odyssey*, who begin to haunt their killers the moment they are dead. The "elk and yak, the bulls of Bashan and of Babylon, mammoth and mastodon," among the numbers of these ghosts of beasts, are Biblical beasts of prophesized ruin for ancient civilizations. Don Gifford points out in his notes on this passage that Parallax comes under the eighth sign of the zodiac, Scorpio, the sign of "intensity of feeling, crusading, bold adventurer…shrewd in attack,…[whose] weapon is the tongue" (Gifford quoting Alexandra Kayhle, *Astrology Made Practical* [Hollywood, Calif., 1967], p. 44). The Odysseus-like figure moves his ghostly herds of animals prophesizing apocalypse and ruin through what was once a promised land, displacing the

gentler vision of a mare and her "fillyfoal" of dusk and bringing thunder and lightning as "murderers of the sun."

This ominous vision of an anthromorphic parallax comes in the episode of *Ulysses* that takes place in the National Maternity Hospital, "Oxen of the Sun," as Mina Purefoy finally delivers a son after three days of hard labor. It is also the episode where Bloom and Stephen are finally united, after passing each other without interacting a few times earlier in the day. Just as the Purefoys are finally delivered a son and heir in this episode, Bloom is here finally united with his figurative son and heir in Stephen. The apocalyptic imagery of the previous passage is preceded by Bloom's memories of being a young son of his father and his realization that he has no son to carry on his name and memory: "No, Leopold. Name and memory solace thee not. That youthful illusion of thy strength was taken from thee. There is none now to be for Leopold, what Leopold was for Rudolph" (*U* 338). After these words, Bloom finds himself as a soul "wafted over regions of cycles of generations that have lived," where he sees the mother and offspring replaced by harbingers of ruin in the promised land of Zion.

Significantly, the herdsman Parallax comes in the skies with his "ominous revengeful zodiacal host." The principles of astronomical parallax that allow for the measurement of stars and planets and their movements as well as terrestrial distances are combined here with the prophetic principles of astrology. The science of parallax meets the prophecy of parallax[10] in a figure that unites the boldness and passion of the

[10] The science of parallax meets the prophecy of parallax again in Episode 15, "Circe," when parallax appears as spoken by the vision of Bloom's grandfather, Lipoti Virag: "Meretricious finery to deceive the eye. Observe the attention to details of dustspecks. Never put on tomorrow what you can wear today. Parallax! (with a nervous twitch of the head) Did you hear my brain go snap? Pollysyllabax!" (*U* 418). Stuart Gilbert points out that the spiritualist medium Mrs. Leonora Piper was known for saying "Did you hear something snap in my head?" and twitching oddly when she came out of a trance (Gifford 493).

Odyssean adventurer and the fearful vengeance of the apocalyptic horseman. This unification happens in the troubled vision of Bloom, himself an Odyssean adventurer, who is realizing that his Telemachus is dead, his homeland is lost, and his place in the "cycle of generations that have lived" is empty. The empirical, scientific knowledge provided by parallax and the prophetic, astrological knowledge provided by parallax both confirm this.

In the passage following this ruinous vision, the herd of Parallax continues across the sky until it is replaced by another vision:

> Onward to the dead sea they tramp to drink, unslaked and with horrible gulpings, the salt somnolent inexhaustible flood. And the equine portent grows again, magnified in the deserted heavens, nay to heaven's own magnitude, till it looms, vast, over the house of Virgo. And lo, wonder of metempsychosis, it is she, the everlasting bride, harbinger of the daystar, the bride, ever virgin. It is she, Martha, thou lost one, Millicent, the young, the dear, the radiant. How serene does she now arise, a queen among the Pleiades, in the penultimate antelucan hour, shod in sandals of bright gold, coifed with a veil of what do you call it gossamer. It floats, it flows about her starborn flesh and loose it streams, emerald, sapphire, mauve and heliotrope, sustained on currents of the cold interstellar wind, winding, coiling, simply swirling, writhing in the skies a mysterious writing till, after a myriad metamorphoses of symbol, it blazes, Alpha, a ruby and triangled sign upon the forehead of Taurus. (*U* 338).

The maternal vision of mare and "fillyfoal" returns in the "equine portent" of this passage, and is united with the constellation of Pegasus—the symbol of poetic inspiration. Don Gifford points out that Pegasus would have been visible in Dublin around 11:00 p.m. on 16 June 1904, and that as it rose higher in the sky, Virgo would decline. As Virgo declines towards dawn it becomes Bloom's daughter, Milly, until Taurus rises just before dawn. Taurus is the zodiac sign symbolic of artistic consciousness, love, and money.

As an aspiring poet, Stephen Dedalus is associated with both Pegasus and Taurus, both prominent, rising constellations on the night of 16 June 1904. As the virginal daughter, Milly becomes symbolic of the Virgin Mary, who obviously had an important role in the advent of Christ, also a long-awaited son whose birth marks the dawn of a new day. As the first star of Taurus—Alpha Tauri[11]—rises it marks the beginning of the dawn. This passage marks the end of Bloom's vision, and the following paragraph turns to a narration focused on Stephen. This final episode in Bloom's vision suggests the realization that his place in the "cycle of generations that have lived" is not empty, that his homeland is not a wasteland, and that Telemachus lives. Milly—though a daughter and not a proper heir as the lost son Rudy would have been—fills the gap between Bloom's sons. As Pegasus and Taurus rise and Virgo sets, Stephen comes into his place

[11] Alpha Tauri, or Aldebaran, the first star of the constellation Taurus, is associated again with the principle of parallax in Episode 15, "Circe":

CHRIS CALLINAN
What is the parallax of the subsolar epileptic of Aldebaran?
BLOOM
Pleased to hear from you, Chris. K.11 (*U* 398)

Don Gifford points out in his note on this passage that "the correct answer to Callinan's question would have been 0.048 seconds of arc…But the K is also strangely relevant; in the Harvard system of classification of stars by temperature (1890), K would correctly identify Aldebaran as a somewhat cooler than average star" (Gifford 479).

as poet, artist, and long-awaited son who arrives in Bloom's life not long before the dawn of a new day—and in the very next paragraph.

Parallax makes one final appearance in the novel in Episode 17, "Ithaca." Bloom has taken the drunken Stephen home with him to 7 Eccles Street, and after some cocoa and conversation, the two urinate side by side in the yard and then walk around to the front of the house to look up at the stars. Bloom indulges his propensity for fatherly instruction with a little lesson in astronomy:

> What spectacle confronted them when they, first the host, then the guest, emerged silently, doubly dark, from obscurity by a passage from the rere of the house into the penumbra of the garden?
>
> The heaventree of stars hung with humid nightblue fruit.
>
> With what meditations did Bloom accompany his demonstration to his companion of various constellations?
>
> Meditations of evolution increasingly vaster: of the moon invisible in incipient lunation, approaching perigee: of the infinite lattignous scintillating uncondensed milky way, discernable by daylight by an observer placed at the lower end of a cylindrical vertical shaft 5000 ft deep sunk from the surface towards the centre of the earth: of Sirius (alpha in Canis Maior) to lightyears (57,000,000,000,000 miles) distant and in volume 900 times the dimension of our planet: of Arcturus: of the

> precession of equinoxes: of Orion with belt and sextuple sun theta and nebula in which 100 of our solar systems could be contained: of moribund and of nascent new stars such as Nova in 1901: of our system plunging towards the constellation of Hercules: of the parallax of parallactic drift of socalled fixed stars, in reality evermoving wanderers from immeasurably remote eons to infinitely remote futures in comparison with which the years, threescore and then, of allotted human life formed a parenthesis of infinitesimal brevity. (*U* 573)

In "All the Dishevelled Wandering Stars: Astronomical Symbolism in Ithaca," David Chinitz points out that as Stephen remembers the lines of W.B. Yeats's poem, "Who Goes with Fergus?"[12] again and again throughout the day, he always manages to omit the last line's reference to "all the dishevelled wandering stars":

> Since each of the final lines of "Fergus" invokes one of the four elements, Stephen's omission of the fire may be seen as a symptom of incompleteness, and of artistic deficiency most of all. Somehow he must achieve a full complement of the elements; but there has yet been no interchange with Bloom, and the stars have yet to make their entrance.

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[12] Who will go drive with Fergus now,
And pierce the deep wood's woven shade,
And dance upon the level shore?
Young man, lift up your russet brow,
And lift your tender eyelids, maid,
And brood on hopes and fears no more.

And no more turn aside and brood
Upon love's bitter mystery;
For Fergus rules the brazen cars,
And rules the shadows of the wood,
And the white breast of the dim sea
And all the dishevelled wandering stars. (Yeats 43)

> They await the Odyssean climax of "Ithaca," for which Joyce almost literally holds his fire. (Chinitz 433)

As seen in the conclusion to Bloom's vision just before the advent of Stephen in Episode 14, "Oxen of the Sun," one reason for Stephen's unconscious omission of the fiery stars from Yeats's poem may be because he himself is the alpha of the rising constellation. The stars once thought to be stationary in the heavens—"socalled fixed stars"—have been revealed by the same astronomers who developed the principles of astronomical parallax to be "in reality evermoving wanderers from immeasurably remote eons to infinitely remote futures." The wanderings of human adventurers like Odysseus and Bloom and Stephen are measured in years rather than eons—or, in the case of a novel like *Ulysses*, in the "infinitesimal brevity" of mere hours. The movements of both the stars and these human wanderers are the result of a kind of "parallactic drift"—the apparent movement of a body (such as a star) as a result of the movement of the body from which it is viewed (such as the earth). Viewed from the shifting perspectives of novel time, the wandering of Bloom and Stephen through this single day in Dublin take on the magnitude of an epic adventure.

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Perhaps the most pertinent example of the principle of parallactic drift at work in the novel is in the parallactic relationship that exists between Molly Bloom and various characters in the novel. Molly has long been seen as the unmoving center of *Ulysses*—as the object of Bloom's preoccupations, as the heart of his home at 7 Eccles Street, as an archetypal earth-mother figure—and also as more-or-less literally unmoving, staying in

her home, bed, and nightgown for most of the day. With the exception of a brief encounter in Episode Four, "Calypso," most of the reader's knowledge of Molly is derived from the thoughts, words, and memories many characters in the novel have of her throughout the day. It is only in the eighteenth and final episode, "Penelope," that Molly speaks for herself and the unmoving center is revealed as a dynamic and complicated woman who herself is "in reality evermoving."

Molly Bloom's temporal experience of June 16, 1904 may be seen as a model and metaphor for the rest of Joyce's novel, as well as for the subgenre of the twenty-four hour or day-long novel for which he is establishing the paradigm in *Ulysses*. The ostensible limits of Molly's day—and, many would contend, of certain aspects of Molly herself—are quite constrained. In contrast to her physical size, sexual appetite, and power over the imaginations of the men of Dublin, Molly's intellect, sophistication, and emotional depth are often characterized as being misogynistically small. The reach of Molly's influence, however, stretches far beyond the confines of her house and bedroom, travelling around the city in the thoughts and words of several characters, and achieving what some have described as truly mythical proportions. The power and impact of her section of the novel—the eighteenth and final section, known as "Penelope"—resonates with the colorful vitality of a consummately full, if also complex and controversial, character.

The clear connection between the character of Molly Bloom and Odysseus's wife, Penelope, certainly also heightens the mythical resonances of the novel and Molly's character. Lisa Sternlieb, in "Molly Bloom: Acting Natural," uses Molly's echo of Penelope as further evidence of her complexity rather than her shallowness; of her consummate artifice rather than her consummate narcissism. She argues that both

Penelope and Molly are weaving and unweaving—simultaneously constructing and deconstructing the narratives around themselves in order to draw out and shape time according to their own experience and need. Both women are in many ways constrained and held static by their circumstances (temporal, sexual, spatial, marital, and otherwise) but occupied with finding ways to evade expectations and enclosures.

Sternlieb also characterizes both Penelope and Molly's constraints and occupations as innately temporal:

> Each day for Penelope is a battle against time. Thus, her experience is more closely related to Joyce's valorization of the quotidian than is her husband's. Odysseus's daily experience is subsumed within the context of nine years of adventure. We remember his exploits in relation to the monsters he eludes, not the hour at which he is cornered. Penelope, however, can sum up her four years' deception with the same brief words as Antinoos and Amphimedon. Seen as the activity of four years her weaving is uneventful and monotonous. Only on the level of the individual day does her experience vary and acquire meaning. We see in Molly's chapter the epic (her largely unchanging narrative) competing with the quotidian (her attempt to introduce new threads). If backing off, changing course, losing speed and fellow travelers are central to the Odyssean experience, then covering the same ground defines Penelope's. Each novelty in her design is instantly subsumed into her larger story of frustration, aimlessness, and loss. With each row that holds out hope of escape, she is blown back onto shore; with each obstacle passed, another is erected. (Sternlieb 767-768)

"Joyce's valorization of the quotidian" in establishing the paradigmatic twenty-four hour novel compresses the scope of the eighteen-year epic adventure into a single day. Both Penelope and Molly offer contrasting temporalities for their husbands' epic adventures.

They also both put forward the narrative temporalities that most closely illustrate the paradigm of the twenty-four hour novel itself—emphasizing the microcosm within the fragment, and the epic within the quotidian as they both carefully weave and unweave their stories on a much smaller and more domestic scale. Alone, at night, and from their solitude and confinement, Penelope and Molly negotiate their own precarious and lonely paths towards the end of their stories.

Molly's orgasmic "Yes" at the very end of the final episode is, like the character who utters it, illustrative of the temporality of the twenty-four hour or day-long novel subgenre. The moment of orgasm itself is brief, but its physical, emotional, mental, and symbolic impact is extensive, and indicative of a much more expansive temporal experience. That Molly's orgasmic "Yes" is uttered in both the moment of her narrative and in a remembered moment more than sixteen years before points to this expansiveness, as does the common association of the experience of orgasm with the experience of death. In memory and in death, the experience of lived time is altered and evaded, as one inhabits multiple temporalities simultaneously, or evades lived temporality altogether. Like the experience of living a day, the experience of orgasm is one that is repetitive, natural, and imbued with a symbolic significance beyond its relative brevity. In the body's experience of climactic sexual pleasure is also an inhabitation of multiple temporalities—both the intense physical experience of the moment of pleasure itself, as well as remembered sexual experience, the memory of other pleasures (sexual and otherwise), and a kind of euphoric evasion of time itself. In this moment of temporal evasion, interestingly, one could argue that time is inhabited most fully—as in the moment of death to which it is so often likened.

The day-long novel, like Molly's orgasmic "Yes," inhabits a relatively brief expanse of time that is nonetheless expansive in its significance. Although a life encompasses many days, although those days seem endlessly repetitive, and although everyone has the experience of living a day, the temporal experience of a day is capable

of encompassing much more—much more that is able to be explored with the emergence of the subgenre of the twenty-four hour novel at the beginning of the twentieth century. Molly's orgasmic "Yes" is uttered in her own "room of the infinite possibilities" from which she barely moves during the hours of June 16, 1904. The rest of the city—including the many who are preoccupied with thoughts of her—goes about its daily business around her (relatively) unmoving center. As the parallactic views of Molly accumulate throughout the novel, it moves toward her resoundingly affirmative conclusion to the day and the first of the twenty-four hour novels that will revolutionize the temporal modality of the novel. The method Joyce employs for the first time in *Ulysses* is not mythical, but temporal. In his temporal frame for the day-long novel is an expansion of the scope of the novel and the epic through a temporal narrowing. He acknowledges through the limited temporal constraints of a day-long narrative the riches of story and adventure that exist in even the smallest and most ordinary of daily experiences—the experiences of a Leopold and Molly Bloom as well as an Odysseus. In Molly's orgasmic "Yes" are encompassed the infinite possibilities of a life lived within the expansive constraints of limited time—in the "room of the infinite possibilities" on Eccles Street. In every day—as in every moment—is the possibility for the quotidian adventure of an epic.

## Chapter Two*: Mrs. Dalloway* and The Dangerous Day: The Lives of Time in the Twenty-four Hour Novel

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"Let us record the atoms as they fall upon the mind in the order in which they fall, let us trace the pattern, however disconnected and incoherent in appearance, which each sight or incident scores upon the consciousness." – Virginia Woolf, "Modern Fiction"

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The famous first line of Virginia Woolf's 1925 novel, *Mrs. Dalloway*, echoes with the poignancy of a woman standing literally at a threshold: "Mrs. Dalloway said she would buy the flowers herself" (Woolf 3). In the doorway of the Westminster home where she has lived for "how many years now? over twenty—" Clarissa Dalloway, recently recovered from a serious illness, "vivacious, though she was over fifty," is setting out into the streets of London on a bright June morning to buy flowers for the party she is to give that night (Woolf 4). Mrs. Dalloway is the wife of a member of parliament, one of interwar London's elite, and her home and the parties she is known for are symbols of her distinct and elevated social station. She is a wife, a mother, a member of the aristocracy, with a distinct set of roles, responsibilities, limits, and privileges, and a carefully crafted public image to cultivate and maintain. But when Mrs. Dalloway crosses the threshold of her home and enters the street on her errand, a much more complex and idiosyncratic identity begins to be revealed through the stream of consciousness narratives that wander with her and around her through the city and her day.

Of the four novels presented here, Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* is the only one that does not take a specific date—for either historical, superstitious, or symbolic reasons—as the timeframe for the story told. Although scholars continue to argue over

whether the date of Mrs. Dalloway's party is Wednesday, June 13 or Wednesday, June 20, 1923, this date, while particular, is not chosen for its historical particularity, as in the case of Nathan Asch's choice of the night Sacco and Vanzetti were executed in 1927, or Richard Wright's choice of Lincoln's Birthday in February 1937. In the case of Wright and Asch's novels and choice of days, the particularity of the historical setting is connected to a specific event that occurs on a specific date, while in *Mrs. Dalloway*, the historical setting is related to the broader interwar period. Woolf is addressing the cultural trauma of World War I, which both as an event and a trauma cannot be pinned to a specific date. Her choice of a single day to address a constantly unfolding historical trauma speaks to the nature of an event so cataclysmic that it never truly ends and occurs on every day in some way. Throughout Mrs. Dalloway's day she shops for flowers, walks through the park, readies her home, rests in her room, interacts with servants, shopkeepers, acquaintances, friends, family, and strangers—all aspects of an eventful but fairly ordinary day. The intricacies of Mrs. Dalloway's day would have been lost to literature forever in the context of the nineteenth century novel, but the narrative innovations of the modernist period in the early twentieth century—of which Woolf herself was one of the principal innovators—gave Woolf and her readers access to the submerged and vastly interconnected realities of her story. In *Mrs. Dalloway* the intersections of stream of consciousness narratives with precise historical setting and a compressed timeframe result in a novel that exposes the deep fractures in interwar culture.

As Alex Zwerdling points out in "Mrs. Dalloway and the Social System," the novel's setting is historical and precise if not quite so specific as some of the other

examples of day-long modernist novels (Zwerdling 70). Woolf takes care (a care that is not taken in many of her other novels) to situate Mrs. Dalloway's day five years after the end of the First World War—a Wednesday in June 1923. If Mrs. Dalloway's day could not have been the stuff of a nineteenth century novel, it is certainly also true that it could not have been the stuff of a novel before the end of the First World War. Clarissa Dalloway is doubled in the character of Septimus Smith, a shell-shocked WWI veteran[13] who commits suicide near the end of the novel. Septimus's post-traumatic stress disorder and its tragic result is the most visible sign of largely invisible cultural trauma. Clarissa recognizes, even as she joys in the simple pleasures of being alive in London on this bright summer morning, that things are not as sunny as they might at first appear. She notes that, "This late age of the world's experience had bred in them all, all men and women, a well of tears. Tears and sorrows; courage and endurance; a perfectly upright and stoical bearing" (Woolf 9-10). The "perfectly upright and stoical bearing" is exactly what Septimus refuses to mask his pain and suffering in and present to the world. When news of his suicide reaches Clarissa's party, she is the only one who is notably affected. For all of the grace and charm in her performance of the role of "perfectly upright and stoical" hostess of a lovely party, Clarissa Dalloway is acutely aware of the masks each person wears to cover his or her own "well of tears." Her party is a symbol of her own courage and endurance in the face of a darkness she perceives but does not publicly acknowledge.

Clarissa's perception of the darkness around her, even in her brightest of moods, stems in part from the fact that it has touched her own life as well. In the course of Mrs.

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[13] Many critics have written extensively on the relationship between Woolf's work and war, especially World Wars I and II. Most notable among these studies are Christine Froula's *Virginia Woolf and the Bloomsbury Avant-garde: War, Civilization, Modernity* (2005), Karen L. Levenback's *Virginia Woolf and the Great War* (1999), *Virginia Woolf and War: Fiction, Reality, and Myth*, edited by Mark Hussey (1991), and Alex Zwerdling's *Virginia Woolf and the Real World* (1986).

Dalloway's day we learn of a lifetime of her experience, from her youthful passions and love affairs, her disappointed aspirations for herself and her friends, to her stable if uneventful marriage, her sense of failure as a wife and mother, her experiences of depression, illness, and repressed sexual desire—and the childhood trauma of watching her sister die beneath a falling tree. Her perceptiveness also stems from what Clarissa calls her "her only gift": "knowing people almost by instinct" (Woolf 9). This instinctual knowledge is part of both her skill as a hostess and her fascination with the city around her, but her sense of being able to understand people does not give her a sense of being able to legitimately label or determine identity:

> She would not say of any one in the world now that they were this or were that. She felt very young; at the same time unspeakably aged. She sliced like a knife through everything; at the same time was outside, looking on. She had a perpetual sense, as she watched the taxi cabs, of being out, out, far out to sea and alone; she always had the feeling that it was very, very dangerous to live even one day. (Woolf 8)

Clarissa's simultaneous sense of isolation from and connection with the world around her is related to her sense of time and timeliness. The danger she perceives as being inherent to the ostensibly simple act of living a day in the world is part of her perception that a day contains far more than a collection of hours passed. Throughout the novel characters hear and note the sound of Big Ben and a city of clocks sounding the hours passing: "There! Out it boomed. First a warning, musical; then the hour, irrevocable. The leaden circles dissolved in the air" (Woolf 4). Part of the danger inherent in living a day is the finality, irreversibility, and irretrievability of time as it passes. The awareness of time irrevocably passing, insensible and impervious to the lives it measures, is inescapable in this city of chiming clocks. The last clock strikes the last hour in the novel as Clarissa returns to her party from considering her similarity to the young man who took his life. The danger of

just living a day is not that one might die before its end, but that a day is capable of containing more than one lifetime[14].

When Clarissa Dalloway stands in her Westminster doorway on a sunny summer morning, her position is liminal in more than just a literal sense. As she stands in the threshold of her home and we follow her thoughts we find that she inhabits more than one time and place in a moment. She is also "a girl of eighteen," standing in an open window at Bourton and being teased by an old lover who will return to London from India any day now. Mrs. Dalloway's day will take us through the thoughts, feelings, memories, histories, and conversations of a host of people, alive and dead, and allows them all to intermingle, displaying the interconnectedness and continuity as well as the distance and isolation that exists between them. Woolf's narrative combines the last authoritative echoes of the omniscient third person narrator with the subtleties and flexibility of free indirect discourse and multiple streams of consciousness to craft a story that reveals the masks, the fractures in them, and the worlds both behind and in front of them.

The meaning of *Mrs. Dalloway*—as with the other twenty-four hour novels in the subgenre this novel helps found—emerges from its complicated interweaving of temporal relationships. The constant chiming of clocks across the city of London connect the vagaries of multiple consciousnesses in a sense of public, shared, and standard time. This shared temporality unites even as it separates, emphasizing the relativity and isolation inherent to the individual's experience of time, despite its commonality. The experience of time by the traumatized subject makes him or her an ideal vehicle for exploring the modernist preoccupation with exposing the microcosm that exists within the fragment. The fragment of time in a day is its own microcosm, which, like the elusive and fleeting

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[14] This day in the life of Mrs. Dalloway illustrates the nature of time and history according to T. S. Eliot:

> Not the intense moment
> Isolated, with no before and after,
> But a lifetime burning in every moment
> And not the life of one man only
> But of old stones that cannot be deciphered. (Eliot *Four Quartets* 192-196)

nature of life Clarissa commemorates with her parties and Septimus declaims with his suicide, is at once so liminal and so dangerous.

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*Mrs. Dalloway* is a novel filled with the sound of time passing. Clocks are heard everywhere and by everyone as their "leaden circles dissolve in the air" and in the minds of all who hear their chimes marking the hours. The irrevocable, inevitable, and inexorable nature of time is heard in the sounds of all of the clocks—Big Ben predominantly and over all, but also St. Margaret's, and the clocks of Harley Street—and they are a constant reminder of both the thing Clarissa most fears, and of what she works hardest to escape.

The clock of St. Margaret's chimes slightly after that of Big Ben, and is, like Clarissa Dalloway, a hostess:

> Ah, said St. Margaret's, like a hostess who comes into her drawing-room on the very stroke of the hour and finds her guests there already. I am not late. No, it is precisely half-past eleven, she says. Yet, though she is perfectly right, her voice, being the voice of the hostess, is reluctant to inflict its individuality. Some grief for the past holds it back; some concern for the present. It is half-past eleven, she says, and the sound of St. Margaret's glides into the recesses of the heart and buries itself in ring after ring of sound, like something alive which wants to confide itself, to disperse itself, to be, with a tremor of delight, at rest—like Clarissa herself, thought Peter Walsh, coming down the stairs on the stroke of the hour in white. (Woolf 49)

Clarissa's own lack of individuality is a common critique of both other characters in the novel (such as Peter Walsh) and critics of the novel itself (such as Lytton Strachey, who found her to be "disagreeable and limited") (Woolf, *Diary*, 32). Even Virginia Woolf, writing of Clarissa in her diary while composing the novel, found something underdeveloped in her character which she felt was resolved by providing her heroine with memories: "For I remember the night at Rodmell when I decided to give it up, because I found Clarissa in some way tinselly. Then I invented her memories. But I think some distaste for her persisted" (Woolf, *Diary*, 32). Clarissa Dalloway is the consummate hostess, and as such must efface her idiosyncratic self and her past to exist fully for the delight of the present, and the party.

The clocks of Harley Street, where Rezia and Septimus go to see Sir William Bradshaw, sound remarkably like the physician himself:

> Shredding and slicing, dividing and subdividing, the clocks of Harley Street nibbled at the June day, counseled submission, upheld authority, and pointed out in chorus the supreme advantages of a sense of proportion, until the mound of time was so far diminished that a commercial clock, suspended above a shop in Oxford Street, announced, genially and fraternally, as if it were a pleasure to Messrs. Rigby and Lowndes to give the information gratis, that it was half past one. (Woolf 100)

The authoritative nature of time both as a regulator and as an inevitability align it with men like Bradshaw, who is constantly described as mercilessly if genially "forcing [the] soul[s]" of his patients (Woolf 180). Like the physician Clarissa describes as "obscurely evil," time is repeatedly described as "forcing" characters throughout the novel (Woolf

180). Clarissa fears Sir William Bradshaw as she does the passing of time—a powerful and insensitive force she resists through her parties and attempting to live fully in the present, and in love of life.

When Lady Millicent Bruton asks Clarissa's husband Richard to one of her infamous, power-brokering lunch parties, Clarissa is piqued not by jealousy, but by a sense of her own impending obsolescence:

> But she feared time itself, and read on Lady Bruton's face, as if it had been a dial cut in impassive stone, the dwindling of life; how year by year her share was sliced; how little the margin that remained was capable any longer of stretching, of absorbing, as in the youthful years, the colours, salts, tones of existence, so that she filled the room she entered, and felt often as she stood hesitating one moment on the threshold of her drawing-room, an exquisite suspense, such as might stay a diver before plunging while the sea darkens and brightens beneath him, and the waves which threaten to break, but only gently split their surface, roll and conceal and encrust as they just turn over the weeds with pearl. (Woolf 30)

Both Clarissa and Septimus repeatedly recall the words, "Fear no more the heat o' the sun / Nor the furious winter's rages," throughout this summer day. The words are taken from Shakespeare's *Cymbeline* in Act IV, Scene ii, when two characters sing a song believing (erroneously) that the play's heroine, Imogen, has died. Clarissa remembers these words again just before the passage above, and the image of Lady Bruton's face as a sundial connects the fear of the sun's heat with the fear of time passing. Lady Bruton clings through her lunch parties to a dwindling sense of power and control over politics and

public affairs in the similar fashion to how Clarissa clings to life through her own parties. Both in the aging apparent on Lady Bruton's sundial-face (itself a marker of time passing in the shape of a day) and her failure to include Clarissa in her invitation to luncheon Clarissa is reminded of being inevitably moved toward obscurity and irrelevance by time and age. She already feels acutely the allegation that her own parties are frivolous and inconsequential affairs (by such as Peter Walsh, who characterizes her entire life as a frivolous and inconsequential waste), but Lady Bruton's disregard for her only heightens her sense of increasing insignificance as an aging woman—even to another aging woman.

Clarissa strives, in her life, and especially with her parties, to fix time—to arrest it and hold it up to be wondered at and admired. As she regards herself in her dressing room mirror when she returns home from her stroll through London, Clarissa feels both the fear and the wonder of time, and herself in it:

> Laying her brooch on the table, she had a sudden spasm, as if, while she mused, the icy claws had had the chance to fix in her. She was not old yet. She had just broken into her fifty-second year. Months and months of it were still untouched. June, July, August! Each still remained almost whole, and, as if to catch the plunging drop, Clarissa (crossing to the dressing table) plunged into the very heart of the moment, transfixed it there—the moment of this June morning in which was the pressure of all the other mornings, seeing the glass, the dressing-table, and all the bottles afresh, collecting the whole of her at one point (as she looked into the

> glass), seeing the delicate pink face of the woman who was that very night to give a party, of Clarissa Dalloway; of herself. (Woolf 36)

The fear of age and impending death accompanies Clarissa's fear of obsolescence and insignificance. Clarissa is hurt, angered, and annoyed when her parties are dismissed as trivial by Peter Walsh and others, in part because she senses this impending obsolescence and clings to the occupation for which she is best known: giving parties. Clarissa's parties are her stay against death in both their claim for her consequence and worth in her community, and their emphasis on enjoying life in the present moment. She attempts to suspend the moment of significance in her life through being the consummate hostess.

The sound of St. Margaret's bell chiming the hours is compared to a hostess entering a room as Clarissa does so often in the novel, and when Peter Walsh hears it he is reminded of Clarissa, of both of their aging, and of the suddenness of death:

> Then, as the sound of St. Margaret's languished, he thought, She has been ill, and the sound expressed languor and suffering. It was her heart, he remembered; and the sudden loudness of the final stroke tolled for death that surprised in the midst of life, Clarissa falling where she stood, in her drawing room. No! No! he cried. She is not dead! I am not old, he cried, and marched up Whitehall, as if there rolled down on him, vigorous, unending, his future. (Woolf 49)

Clarissa's aging and death reminds Peter of his own. Peter, the eternal bachelor, refuses to settle down, and clings to a sense of youth and vitality in his sixth decade, as he follows anonymous young women around London and constantly opens and closes his phallic pocket-knife. The sound of the hostess-like bell marking the time reminds him of

Clarissa, and her age and recent illness. The image of Clarissa dying suddenly accompanies the sound of time passing, and reminds Peter of his own death, spurring him as he walks. It is quite literally for Peter in this passage as seventeenth century poet John Donne famously wrote of the sound of funeral bells: “Do not ask for whom the bell tolls—it tolls for thee.” St. Margaret’s tolls for the passing of time, for the aging Clarissa and Peter, and for the death that comes to all, whether it surprises or not.

The constant tolling of the bells in *Mrs. Dalloway* serves as a connection between multiple characters, both in the sound as it is heard in the city, and in the reminder it serves of how time passes swiftly and inexorably for all, ushering all the living toward death. As Clarissa prepares for the party that she hopes will suspend (or at the very least, retard) time for a few beautiful moments, she watches the old woman who lives in the house across the street and listens to the bells chime:

> Big Ben struck the half-hour.
>
> How extraordinary it was, strange, yes, touching, to see the old lady (they had been neighbours ever so many years) move away from the window, as if she were attached to that sound, that string. Gigantic as it was, it had something to do with her. Down, down, into the midst of ordinary things the finger fell making the moment solemn. She was forced, so Clarissa imagined, by that sound, to move, to go—but where? Clarissa tried to follow her as she turned and disappeared, and could still just see her white cap moving at the back of the bedroom. She was still there moving about at the other end of the room. Why creeds and prayers and mackintoshes? when, thought Clarissa, that’s the miracle, that’s the

> mystery; that old lady, she meant, whom she could see going from chest of drawers to dressing-table. She could still see her. And the supreme mystery which Kilman might say she had solved, or Peter might say he had solved, but Clarissa didn't believe either of them had the ghost of an idea of solving, was simply this: here was one room; there another. Did religion solve that, or love?
>
> Love—but here the other clock, the clock which always struck two minutes after Big Ben, came shuffling in with its lap full of odds and ends, which it dumped down as if Big Ben were all very well with his majesty laying down the law, so solemn, so just, but she must remember all sorts of little things besides—Mrs. Marsham, Ellie Henderson, glasses for ices—all sorts of little things came flooding and lapping and dancing in on the wake of that solemn stroke which lay flat like a bar of gold on the sea. Mrs. Marsham, Ellie Henderson, glasses for ices. She must telephone now at once. (Woolf 124-125)

The sound of Big Ben chiming and the sight of the old woman in her house across the way combine in Clarissa's mind to create a sense of the innate interconnectedness between human beings. The sound of time passing solemnizes an otherwise ordinary moment, and Clarissa senses she is being "forced" by time to move. This verb is the same that Clarissa uses to describe the actions of Sir William Bradshaw, who she believes to be "capable of some indescribable outrage—forcing one's soul, that was it" (Woolf 180). The word "forced" was also commonly used to refer to the act of rape. This kind of intimate violence—upon one's body or one's soul, but always against one's will—draws

Clarissa towards the woman across the way by connecting them in time, but at the same time separates them, moving them in different directions, and out of one another's vision and lives. In the brief moment of intersection when Clarissa glimpses her neighbor in the midst of her ordinary, daily activities in the privacy of her own home, she has a sense of their connectedness through the experience of living in shared time, both being moved against their wills toward some inevitable end-point. Clarissa's frustration with Doris Kilman and Peter Walsh and their confident assertions of having solved the "supreme mystery" of the meaning of life is that they fail to take into account this simultaneous connectedness and isolation that Clarissa feels between herself and the old woman in the room across the way. Each inhabits a version of Stephen Dedalus's "room of the infinite possibilities" of a life lived in time, but they are separate rooms, time is forcing them to move in different directions, and each will find their ultimate end-point alone and in their own time. Clarissa is herself contemplating the question of whether love offers some kind of solution to the "supreme mystery," the "miracle" of life, but her meditations are interrupted by the sound of another clock chiming—this time the hostess-clock of St. Margaret's, which reminds her of the plans for her party and all of the things she has left to do to prepare where a few moments before the tones of Big Ben had reminded her of being moved against her will. Interestingly, it is the thought of needing to make a phone call—a technological innovation that connects people in time, across wide distances—that finally ends Clarissa's ruminations on the interconnectedness of human beings. The telephone—like time—unites even as it separates.

The omnipresent sound of London's chiming clocks connects the diverse streams of consciousness in the novel. As the bells of a clock ring in one person's mind, the same

chimes are heard by another character elsewhere, and the narrative shifts between the two with the sound of the clocks. The irrevocable, inevitable, and inexorable passage of time unites otherwise disconnected streams of consciousness and narrative.[15] The stream of consciousness narrative Woolf employs in *Mrs. Dalloway* moves freely between not only the main characters in the novel, but also between all of the minor characters, acquaintances, and passerby they encounter in the course of a typical day in the city. As Elissa Schappel explains in her account of reading *Mrs. Dalloway*, it is easy to be

> …unnerved by the way Woolf move[s] like a breath from one character's point of view to another's—a woman stopping to ask for directions, a child running into the legs of a stranger, each passing the touch of consciousness from character to character. (Schappel 157)

Woolf's innovative (and often unnerving) version of the stream of consciousness narrative in *Mrs. Dalloway* incorporates elements of free indirect discourse. This is another mode of narration that allows the reader to have indirect access to the thoughts of a character through mediation by an unspecified ("free") discursive voice. Because the same free indirect discursive voice moves between the consciousnesses of several characters—"like a breath," as Schappel describes it—the streams of several

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[15] Gillian Beer's famous assessment of the airplane in *Mrs. Dalloway* and other of Woolf's works functions similarly to the many chiming clocks. As both named and unnamed characters in the novel watch the airplane write its message (variously interpreted) across the sky, their consciousnesses are united in their absorption and contemplation of the object, albeit in very different ways. As Beer notes of this passage:

> Each person reads the plane's message differently […] The communality is not in single meaning but in free access to meaning […] The message does not matter; the communal act of sky-gazing does. For each person, their unacted part becomes alerted […] (Beer 161)

The airplane is interpreted as a symbol of militarism and menace by some; as a symbol of freedom and adventure by others. Like the sound of time passing in the novel, the airplane connects as well as divides, uniting all in a collective isolation.

consciousnesses can flow and be navigated together. As Paul Ricoeur explains in his study of *Mrs. Dalloway* in *Time and Narrative*:

> A bridge is built between these souls both through the continuity of place and the reverberation of an internal discourse in another person. […] A point in space, a pause in time form the footbridges between two temporalities foreign to each other. (Ricouer II 105)

Time is a footbridge between diverse and disparate consciousnesses in the novel. Woolf's narrative mode emphasizes the connections between otherwise disconnected individuals. Characters separated by age, class, occupation, preoccupation, and experience are brought together in the stream of consciousness—a stream of consciousness that flows through the timeframe of a single day, uniting in temporality as well as in narrative mode. Time—and the thoughts of death that often accompany its contemplation—is an equalizing, democratizing element in an otherwise sharply hierarchical society, that gives shape and form to the often fragmented narrative. The public timepieces of London's chiming clocks connect these disconnected fragments of narrative and consciousness in the experience of living a day in time.

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In Virginia Woolf's original conception of the novel that would become *Mrs. Dalloway*, Clarissa was the character who would end her life with the day. The character of Septimus Smith was a relatively late addition to the novel's scheme. Although critics have disagreed over the extent to which Septimus Smith is Clarissa Dalloway's mirror or rather her foil, his prominent position in the novel exposes deep fractures in a culture struggling to recover from the trauma of war and (largely failing) to reintegrate the

traumatized into that culture. He is also, as Alex Zwerdling and other critics have noted, given many of Woolf's own symptoms and experiences of mental illness. As Karen DeMeester explains in "Trauma, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, and Obstacles to Postwar Recovery in *Mrs. Dalloway*," Septimus's suicide results from his inability to give his experiences meaning and purpose by communicating them to others (DeMeester 77). Septimus himself senses the importance of communication to his predicament, as he hears his fallen comrade Evans speaking from behind a screen and imagines that the flowers his wife arranges were picked by the dead man. His inability to communicate any of this summons Dr. Holmes:

> So there was a man outside; Evans presumably; and the roses, which Rezia said were half dead, had been picked by him in the fields of Greece. "Communication is health; communication is happiness, communication—" he muttered.
>
> "What are you saying, Septimus?" Rezia asked, wild with terror, for he was talking to himself. (Woolf 93)

This inability to relate and shape his story into a meaningful and purposeful whole thwarts Septimus's full recovery, leaving his thoughts—and Woolf's portrayal of them in the narrative—fragmented, and for the most part incoherent and incommunicable. He is determined to tell the world the messages he receives from the dead, but is constantly frustrated in his attempts to translate or communicate them. His recovery is necessarily communal, however—in order to communicate his story and give it meaning and purpose, it must be heard, recognized, and interpreted by a society and culture that is willing to participate in it. Dr. Holmes and Sir William Bradshaw are the figureheads not

only of the sisters “Proportion” and “Conversion,” but also of a society that ignores the brutality, fear, and guilt of war and insists on stoicism, repression, and denial. Marginalized and silenced by his culture and society, however, Septimus is unable to access and communicate with his community. His suicide becomes the symbolic act he hopes can finally speak for him.

Septimus’s trauma mirrors the trauma of the culture that marginalizes and silences him. As DeMeester points out elsewhere, the incommunicable fragmentation in the narrative of Septimus Smith makes him—and other trauma survivors—the epitome of the modernist subject, the modernist project, and the modernist age (DeMeester 80):

> The modernists were attempting to cope with and create a language to represent what Kirby Farrell refers to as the “shock of radical historical change” (2). Such a shock is registered as an injury, a trauma that sabotages faith in traditional value systems and the cultural order, undermines our sense of safety and stability, erodes identity and self-esteem, challenges interpretation, and often defies or destroys meaning. According to Farrell, trauma functions as a trope, “a strategic fiction that complex, stressful society is using to account for a world that seems threateningly out of control” (2). When change occurs in our lives or our culture, we experience trauma and fantasies about trauma in an effort to cope with change and to mitigate our fears of disorder and cosmic chaos or indeterminacy. (DeMeester 78)

Septimus’s character and story in the novel functions in many ways as an example of Farrell’s “strategic fiction.” His trauma disrupts the stability of the narrative and

challenges its coherence, but also draws together disparate parts and exposes the seams of the cultural moment portrayed. Septimus's trauma mitigates the underlying fears of the novel by recognizing them, facing them, and attempting to articulate them. The often disconnected fragments of his traumatized consciousness mark the site of a "radical historical change," as well as a shift in the way a story can be told. The divisions between past and present are dissolved in Septimus's mind and narrative, as are those between memory, vision, hallucination, dialogue, and image.

Woolf's narrative form in *Mrs. Dalloway* mirrors Septimus's ideal, modernist subjectivity. As DeMeester again explains:

> Woolf's stream of consciousness narrative form also mimics the trauma survivor's perception of time. The survivor's traumatized mind apprehends the traumatic event as ever-present and his memories of the event often exist in present consciousness as encapsulated images and fragments of thought that are juxtaposed with other nontraumatic memories but do not meaningfully relate to them sequentially or chronologically […] Woolf similarly contracts time, intermingling the past and the future with the present in a continuous flow of narrative temporality. (DeMeester 79)

DeMeester later observes that, according to Joseph Frank, "the meaning of the text does not emerge from temporal relationships but rather from spatial ones (Frank 10)" but I would argue that Woolf's contraction of time in the twenty-four hour timeframe and the dissolution of the traditional boundaries between past and future creates a unique narrative temporality from which the novel derives its structure and through which the

disparate strains of narrative are connected and given meaning (DeMeester 79). The temporal compression of the novel, combined with the intermingling of several different stream of consciousness narratives, mimics Septimus's traumatized mind and the traumatized cultural moment he exposes and which modernists like Woolf sought to express through new experiments in narrative form.

If Septimus Smith's suicide is his final attempt at communication, Clarissa Dalloway may be the one who finally receives his message. Although she never meets Septimus and hears of him for the first time only after his death, she somehow intuits how he died, why he killed himself, and even how Sir William Bradshaw might have contributed to his death as she retreats for a moment from her party and reflects:

> She had once thrown a shilling into the Serpentine, never anything more. But he had flung it away. They went on living (she would have to go back; the rooms were still crowded; people kept on coming). They (all day she had been thinking of Bourton, of Peter, of Sally), they would grow old. A thing there was that mattered; a thing, wreathed about with chatter, defaced, obscured in her own life, let drop every day in corruption, lies, chatter. This he had preserved. Death was defiance. Death was an attempt to communicate; people feeling the impossibility of reaching the centre which, mystically, evaded them; closeness drew apart; rapture faded, one was alone. There was an embrace in death. (Woolf 184)

Clarissa, the great giver of parties, understands both that Septimus's life was thrown away for a distinct purpose—the preservation of a precious, essential "thing that mattered," and that she daily disregards this thing that matters in her own life. She

recognizes that Septimus's death defies this prevalent disregard, and communicates his insistence that something of life matters significantly, and must be sought out, acknowledged, and brought to light—if need be, through death[16]. Although the search for this evasive, mystical centre seems to be an individual endeavor, it also seems to be common to all. Septimus's desperate attempt both to protect this "thing that mattered" and to communicate through his death testifies to the essential loneliness of the endeavor. It is a loneliness that, although shared, ends only in death—another essentially lonely experience that is nonetheless common to all. The danger Clarissa senses is inherent to each day is both that something precious may be flung away, and that we may fail to acknowledge its preciousness before we do.

Clarissa is in the midst of hosting one of her many parties as she reflects on Septimus's death. As Ariela Freedman explains, Clarissa's parties are far more than the trivial social gatherings they are often assumed to be and for which she is often criticized:

> Clarissa gives parties, of course, parties scorned, belittled, and eagerly attended by the cream of London society. We are told giving parties was her "one gift," "an offering for the sake of offering" (109). The parties are her response to the disconnectedness of life, "an offering, to combine, to create" (109) to bring people together, to pay tribute to life, "'That's what

[16] Some have argued that Septimus gives his life for Clarissa, and that the two are united in their roles as 'givers'—Clarissa gives parties as tributes and offerings, and Septimus gives his life:

> Clarissa's gift of the party converges with a gift of death, which grants the substance she has been seeking, and is the real offering or coin she must pay to life. Septimus' dying words—"I'll give it you!" (132)—are particularly crucial in this context. Jeremy Hawthorn argues that the words established affinity between Clarissa and Septimus, "as they point to the thing that both he and Clarissa most want to do—to give." In contrast, Molly Hoff claims that the giving is asymmetrical rather than reciprocal. "The meaning of his death is unwrapped as Clarissa's gift…it magnifies Clarissa's vaulting ambitions for her party, and as a pharmakon, a drug, it is the antidote for Clarissa's death." But as Derrida argues in *The Gift of Death*, "Death's dative (dying for the other, giving one's life for the other) does not signify a substitution…I can give the other everything except immortality, except this *dying for her*." One life cannot be substituted for another, since two lives are not commensurable. (Freedman 98)

> I do it for' she said, speaking aloud, to life" (108). As a tribute to life, the parties are a means of repressing death "After that, how unbelievable death was!" (108). The parties, described as "tribute" and "offering" are ritualized means of worshipping life. Clarissa Dalloway becomes a priestess in her domestic role, as Mrs. Ramsay does in *To the Lighthouse*, and assumes an identity suddenly stabilized in the act of self-presentation. (Freedman 98)

Clarissa's parties are her method of communication and connection. She is like Septimus in her need to communicate a message, and in ultimately attempting to do so with a symbolic act. Unlike him, however, her gift is an attempt at repressing death (his own having intruded so suddenly on her party), and a general affirmation of life rather than the communication of a specific message. She knows that she—unlike Septimus—lives her life in ignorance of the "thing there was that mattered" and for which Septimus gave his life. Just as Clarissa grasps the significance of Septimus's death and what has driven him to it, she also senses their affinity:

> She felt somehow very like him—the young man who had killed himself. She felt glad that he had done it; thrown it away. The clock was striking. The leaden circles dissolved in the air. He made her feel the beauty; made her feel the fun. But she must go back. She must assemble. She must find Sally and Peter. And she came in from the little room. (Woolf 186)

The sound of the striking clock recalls Clarissa to herself and to her party, continuing without her downstairs. Time carries on, and it carries her away from her contemplations and Septimus's message and back to her party. Septimus's death renews her

determination to give her party and to continue in her general enjoyment and wonder of life. She has heard Septimus's message—she has even understood it—but it is not her own, and she will not adopt it. The leaden circles of time passing dissolve into the air for the last time in the novel, and Clarissa returns to the party.

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James Naremore, in his essay on Woolf, "A World Without Self," argues that "Most of Virginia Woolf's novels are about the grief caused by death and separation, but in one sense she, too, wants to die, to become part of a "splendid unanimity" (Naremore 10). For Woolf, the dissolution of the self comes through death as well as contemplation of mortality. The day as a universal unit of time unites all humans in the medium of existence in time, as well as the inevitability of death. This temporal connection to others heightens the sense of danger inherent to time and life lived in it, for death is always close to us, even when it isn't our own, or even that of someone we know. Every day is the last for someone, and Woolf uses the temporal frame of the day-long novel to emphasize the immediacy of life and death that makes it so dangerous to live even one day.

Like Molly Bloom's "Yes" at the end of *Ulysses*, *Mrs. Dalloway* offers its own sense of the orgasmic nature of time in the twenty-four hour or day-long novel. Recalling her years of marriage to Richard Dalloway and her youthful infatuation with Sally Seton, Clarissa describes the experience of orgasm as she has only experienced it through contact with women:

> Only for a moment; but it was enough. It was a sudden revelation, a tinge like a blush which one tried to check and then, as it spread, one

> yielded to its expansion, and rushed to the farthest verge and there quivered and felt she would come closer, swollen with some astonishing significance, some pressure of rapture, which split its thin skin and gushed and poured with an extraordinary alleviation over the cracks and sores! Then, for that moment, she had seen an illumination; a match burning in a crocus; an inner meaning almost expressed. But the close withdrew; the hard softened. It was over—the moment. (Woolf 31)

Clarissa's description of the moment of orgasm emphasizes both its temporal brevity and its exponential significance. The "pressure of rapture" is intensified by its compression into a short span of time, and the "revelation" or "illumination" towards which she describes rushing is "almost expressed" but never quite reached. The "expansion" to which she refers describes the expansion of a single moment to encompass an excess of meaning, sensation, and significance. Like the narrative mode that makes it possible to compress the scope of an entire novel into the timeframe of a single day, or the modernist obsession with exposing the microcosm that exists within the fragment, the moment of orgasm represents the expansive brevity of life in time. Like the moment of death to which it is so often compared, it is just another passing moment, but one that holds an ultimate import.

The language that Woolf uses to describe the moment of orgasm is echoed in a passage where Rezia and Septimus encounter Peter Walsh in Regents Park. Rezia prods Septimus to be aware of the time, and the word triggers one of Septimus's visions. As he imagines his fallen comrade Evans and hears "an immortal ode to Time," Peter Walsh asks him for the time:

> "It is time," said Rezia.
>
> The word "time" split its husk, poured its riches over him; and from his lips fell like shells, like shavings from a plane, without his making them, hard, white, imperishable words, and flew to attach themselves to their places in an ode to Time; an immortal ode to Time. He sang. Evans answered from behind the tree. The dead were in Thessaly, Evans sang, among the orchids. There they waited till the War was over, and now the dead, now Evans himself—
>
> […]
>
> The millions lamented; for ages they had sorrowed. He would turn around, he would tell them in a few moments, only a few moments more, of this relief, of this joy, of this astonishing revelation—
>
> "The time, Septimus," Rezia repeated. "What is the time?"
>
> He was talking, he was starting, this man must notice him. He was looking at them.
>
> "I will tell you the time," said Septimus, very slowly, very drowsily, smiling mysteriously. As he sat smiling at the dead man in the grey suit the quarter struck—the quarter to twelve. (Woolf 68)

Like the thin "thin skin" that "split" at the moment of Clarissa's orgasm, "the word time split its husk" in this passage, and is also followed by the same language of "revelation" and hidden meaning that Septimus must communicate to the world. In Septimus's case, ages and millions of the lamenting humankind have been rushing towards this moment of revelation, but just as Clarissa never quite reaches the moment of expression, Septimus never gets to deliver his message. Significantly, the sound of the clock chiming the hour

interrupts him, and he is no longer needed to tell the time. The sound of the public clock draws everyone back to a shared, common experience of lived time, but it also robs Septimus of his message. His inability to communicate it draws him a step closer to the symbolic act of his death.

The similarities between these two passages suggest both another layer of connection between Clarissa and Septimus, and add substance to Clarissa's "feeling that it was very, very dangerous to live even one day" (Woolf 8). The endeavor of living a day is a dangerous undertaking, and both Clarissa and Septimus have a sense of the great significance and meaning lying just beneath the surface of the quotidian. In the space of a moment one can experience great rapture, great pain, or great revelation—and in another moment it can all be lost forever. The experience of living in time is common to all, but Clarissa and Septimus share an acute awareness of the significance of time. The sound of chiming clocks connects all of the Londoners in this novel, but Clarissa and Septimus are driven to communicate what they know to be true of life. For Clarissa, her parties are attempts to arrest time and hold it up to be admired as it swiftly passes. For Septimus, he finds that he must die to communicate the awful truth his traumatized mind has taught him—that time can bring back the dead, and that the great pain of a moment can recur perpetually.

Clarissa Dalloway begins and ends the novel that bears her name standing on a threshold, as she does several times during the day. She seems to be nearly always on the verge of crossing—from room to room, from home to street and back, from the present to memory, from rapture to revelation—and she has recently recovered from being on the verge of death. These thresholds are where she likes to stop and think, remember, collect herself, and be admired. As she removes herself from her party to consider Septimus and his suicide, she stands at a window. When Septimus removed himself from life a few hours before, he had flung himself from one. Clarissa's moments of pause and reflection

in the novel's thresholds models her attitude towards life, the historical moment she occupies between two world wars, and the temporal structure of the novel in which she appears. Her parties and intense love of life drive her to resist the passage of time, to arrest it in its movement from moment to moment as she pauses in doorways between rooms. The "late age of the world's experience" has suspended Clarissa and England between two cataclysmic wars, with the terrible knowledge of the horrors that have already transpired and the fear of what may yet come. The limited temporality of the twenty-four hour or day-long novel emphasizes the liminality of life in time—in perpetual movement, with only brief moments of suspension to hold the weight of greater significance and meaning.

## Chapter Three: Nathan Asch's *Pay Day*: Sacco-Vanzetti and the Execution of Modernist Vision in the Night-long Novel

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"all right we are two nations America" –John Dos Passos, "The Big Money," *U. S. A.* (1937)

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In Nathan Asch's *Pay Day* (1930), Jim Cowan is a young clerk spending a night—and a week's paycheck—on the town. Like Joyce's *Ulysses* and Wright's *Lawd Today!*, *Pay Day* is set on a very particular date—the early hours of Tuesday, August 23, 1927. It was just after midnight on this date that Bartolomeo Vanzetti and Nicola Sacco were executed by electric chair in Boston, Massachusetts for a 1920 robbery and double homicide. The Italian-born immigrants were anarchists who had dodged conscription during the First World War and had pro-labor sympathies, but evidence that they actually committed the crimes of which they were found guilty remains inconclusive eighty years after their deaths. The highly publicized trial and execution sparked protests—many of them violent—around the world, and long after the executions, bombings and bomb-threats took place in response to the perceived miscarriage of justice—some of them in the same New York City subways in which much of *Pay Day* takes place. It was widely believed that racism, xenophobia, and widespread fear of anarchism, terrorism, and violent revolution were behind the controversial verdict.

Jim Cowan is not an immigrant, a minority, an anarchist, or a communist. His interest in the trial and execution of the two men with which New York City and the rest of the world are abuzz on this night is at the most marginal to the personal plans and problems that consume him on this historic evening. Picking up the paper in the crowded

subway on the way home from work he scans the sports section and comics without pausing over the two names that are in all of the headlines and on everyone's lips. His response to others' mention of the two condemned men is repeatedly apathetic:

> "Isn't this a God damned shame?" Harry was saying.
>
> "What?" he asked.
>
> Over the head of a woman, Harry handed him the paper. He read the headlines: SACCO-VANZETTI LOSE HOPE MUST DIE TONIGHT.
>
> He looked at the headline, at first not understanding; then he remembered and gave the paper back.
>
> "Who cares?" he said. (Asch, *Pay Day* 17)

The specific historical setting of the novel is everywhere—from the newspaper headlines being shouted by paperboys in the streets, to the overheard comments and rants of passerby, the reading material of people on the subway, and the young female neighbor bludgeoned as she made her way home from work by police trying to quell a protest in Union Square. Jim flippantly dismisses most of the intrusions of the execution into his thoughts, but the novel closes with his stunned realization of what has transpired: "'Oh, my god. They're dead'" (Asch, *Pay Day* 265). Uttered as he returns home from a night of drunken revelry and looks up at the lighted window where his long-suffering mother waits up for him, his awareness that the famous pair have died is conflated with his thoughts of his own family, the shortcomings of his devotion to them, and their mortality. These are Jim's last words in the novel, and interestingly, Sacco's own last words were recorded as "farewell, Mother."

The novel opens as Jim is leaving his office for the day, paycheck in hand ($30. 15) and all of his plans for the ways he will spend it—beginning with a long-anticipated date for the evening—in his head. Jim Cowan could easily be New York City's version of T. S. Eliot's "young clerk carbuncular," and the waste land Jim inhabits is similarly violent, futile, and carnal. It is also almost entirely inside his own head. Jim's imagined world is colorful, if not rich, and the New York City summer night through which he moves is its teeming fodder and catalyst. As Jim ignorantly regards and embellishes his world, many of the issues of race, class, and gender with which the country is struggling make their way into his consciousness and the story. Most of Jim's thoughts and activities focus on sex, and both the city and his imagination are virtual galleries of female nipples and thighs, the props of the elaborate fantasies he entertains of possible conquests with almost every woman he encounters. He observes distinctions of class and race even in his sexual fantasies, however, and seems everywhere to be confronted with his own impotence—in memories of a failed sexual encounter, in his awareness of his inadequate education, in knowledge of his inability to keep or advance in a job, and in his guilt over reneged promises to his beloved mother. Jim reacts angrily to the women who fail to respond positively to his leering advances, to the college students who mock these attempts, to the traffic and crowds that impede his progress across the city, and to the wealthy men and women who stand out to him by their clothes and cars and perceived haughtiness—to almost everyone, in fact, including his date for the evening. Jim's imagination provides motivation for his anger, and a running commentary to complement it. Most of the words Jim "says," according to the text, aren't spoken aloud, but imagined by Jim as having been spoken aloud, and the ambiguity between imagined events and

those that actually occur heightens the sense of interiority inherent to this portrayal of reality.

The immediacy of Jim's ignorance, racism, sexism, and impotent rage against his status in the world is reflected in and by both the historical and fictionalized events of the night on which the novel takes place. The trial and execution of Sacco and Vanzetti exposed and exploded along many of the fault lines in the nation's image of itself. On his ill-fated date Jim takes his companion to the movies, and for almost a chapter the silent film they see is described frame by frame. It is a montage of scenes shot from sunrise to sunset across the United States. Jim does not understand the film—overhearing some people at a bar later in the evening talking about it, he jumps in with, "'I couldn't make head or tail of it. What's it all about?'" and "'That picture was no good'" (Asch, *Pay Day* 173). The prominence of a film about one day in the U. S. in a novel about one night in the U. S., however, described at length and in its detailed entirety in almost the exact center of the story, belies it and the novel's concern with representing more than just a single night in the life of one young man on which it focuses. Jim Cowan and the night of August 23, 1927 constitute a vivisection of a city and a nation in the same way that the film at the center of the novel does. The events of this night will change the nation forever, but at dawn it remains to be seen whether it will change Jim at all. An enraged, impotent, and ignorant everyman, Jim Cowan is, like the young nation he represents, poised on the brink of confronting his own identity and place in the world. He does not understand the film, and only momentarily and at the very end of the novel does he grasp the significance of the night's highly publicized and violent events.

*Pay Day* has a place in many works of literature written during the same period that focus in some way on the trial and execution of Sacco and Vanzetti and the significance of those events for the nation in which they took place. Upton Sinclair's *Boston*, Edna St. Vincent Millay's "Justice Denied in Massachusetts,"[17] Katherine Ann Porter's *The Never-ending Wrong*, John Dos Passos's[18] *Facing the Chair*, and Countee Cullen's "Not Sacco and Vanzetti" are only a few such. But as a day-long—or, in this case, night-long—novel with many noted similarities to Joyce's *Ulysses*, Asch's novel breaks the mold of protest literature, expanding the scope of the project beyond the ostensible limits of activism by confining it to a few hours in the life of one seemingly unrelated and insignificant man. As with any person living any day in his or her life, the events of Jim Cowan's evening are shaped more immediately by his own fraught thought-life and the material fact that it is his pay day than by his relationship to any historical setting. Not unlike the relationship of Ian McEwan's *Saturday* (set on the day of the huge anti-war protest in London on February 15, 2002) to the events of September 11, 2001, *Pay Day*'s relationship to the trial and execution of Sacco and Vanzetti is both tangential and central to the novel's meaning. Just as Jim's rapidly squandered paycheck is symbolic of his impotence, inadequacy, and frustrated desires, so the execution of Sacco and Vanzetti constitutes a different kind of pay day for the nation—a reckoning with ambiguous standards of justice, racial and cultural prejudice, and the fears that unite even as they divide. John Dos Passos, an outspoken defender of Sacco and Vanzetti, summed up this contradiction in an autobiographical passage from his *U.S.A.* (1937) in which he reflects on the famous trial and execution, and ironically concludes that,

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[17] This poem appeared in the *New York Times* on the day before the executions, August 22, 1927.
[18] John Dos Passos conceived of the idea for his *U.S.A.* trilogy on the night Sacco and Vanzetti were executed and *Pay Day* is set.

"alright we are two nations America." Asch's novel, however, paints a portrait of one particular man on one particular night in one city of a nation in order to portray how they are all internally divided against themselves and struggling for definition.

The timeframe of the twenty-four hour novel subgenre allows Asch to particularize a historical moment. Sacco and Vanzetti had been languishing in Massachusetts prisons for a little over seven tumultuous years before they were finally executed. Their arrest, trial, and conviction were the result of a complicated tangle of historical, social, and cultural forces that had been building for decades before the two men were ever born. Even after they were executed, the events surrounding their lives and deaths continued to be a source of violent reaction and contentious debate.[19] The deaths of these two anarchists mark several sites of failure for Romanticism, idealism, and the glorified ideal of America. The two men also symbolize the fraught anxieties and fears of the transition between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The reality of history is that it is never a single reality, or capable of being grasped in whole. Asch's novel places the extraordinary and historically expansive event within an individual's limited temporality, allowing the large event to be filtered through the narrowness of individual experience and glimpsed in an illustrative fragment. The limited but specific timeframe of the twenty-four hour novel in conjunction with the historical event create a clarity and structure to which the vagaries of the protagonist's consciousness may be bound. Time is the unifying principle behind the often fragmentary elements of these

[19] A huge funeral procession through Boston for the two men on August 28 turned violent when police and mourners clashed. A year later, a bomb destroyed the home of the man who had served as executioner, and in 1932, a bomb exploded in the home of the outspoken and controversial judge in the trial, Judge Webster Thayer. A pardon hearing was held in 1959 that resulted in nothing more than renewed contention around the case. Massachusetts governor Michael Dukakis declared August 23, 1977, the fiftieth anniversary of the executions, "Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti Memorial Day," but did not issue a pardon. His commemoration of the execution day was enough to cause state Republicans to rebuke Dukakis for honoring convicted murderers.

modernist narratives, bringing together the pieces of mosaic and montage that are used to create powerful images but not always coherent stories. In this way Asch's contribution to the 24-hour novel subgenre demonstrates that subgenre's modernist origins—the modernist preoccupation with exposing the wholeness that exists within the fragment.

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Nathan Asch, a Jewish-American and European immigrant himself, spent much of his life and his career as a writer consumed with and exploring the idea of America. Born in Warsaw, Poland in 1902, Asch was the oldest child of the famous Yiddish novelist Sholem Asch. His family left Poland when Asch was ten, and lived for a time in the suburbs of Paris before moving to Staten Island when Asch was thirteen, just before the outbreak of World War I. He remained in the United States until he returned to Paris at the age of twenty-one, when he became part of the famous expatriate colony of writers, artists, and other intellectuals gathering there. Among such friends as Josephine Herbst, John Herrmann, Kaye Boyle, Malcolm Cowley, Eugene Jolas, Ford Maddox Ford, and Ernest Hemingway[20], Asch began his career as a writer in 1924 with the publication of three stories in Ford's short-lived but influential *transatlantic review*. All three of these stories appeared as episodes in his first novel, *The Office*, published in 1925. The novel is made up of a series of sketches, each one focused on a different employee of a company on the day it goes bankrupt. Asch's first take on the day-long novel is a fascinating and

[20] After hearing of Hemingway's death, Asch wrote to their mutual friend, Malcolm Cowley about an incident that reveals the nature of his complicated relationship with the deceased writer when they were both young and living in Paris between the world wars: "…once he knocked me cold on the Boulevard Montparnasse, after telling me there wasn't anything I had that was original except maybe a little freshness. That night as I slept in my room on the Rue Campagne Premiere he broke into my room drunk and in tears and told me that he could never forgive himself, and that I had more than anybody." From an item dated 2 December 1961, TS, fol. 5 Cowley Collection, the Newberry Library. A carbon copy of the original may be found in the Nathan Asch Collection, Archives & Special Collections, Dacus Library of Winthrop University in Rock Hill, SC.

adept experiment in point of view and characterization, but its highly episodic narrative lacks cohesion as a novel.

Asch's second novel, *Love in Chartres* (1927), is a largely autobiographical account of his courtship of his first wife, Lysel Ingwersen, while they were both living abroad in France. Completed after the couple married and moved back to the United States, the book was a critical but not a financial success. The couple divorced in 1930, not long after the birth of their son, David, Asch's only child.

When Asch and his first wife returned to the U.S. from Europe and Asch undertook revision of *Love in Chartres*, the couple lived for a time with a group of former expatriate writers and artists in Connecticut, and also for a time in the same boarding house in Paterson, New York where the poet Hart Crane was living while writing his great work, *The Bridge*. This was the same period when the Sacco-Vanzetti trial was approaching its end in the execution of the two accused men, and as the highly publicized events swirled around them, Asch began his third novel, *Pay Day*, as his marriage collapsed and he listened to the sound of Crane's typewriter and Dvorak's "New World Symphony" that the poet played over and over again on an old phonograph in the next room while he wrote.[21] In his fourth novel based on his life during these years, *The Valley* (1935), Crane appears as a character, a dissolute poet who goes on a drunken three-day bender at a bootlegger's in the hills. Many years later, Asch wrote up his

[21] Also in "Remembering Hart Crane," Asch expresses his frustration and distaste for Crane's musical inspiration: "I was trying to write, too, in between the noises, the way one is supposed to walk between the raindrops when it rains, and succeeding no better than one succeeds. One of the reasons I didn't think Hart's verse could be very good was that he composed always to music, and I considered Dvorak *kitsch*; and how can you write serious verse to sounds that are altogether corny? But obviously Hart did, next door to me, beyond the thin wall, while I cried to Lysel, 'I'm going in and tell that fellow to shut up!'" (1)

reminiscences of Crane in an unpublished and undated short piece entitled "Remembering Hart Crane," or, alternately, "Hart." [22]

In this account of his encounters with the poet, Asch recalls the time they spent living and working side by side in Mrs. Turner's boarding house, and the conversations he had with Crane about "composing his to-become-immortal verse":

> He did his best to try to explain to me what he was doing while he was writing "The Bridge"; he really tried to in what he probably considered were one syllable words, sitting with me in his room, reading the verse lines one after another, and interpreting them to me. There must be something fundamentally self-obscurantist about me, but I did not know what one earth he was talking about. And today, when I read again passages in "The Bridge," I shiver because I seem to hear again Hart's voice. (Asch, "Remembering Hart Crane," 5)

Both of the literary projects underway in Mrs. Turner's boarding house during this time were concerned with the idea of America: with what it was and what it represented, with what it had been and what it was likely to become in the days and years and generations ahead. Crane's position as a young, white, homosexual son of a Midwestern candy mogul was in many ways in decided contrast with Asch's experience as a young Jewish immigrant, the novelist son of a famous novelist father, and the clashes of their personalities were in many ways indicative of the clash of their artistic and world views. Crane's poetry descended from a line of American Romanticism, what Waldo Frank called in his 1932 introduction to *The Bridge*, "a deliberate continuance of the great

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[22] The original typescripts of "Remembering Hart Crane" and "Hart" are held in the Nathan Asch Collection, Archives & Special Collections, Dacus Library of Winthrop University in Rock Hill, SC.

tradition in terms of our industrialized world"; the 'great tradition' of what was perceived to be a common American culture (Frank, xix). Seeking always the principles of synthesis, unity, immersion, and dissolution in the construction of a myth with the power to create order out of chaos, Crane also sought to articulate a vision of a dynamic but unified America—a Romantic vision of a mechanized nation of movement, monument, and both industrial and natural power.

Throughout his life and career, Nathan Asch was consciously pursuing the idea of America, trying to get at the essential meaning of the nation and its people. Although not born in the United States, Asch lived and traveled all over the country from a young age, was a writer in the WPA during the Depression, served in the armed forces during World War II, and lived out the last years of his life writing and teaching writing to working adults in the San Francisco Bay Area. His fifth and last published book-length work, *The Road: In Search of America* (1937) was an only loosely fictionalized account of a cross-country bus trip the writer took across a U. S. still struggling to survive the Depression. As in *Pay Day*, Asch made no bones about acknowledging America's failures—those it has denied justice and equality; those it has dispossessed. But he also noted a common tradition among those who call themselves Americans: the lack of a tradition:

> …there is no tradition of suffering. When you're born you're not born to suffer. If the American slogan, everyone is born equal, with an equal chance, has so often proved to be a misleading slogan, still for all its falseness it's better than no slogan at all, better than the knowledge so many people have abroad, that what they were born for is to die someday.

> It's what makes for a certain look upon the face and a certain smile. It's what makes a six-month's newcomer say: "I'm an American now." It's what makes it possible to travel in this country, looking at places where not the fortunate ones live, but those dispossessed, and see much want and hear of many troubles, and still feel there is hope, there is a chance, there is a future. It's what makes it possible to be happy while traveling in America. (Asch, *Road* 11)

Asch had little interest in the rich and famous Americans held up as examples of all that is possible when democracy and capitalism work hand in hand. In *The Road* he was in search of America's laborers, America's unemployed, America's immigrants, America's poor and hungry and struggling. If anything united all Americans, in Asch's view, it was their differences. The lack of a common tradition meant that anyone could become an American. Being an American, however, held few more promises than that. Where Crane's vision of America consolidated rich and highly selective fragments of the nation's past into a glorious vision of a unified future, Asch's vision was of a people who have left everything behind—including their pasts—to be united only in the present fact of being an American. The future may be hoped for, but not what it will be. Crane's vision includes what lies on the other side of the bridge between past and future, but Asch's only describes the bridge itself, the present moment suspended between two largely unknown shores. Both Crane's poem and Asch's novel, however, give their visions of America the timeframe of a single day.

In his foundational essay, "The Architecture of 'The Bridge'," John Unterecker was the first to make the comparison between Crane's great poem and Joyce's *Ulysses*. Citing their mosaic structures, their seemingly fragmented and independent sections that

come to congruence when considered together, their integration of "temporal and spatial schemes," and their use of contemporary material adapted to mythic structures, Unterecker notes that *The Bridge*—like both *Ulysses* and *Pay Day*—also has a day-long time frame (Unterecker 10):

> I have already mentioned the temporal scheme—the twenty-four hour action of the plot. This same chronological pattern recurs in each of the major divisions, though it is not always stressed. The "Proem," for example, opens with a reference to dawn ("How many dawns, chill from his rippling rest"), at dead center ticks off noon ("Down Wall, from girder into street noon leaks"), goes on through the afternoon ("All afternoon the cloud-flown derricks turn"), and ends in deep night after the "traffic lights" that "skim" the surface of the bridge in the early evening have been stilled ("Under thy shadow by the piers I waited;/ Only in darkness is the shadow clear").[23] (Unterecker 17)

Some critics of Crane's poem have called its many divisions incoherent—fragments that, in the end, don't come together into any kind of meaningful whole. But Unterecker's notice of the twenty-four hour action of the poem suggests that Crane uses this standard division of time as a unifying principle in what can otherwise be seen as a very disjointed work.[24] This same unifying principle is a hallmark of the day-long novel, especially in its modernist origins, where the constraints of the standard time frame provide a coherent

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[23] Unterecker also notes that this is only one "of a number of temporal patterns that can be recognized in the poem. Crane insists that 'some men…count…/ The river's minute by the far brook's year.' And his poem is organized as carefully along a January to January scheme as it is along a dawn to dawn one." (Unterecker 17)

[24] The traditional anthological selections from *The Bridge* aptly demonstrate this point—scarcely ever anthologized in whole, *The Bridge* tends to appear only in its more critically acclaimed pieces.

shape to narratives that are otherwise disconnected by vagaries of style, perspective, diction, tone and stream of consciousness narrative.

Crane was a careful reader of Joyce—he came to the defense of the much-maligned *Ulysses* in the pages of *The Little Review* where the novel was first being serially published—and prepared a critical summary of portions of the novel along with passages from it for a friend who had been unable to procure a contraband copy (Fisher 70; Unterecker 8). After reading the novel, Crane glimpsed in Joyce's work a solution to a problem he was confronting in his own poetry. In the words of Crane biographer Clive Fisher the question Joyce's novel in part answered for Crane was how to "affirm the present while writing in the language of the past" (Fisher 150). In an interview with Karl T. Piculin held in March 1977, Unterecker expanded upon the centrality of the condensed time frame and the influence of this Joycean method on Crane's work:

> *Ulysses* gave him an image of the way he could put together a big structure out of stylistically incompatible elements. If you look at *Ulysses,* what you've got is a book in which there are more than a dozen different styles. Each section of *Ulysses* is deliberately written in a stylistically different manner. And the *tour de force* of *Ulysses* is that they add up to a single book, because the characters link them. I think what Crane did was to write a book that was stylistically in a great many modes and link the units by a series of interrelated images. Instead of plot linkage or character linkage, his linkage was time—the coherence of time—and these interconnecting images. The idea of a mythic structure for America is parallel, I think, to what Joyce was doing then in *Ulysses*. He was taking a

> city and using it as a microcosm, representing in the travels of Bloom and Stephen the parallel voyage of Ulysses around the Mediterranean. So his Dublin becomes the world, and Irish Stephen becomes a spiritual exile while Bloom, a Jew, a wanderer, a displaced person, becomes a devoted Irishman. (Piculin 186-187)

Time, images, and mythic structure are the glue that holds *The Bridge* together, and Unterecker indicates that Crane discovered these cohesive elements in the pages of Joyce's *Ulysses*. Whereas character and plot can form another layer of connectivity in the novel genre, the long poem with which Crane was working required more of an emphasis on these three methods. The microcosm of the city is much more of a unifying element in day-long novels than in Crane's poem—although the bridge of Brooklyn Bridge and the city through which the poetic speaker wanders is distinctly New York, and the "interborough fissures of the mind" he wanders is that of the city-dweller, other parts of the poem wander elsewhere across the country and through its history. The Brooklyn Bridge and New York are at the center of the microcosm that is Crane's vision of America as a whole.

Unterecker elsewhere notes other striking similarities between *The Bridge* and *Ulysses*:

> The "plot" of the poem, for example, sounds almost like a digest of Joyce's *Ulysses*. A young man awakens in the early dawn, gazes out over harbour and city, spends a day wandering through the streets of his metropolis, gradually becoming involved in its corruption, and, after agonizing disillusionment and drunkenness—

> a kind of spiritual descent to Hades—comes, at the very end of the poem, in the pre-dawn hours of the next morning, to an illuminating vision of order in which he can accept himself and his world.
>
> During his wanderings in his city, its sights and sounds trigger memories both of his own youth and of the youth of his country, its history and its methodology. (Unterecker 8)

Although Unterecker is comparing *The Bridge* to *Ulysses*, he might have easily been describing the similarities between either of these and Asch's *Pay Day*. Reviewers noted the similarity of Asch's novel to Joyce's Ulysses at the time of the publication of *Pay Day*, but largely as a failed attempt to adopt Joyce's method. The Society for the Suppression of Vice also noticed the similarities, however, and attempted to stop publication of *Pay Day* as it had ten years earlier with the serial publication of *Ulysses*. Morris L. Ernst was the civil rights attorney who successfully defended both novels against the charges of obscenity leveled against them. In the case of *Pay Day*, however, the negative attention attracted to the novel by the trial was reflected in a largely negative critical reception. The judge in the case against the publishers of *Pay Day* ruled in its favor in part because Jim's thoughts and behavior were not perceived to be endorsed or encouraged by the text in which it appears. The realism of Asch's portrayal of Jim and his world was deemed uninteresting enough to be either a threat or an accomplishment. The mediocrity and dullness of vice—in Jim's case, drunkenness, laziness, lechery, violence, and profligacy—were reasons for what the author later tersely described as the novel's "suppression" even after the censor had been lifted.

The differences between Asch's Jim Cowan, Joyce's Bloom and Dedalus, and Crane's poetic wanderer reveal differences between the writers' perspectives on the nature of history, nation, freedom, and belonging in works that otherwise share many similarities. For both Joyce and Crane, the guides they choose for their day-long journeys are what Horace Gregory calls "highly sensitized individuals"—Dedalus is the young artist, and Bloom is unusually observant, a man possessed of a natural curiosity and intellectual interests (Gregory 96). Both men represent the experience of the exile. Crane's speaker is also of a highly tuned sensibility, connecting disparate parts of his contemporary experience in the modern world with history and literature. Crane himself saw the role of the poet as that of seer and voluntary isolate, a myth-maker whose "conceptual imagination…resolves a general subject into an individual experience—one which it again dissolves into something universal and timeless" (Cowley 100).

Jim Cowan is not possessed of a heightened artistic or intellectual sensibility, and the only thing he sees are perceived personal slights, self-aggrandizing fantasies, and remembered scenes of failure, rejection, and humiliation. Jim's un-heroic and unattractive character ended up being the main reason Asch's novel was cleared of obscenity charges—the virtue of no reader could possibly be threatened by a desire to imitate someone like Jim Cowan. But Asch's choice of such an unattractive, low-brow protagonist for his novel is indicative of his unique take on modernism, America, and the day-long novel. The poster-child of literary modernism is the elite and effete outsider—the "highly sensitized individual" whose extraordinary artistic, intellectual, or visionary abilities set him apart and force him into various forms of exile (psychological, political, emotional, national, social, or sexual). Jim Cowan is also an outsider, but not in the J.

Alfred Prufrock-Stephen Dedalus-Lily Briscoe mode. His exile is the exile of the modern everyman. Rather than the exceptional mind contending with the light, speed and sound of modern life, Asch gives his reader the mediocre mind contending with it, and exposes all of the anger, frustration, alienation, and despair that results for the average rather than for the artist.

Asch gives us an internal view of Jim Cowan's extraordinary mediocrity through a largely stream of consciousness narrative. The condensed time-frame of the novel—giving us just one night (albeit an eventful and sleepless one) in Jim's life—combined with this mode of narrative makes Jim Cowan's characterization as immediate as it is fragmented. This is an effect of all of the day-long modernist novels examined here. But while the immediacy and fragmentation of Joyce and Crane's characterization of highly sensitized individuals gives readers an artistic and intellectual vision of the world, Asch's immediacy and fragmentation gives readers a vision of a world filled with frustration, anger, and alienation without the mitigation of an artistic or intellectual sensibility.

Although both may be described, significantly, as both modernist and twenty-four hour visions of America, the distinction between the poetic and the novelistic vision is an important one. The generic distinctions between poetry and prose often blur in modernist literature, as the style of prose becomes more imagistic, lyrical, and fragmented, and the style of poetry becomes more dialectic, dialogic, fragmented, and less clearly structural. The poetic language of Crane's work allows him a certain thematic flexibility, juxtaposing images and ideas without concern for the necessity of girding a narrative in structural elements like character or plot. The imagism movement within modernist poetics emphasized the centrality of the image to a poem's structure and meaning, as

opposed to form or narrative, and even poets who disavowed or conscientiously moved away from this strict dependence upon the image in their work could not help but be influenced by the most prominent pieces of imagism.

In his essay on "Modern American Poetry," Cary Nelson explains how in *The Bridge*, Crane was responding through his own long poem to the pervasive influence of T. S. Eliot's monument to fragmentation, impersonality, and allusion in *The Waste Land*:

> […] *The Bridge* chooses commercial enterprises and construction projects as images of both greed and transcendence […] it creates a unifying myth out of the most resistant materials. Reacting to Eliot's *The Waste Land*, both poets [Crane and Muriel Rukeyser] wrote long poem sequences that were American rather than international. Crane also wished to substitute cultural optimism for Eliot's bleak pessimism and to imagine that collaborative human work could offer some hope for the future. (Nelson 87)

Crane's commitment to creating a uniquely American vision of hope from the tools of fragmentation and collage that Eliot showcased in *The Waste Land* is distinctly a poetic project. He re-focuses the global pessimism and allusiveness of Eliot's modernist monument into a self-consciously American long poem of optimism, ingenuity, and unity that builds upon a mythical version of American history and literary tradition, and does so within a highly structured and traditional poetic form. As Mutlu Konuk Blasing explains it, "Crane plays against each other his two major influences—an Eliotic formalism with its roots in French symbolism, and a Whitmanic organicism" (Blasing 188). Within this play of influence, the "unifying myth" of America is created out of the

"most resistant material" of time. The temporal configuration of the poem is an ironic deconstruction of tradition that both subverts and upholds it.

In *American Poetry: The Rhetoric of Its Forms,* Blasing identifies four rhetorical models in American poetry—each of which, significantly:

> […] imply different temporal configurations […that] posit temporal relationships, both between the intratextual axes of a poem and between its language and extratextual experience. The different internal time-structures of the four rhetorical models not only clarify the conception and function of poetic form that distinguish one poet's practice from another's, but explain a given poet's or poem's relationship to the tradition that would prefigure it. (Blasing 13)

Crane's poetry belongs to what Blasing terms the "ironic" or "anomalous" rhetorical model of American poetry first recognizable in the work of Emily Dickinson, and later also in the work of John Ashberry. Crane and Ashberry's poetry are both "deconstructions in the ironic phase," that emphasize differentiation—of categories, structures, grammar, language, arguments—for the purpose of ambiguity and discontinuity (Blasing 10). These intentional ambiguities and discontinuities are, of course, the very grounds upon which *The Bridge* was dismissed by critics for lacking a clear, central vision. The lack of a clear, central vision—or, its "diacritical interplay of fusion and diffusion," as Blasing puts it—may be exactly his structural and rhetorical point (Blasing 189).

Blasing identifies the temporal framework of the ironic or anomalous mode of American poetry as "ahistorical": "belated to rhetoric itself and thus forever removed

from a prior authority" (Blasing 14). This distance or removal, however, enables the ironic model to comment upon the validity of the forms it deconstructs. Crane's dominant symbol in his greatest work is a symbol of this ironic distance—the bridge that marks both separation and unity:

> The bridge, then, is a historical embodiment of the rift-design that structures the poetic word. As such, a bridge represents a generic symbol—as Heidegger, in fact, argues—spanning the spatial and temporal cleavage that it deals. Thus the grammar that "conjugates" timeless space, dispersing in declensions and syllables, can also be a
>
> > …Choir, translating time
> > Into what multitudinous Verb the suns
> > And synergy of waters ever fuse, recast
> > In myriad syllables, --Psalm of Cathay!
> > O Love, thy white, pervasive Paradigm…
>
> The "Psalm" that is a "pervasive Paradigm" is not only a model or representation of "Love," but a temporal "declension" of it, since a second meaning of "paradigm" is a model of grammatical conjugation or declension. The systole-diastole of such a language as Crane's constitutes a generic-genetic pulse that coheres and disperses as it records "time's readings, time's blendings" (*CP,* 64). (Blasing 197-198)

Crane's "temporal idiom" is "ahistorical," and the ironic, deconstructive distance of his poetic bridge allows him to craft a vision of an ahistorical, unified America (Blasing 199). As an inheritor and amalgamator of many forms—Dickinsonian irony, "Whitmanic

organicism," "an Eliotic formalism with its roots in French symbolism"—Crane's vision, like his symbolic bridge, straddles many temporalities and historical moments without ever becoming totally a part of one. Crane's day-long poem is—in rhetorical mode and poetic model—timeless.

Crane's vision of America in *The Bridge* is fragmented, and one of the loudest criticisms of the poem as a whole has always been the extent of its fragmentation. But the ultimate purpose of all of his pieces is unity and synthesis. Allen Tate was an early critic of Crane's poem and its overt Romanticism:

> The poem is emotionally homogeneous and simple—it contains a single purpose; but because it is not structurally clarified it is emotionally confused. America stands for a passage into new truths. Is this the meaning of American history? The poet has every right to answer yes, and this he has done. But just what in America or about America stands for this? Which American history? The historical plot of the poem, which is the groundwork on which the symbolic bridge stands, is arbitrary and broken, where the poet would have gained an overwhelming advantage by choosing a single period of episode, a concrete event with all its dramatic causes, and by following it up minutely, and being bound to it. In short he would have gained an advantage could he have found a subject to stick to…he falls back upon the intensity of consciousness, rather than the clarity, for his center of vision. And that is romanticism. (Tate 119; 122)

It is interesting that Allen Tate's assessment of the *The Bridge*'s shortcomings mark almost exactly the divergent approach Asch took with *Pay Day*. In letters and written

accounts from throughout his life Asch expressed his sense of disconnection and rootlessness—his search for a concrete idea of America was constant and lifelong, an obsession to understand the country he called home for most of his life but in which he never felt he entirely belonged.[25] Asch lacked Crane's Romantic vision of American history and the "passage into new truths" the nation represented in the poet's vision of the future. Unable to see this Romantic vision, Asch instead depicted what he did see—a lost, angry, frustrated, and disvalued young man struggling against life in the modern world. Almost as if he was taking Tate's advice for Crane's poem, Asch chooses the "concrete event and all of its dramatic causes" of the Sacco-Vanzetti execution as the event and subject to which the vagaries of Jim Cowan's consciousness is bound. The night-long time frame and the historical event provide the clarity and structure for the "intensity of consciousness" depicted through Jim Cowan—but the result is not the Romantic vision of America Crane had in mind.

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The crime of which Nicola Sacco ("the good shoemaker") and Bartolomeo Vanzetti ("the poor fish peddler") were convicted occurred on April 15, 1920, a little over seven years before their execution was finally carried out. The trial itself lasted for about six and a half weeks in the swelteringly hot summer of 1920, and in the intervening years

[25] In a letter to his mother dated 15 January 1936, Asch explains the sense of rootlessness that consumes him: "For the last several months I have been thinking about the problem of myself, trying to explain myself what I am, and what is my beginning, roots, to what do I go back to? For years now I had been thinking that I go back to nothing, that I have no roots. The fact that I was torn out at the age of eight or nine from Poland and taken to a different, to a French culture, and then again torn out and taken to a newer, to an American culture, that really had not yet become a culture; that I never learned Hebrew, that I never learned to accept anything as the background, as the truth, and the thing from which one begins:--all made me think I was nothing, I really as a personality did not exist; really nothing had formed me, nothing valid, interesting, important. I was unique; my father was a writer, I lived the life of his development; he at least had a background, he had his little village, he had the Jewish law, he had a certain definite culture: Kutno. I did not." The typescript of this letter may be found in the Nathan Asch Collection, Archives & Special Collections, Dacus Library of Winthrop University in Rock Hill, SC.

of repeated appeals and renewed investigations, the accused languished in their Massachusetts prisons as the decade of the twenties roared on outside.

The names and faces of Sacco and Vanzetti first began to appear in print during the late spring and early summer of 1920, when the United States was still in the midst of its first Red Scare, between the years 1917 and 1920. Following the conclusion of World War I in 1919 and the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917, the United States entered a period of heightened fear of anarchism and Communism. Labor unionists and those who opposed the war and conscription were bundled together with anarchists, communists, and revolutionaries as dangerous radicals who threatened the physical, fiscal, governmental, and ideological well-being of the United States. A rash of legislation restricting immigration and toughening penalties for sedition and espionage accompanied a slough of illegal deportations, searches, seizures, arrests, and detainments of suspected leftist political agitators as fear, anxiety, and xenophobia rose to feverish levels across the country.

These fears and anxieties were not entirely unfounded. A series of mail bombings in April and May 1919 targeted more than thirty prominent officials and public figures across the country, from the mayor of Seattle and a Georgia senator to John D. Rockefeller. These mail bombs were followed in June of the same year by a series of even more powerful bombs, these delivered by hand to the homes, offices, and churches of public officials who had suppressed suspected agitators and radicals. The most famous of these bombs blew the front off the Washington, D.C. home of Attorney General A. Mitchell Palmer late one night as his neighbors Franklin D. and Eleanor Roosevelt were just returning home. In the ninety minutes following the explosion at Palmer’s house,

bombs exploded in Philadelphia, Cleveland, Pittsburgh, Boston, New York, and New Jersey. Among the rubble of all of these explosions was found the same pink anarchist flyer. That fall and early in 1920, the targeted Attorney General ordered a series of raids targeting labor groups, immigrants, and suspected radicals that came to be known as the Palmer Raids. Later that spring, the story of Sacco and Vanzetti would revive much of the same fear and anxiety that had motivated the raids a few months earlier. Many of those raids had taken place in the same Massachusetts industrial towns where Sacco and Vanzetti lived and worked and the crime of which they were accused had taken place.

Although little has ever conclusively connected one or both of the accused men with the armed robbery and double homicide outside of a shoe factory in Braintree, Massachusetts, it is known for certain that both Sacco and Vanzetti were ardent anarchists and active within the anarchist community. The series of bombings that had occurred in the spring and summer of 1919 were connected to Luigi Galleani and his followers (known as *Galleanisti*), an anarchist leader and author of a well-known bomb-making manual. Sacco and Vanzetti were both admitted *Galleanisti*—although the extent of their involvement in the 1919 bombings is not known, it is almost certain that they were in some way complicit. The sister of the man who died planting the bomb at A. Mitchell Palmer's home came to live with the Sacco family after her brother was killed, and on the night of Sacco and Vanzetti's arrest they had been hiding anarchist literature with the man suspected of planting a bomb in a Milwaukee church that killed ten law enforcement officials when it exploded in 1917. The same man was later a suspect in the Wall Street bombing of September 1920 that killed thirty-six people and injured four hundred more. Every Sunday Sacco and Vanzetti met with other members of Gruppo

Autonomo, a cell of Italian anarchists and saboteurs. Both men were openly in favor of armed insurrection. Upton Sinclair wrote that Vanzetti "was not the pacifist he was reported under the necessity of defense propaganda. He was, like many fanatics, a dual personality, and when he was roused by social conflict he was a very dangerous man" (Watson 17).

In his 2007 book, *Sacco and Vanzetti: The Men, the Murders, and the Judgment of Mankind*, Bruce Watson explores the Romantic idealism behind groups like Gruppo Autonomo and the *Galleanisti*:

> Sharing poetry, strumming songs, dodging cops, anarchists cultivated a romantic aura of masculinity that resonated with disillusioned Italians like a Verdi opera…Anarchists answered [fear of chaos should government be abolished] with an unshakable faith in "the people." Left to their own devices, people would band together in "mutual aid," forming workshops, communes, and cooperatives. To the anarchist, all defects in society and human nature sprang from an oppressive class system protected by government, sanctioned by the church, enforced by militias. Eliminate the system and humanity would rise. (Watson 26)

The bloody means of anarchy were to the end of freeing the innately good in people from the oppression of the class system. An atheistic faith in the good of humanity built the bombs that maimed and killed its members. The oppressed were men like Sacco and Vanzetti—hard working, industrious men who were devoted to their families and came to the United States in hopes that they could build better lives for themselves and their loved ones. Racism, a war, a highly disparate distribution of wealth—all of these conspired

against those plans, and as the dream of what life in the United States could be moved farther and farther away, their political beliefs became more and more fanatical. As Watson elsewhere explains, Sacco and Vanzetti were not alone in this radical transformation:

> With one small percentile of Americans holding *half* the nation's wealth, the tension between social classes was explosive, and, as Vanzetti would learn, the divide turned many moderates into Socialists and some Socialists into anarchists. (Watson 20)

Anarchy's Romantic and idealistic vision of the future was so dramatic a vision of unity that it required the complete dissolution of any system or structure that divided people, so dramatic a vision of unity that effecting it required blowing to pieces the people it sought to free along with the people who oppressed them.

Sacco and Vanzetti were arrested and tried in an atmosphere of rarified fear. Terrorism, rampant crime, violent labor disputes, a first world war, gigantic class divisions, and the perceivable threat of revolution marked the beginning of the nineteen-twenties with uncertainty and darkness. But the years Sacco and Vanzetti spent behind bars brought about dramatic changes in the nation they dreamed of violently revolutionizing. Although the world may not have been any less uncertain, it was suddenly brighter, bolder, and more confident. The Jazz Age had arrived in America, and a new leisure class was emerging. 1927, the year Sacco and Vanzetti were finally executed, was in many ways the zenith of the decade. It was the year of Lindbergh's transatlantic flight, of Al Jolson and *The Jazz Singer*, of Babe Ruth's sixty homeruns. The United States was still enjoying the years of "Coolidge Prosperity." But crime was still

rampant, and in a year where notorious gangster Al Capone boasted the nation's largest income, many Americans saw the execution of Sacco and Vanzetti as a sign that the U.S. was finally getting tough on crime.

For many, Sacco and Vanzetti—as men, activists, legal example, cultural icons, media circus, and international *cause célèbre*—represented the shift that had taken place between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Traversing and dissolving national boundaries, demonstrating the failure of systems of justice, illustrating the tenuous and representative fate of the individual within a modern, industrial, and class-driven society, Sacco and Vanzetti stood for the changes and uncertainties that many people feared, no matter where one stood in the matter of their guilt or innocence. For their supporters, they represented the failure of the system designed to protect the two men, and for their detractors, they stood for the chaotic forces in the world that threatened to overthrow the system altogether.

August 1927 was a tumultuous and violent month in a violent and tumultuous year. The execution was originally scheduled for August 3 but was stayed at the last minute to allow for a last round of investigations. That month there were bombings in New York subways, a Philadelphia church, the home of the mayor of Baltimore, and a Washington, D.C. factory that printed Ku Klux Klan literature. There were threats of blowing up skyscrapers in Manhattan, and protection around President Calvin Coolidge was tripled. Many of these bombings and threats were linked to the *Galleanisti* and other groups protesting the execution. Protests around the world turned violent, and newspapers were filled with opinions for and against extending mercy to the two men.

Jim Cowan was only one of many out wandering the streets on the night Sacco and Vanzetti were killed. Around the world, people waited for news of the execution, protested it both before and after, or simply walked all night in wonder and disbelief. "Life felt very grubby and mean," Katherine Anne Porter remembered of that night, "as if we were all of us soiled and disgraced" (Porter 44-45). As news that the execution had finally taken place spread around the world, grief gave way to more violence, and the *Galleanisti* voiced their displeasure with more bombings.

Asch's choice to set his day-long novel on the night of the Sacco-Vanzetti execution grounds the novel in the concrete historical reality critics like Allen Tate found missing from Hart Crane's *The Bridge*. The center of Asch's vision is of a historically grounded America glimpsed through the filter of an average individual's consciousness and experience. This stands in contrast to Crane's vision of an America that "stands for a passage into new truths," and is glimpsed through an "intensity" rather than a "clarity" of consciousness (Tate 119; 122). The historical event of the Sacco-Vanzetti execution provides the clear symbolic grounding for the portrayal of the individual consciousness in Jim Cowan. At the same time, this filter of Jim's consciousness takes the historical event of the Sacco-Vanzetti execution out of its dramatic, international, and almost decade-long context and places it instead in the context of an average individual's everyday experience. One of Tate's main criticisms of *The Bridge* was that it did not recognize that there is more than one version of American history, and so found itself unable to show us the one that "stands for a passage into new truths." Asch's novel resolves this potential problem by giving us a single night in American history as a single American experiences it. The reader is always acutely aware that the version of American history being

presented is Jim Cowan's, and it can only be one of many. For Asch, there were at least as many versions of American history as there are people who think of themselves as Americans. The filter of Jim's consciousness experiencing the event of the Sacco-Vanzetti execution also places *Pay Day* apart from many of the other literary works that responded to and protested the event. The filter of Jim's consciousness allows Asch to explore the event without passing judgment on the two convicted men or the system and society that put them to death.

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In Alan Spiegel's *Fiction and the Camera Eye: Visual Consciousness in Film and the Modern Novel*, the author explores four different ways modern writers have incorporated film into their literary work. The lengthy cinematic section of Asch's *Pay Day* seems to belong to the first category, placing him alongside such other writers as Aldous Huxley, John Dos Passos, Graham Greene, James Agee, Wright Morris, Vladimir Nabokov, William Burroughs, and Alain Robbe-Grillet. Spiegel identifies these writers as those who have consciously developed literary art in "imitation of photographic art forms" and have admitted to the influence of film upon their literary work (Spiegel 79).

The cinematic section of *Pay Day* is a literary montage describing a film montage. Spiegel describes montage as a dialectic of juxtaposed images. In the film montage that Jim Cowan and his date go to see in the novel, the juxtaposed images represent a single day, from dawn to dusk, across the United States. The images are presented in the novel in an almost chapter-long series of descriptive sentences:

> The busboy in an all night lunch room sleepily mopped the floor.
>
> The first workman left, lunchbox under his arm.

> A door opened, and a housewife, head covered with shawl, shuffled into a near-by store.
>
> The water sprinkler passed. A taxi hurried by.
>
> An alarm clock rang, and a hand reached to shut it off. Another alarm clock. Still another.
>
> The housewife came out of the store, can of milk and loaf of bread under her arm.
>
> The mist was rising.
>
> The tractor was started, the great combine attached, and followed by help it rolled to the fields. (Asch, *Pay Day* 137)

The preceding passage describes a series of early morning scenes. The montage continues in this manner, chronologically, through the rest of a day. Workers of both sexes, both blue and white collar, urban and rural, as well as children, families, couples young and old, are depicted as they wake up, go to work, go through the work day, take a lunch break, head home at quitting time, have dinner, go out on a date, tuck the children into bed, listen to the radio, and finally retire. Interspersed with images of people going about their days are images of rural and urban settings—fields, forests, city skylines, busy roadways, waves crashing on a shore. This lengthy section constitutes the only break with the narrative style of the rest of the novel, as well as with the consciousness of Jim Cowan. This break serves an important narrative purpose:

> For Joyce and many other novelists in the first quarter of this century, the montage principle represents a way of presenting truncations and limitations within the field of vision at the same time that it provides a

> way of going beyond them; it dramatizes partialized fields without sacrifice of authorial neutrality. Montage allows the author something very like the luxuries of omniscience, the unique status of the epic artist, yet without the need for bias that usually accompanied this position in the past. It allows him to open up the single perspective by juxtaposing it with other perspectives; it provides for scope and depth, crosscurrents of dialectical tensions, balances and contrasts, new conflicts and new continuities. In this sense montage is for the novelist of concretized form an act of liberation and transcendence, offering him the one viable literary means in the twentieth century for releasing epic and panoramic energies while also allowing for a modern, or relativistic, epistemology. (Spiegel 174)

The transition away from the omniscient exposition of the nineteenth century narrator to the limited interiority and heightened visualization of the twentieth century mode of narration means that authors had to find new ways of introducing multiple perspectives, conflicts, plotlines, and characters. The highly visualized concepts of film fit easily into this narrative niche. For an author like Asch, who has chosen not the “heightened sensibility” of the intellectual or artist for his main character, but rather the extremely pedestrian interiority of someone like Jim Cowan, the introduction of these visual concepts through the direct description of film montage in the text allows the author to transcend the limits of his main narrative perspective and introduce a whole new set of ideas and perspectives.

In *Pay Day*, the film described mirrors the structure of the novel that describes it—the day-long film resembles the night-long novel in the limited temporality of its narrative. The theme of the film also mirrors themes in the novel. This 'day in the life of America' is meant to represent an idealistic vision of national unity—an extremely homogeneous vision of diversity demonstrating traditional American values like hard work, the nuclear family, and the prosperity inherent in a capitalist system—complete with white picket fences and amber waves of grain. Conspicuously missing from the film's version of America are racial diversity, sexual equality, abject poverty, ostentatious wealth, crime, birth, death, or any indication of conflict, discrimination, or violence. The film begs a similar question to the historical events of the night of August 23, 1927—whose America is this?

In his introduction to the Proletarian Literature Series edition of *Pay Day*, Warner Berthoff describes the cinematic section of the novel as a prose-poem. Spiegel describes the preoccupation of American modernists with film and montage as a legacy of the American poetic tradition, and differentiates the American use of film in the novel with the European use of film in the novel, as well as between the montage of a poet like Whitman and the montage of a novelist like Asch:

> Because Joyce's perspectives, even within their union, strive to maintain their integral distance from one another, their combined effects are always multileveled and always manage to evoke a variety of resonances and analogies. The Dos Passos montage operates essentially on a single level, and no matter how disparate the juxtaposed perspectives seem to be, they always manage to come together and merge in one strong, clear gesture of

> social protest. Where Joyce seems to arrive at dialectical montage by way of Flaubert and Dickens, Dos Passos seems to arrive at additive montage by way of an essentially American tradition, the tradition of Melville and Whitman, the epic catalogers and list-makers of American space.
>
> From *Leaves of Grass* to *Of Time and the River*, and even beyond, a long line of serious American novelists and poets has tried to cultivate large and amorphous literary forms in an effort to embody their sense of the diversity and plenitude of American space, the vastness that lives in their minds and imaginations: a dream of a great American space that has neither beginning nor end; for Cooper it was a forest; for Melville, an ocean; for Whitman, an open road that wanders beyond all boundaries and finally ends where it began, in the poet's song…
>
> Thus, montage effects seem to come naturally, as it were, to American artists…In the thirties the American artist's drive to encompass the infinitude of the American space joins with a sense of social outrage, of a dream betrayed, of a greatness pillaged by a minority of the rich and the powerful. Now the large-scale literary forms and the additive montage effects serve the various forms of anguish, bitterness, and lament and thus shape the characteristic profile of the protest literature of the thirties…(Spiegel 179)

The cinematic section of *Pay Day* connects Asch's novel to Crane's poetic vision of America, and the American literary tradition Crane represents. Asch's catalog-and-list type of montage is introduced to ask critical questions of the vision of America Crane and

others are depicting in their work. The Romantic vision of America that handed down the catalog-list celebrating the vast diversity of the nation is here being interrogated by an inheritor of that literary mode. At the same time that this vision is large and multitudinous, it is also exclusionary, racist, sexist, classist, and xenophobic. On the night Sacco and Vanzetti were executed so was the ability of many people to believe in an America that represented justice, freedom, and equality. [26]

The cinematic montage is analogous in many ways to the project of literary modernism in its American, British, and European manifestations. As Walter Benjamin describes in his 1936 essay, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," film and modernist literature both dismantle apparent unities into visible and abstract pieces and examine them singly before attempting to put them back together again:

> Evidently a different nature opens itself to the camera than opens to the naked eye if only because an unconsciously penetrated space is substituted for a space consciously explored by man. Even if one has a general knowledge of the way people walk, one knows nothing of a person's posture during the fractional second of a stride. The act of reaching for a lighter or a spoon is familiar routine, yet we hardly know what really goes on between hand and metal, not to mention how this fluctuates with our moods. Here the camera intervenes with the resources of its lowerings and liftings, its interruptions and isolations, its extensions and accelerations, its enlargements and reductions. The camera introduces us to unconscious

[26] Interestingly, Crane's *The Bridge* also contains a cinematic section in its proem, "To Brooklyn Bridge":

> I think of cinemas, panoramic sleights
> With multitudes bent toward some flashing scene
> Never disclosed, but hastened to again,
> Foretold to other eyes on the same screen… (9-12)

> optics as does psychoanalysis to unconscious impulses. (Benjamin 236-237)

In the case of Asch's novel, the cinematic montage dismantles a particular version of American identity in order to insert an interrogation of its validity into the center of a novel that is itself questioning the validity of certain notions of America through its historical setting. The limitations of the night-long time frame perform a similar dissecting function, limiting the temporality of the narrative in order to depict a smaller but more detailed picture. Dismantling, dissecting, and interrogating these traditional unities, Asch's novel suggests that unity is nothing more than an American dream.

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*Pay Day* is in many ways a historical novel. The particularities of the historical events that took place on the night of August 23, 1927 ground the vagaries of the individual's consciousness being portrayed through the modernist narrative style in the "concrete event with all its dramatic causes"—the very structural and envisioned clarity Allen Tate found missing from Crane's failed and Romantic vision in *The Bridge*. Tate damns *The Bridge* for its Romanticism—to his view, the fragmentary nature of modernist style requires a clearer structure or vision to make its pieces cohere into a meaningful whole. In Tate's condemnation of *The Bridge* we hear New Critical echoes of T. S. Eliot's famous take on Joyce's *Ulysses* in his November 1923 essay, "'Ulysses', Order, and Myth":

> In using the myth, in manipulating a continuous parallel between contemporaneity and antiquity, Mr. Joyce is pursuing a method which others must pursue after him. They will not be imitators, any more than

> the scientist who uses the discoveries of an Einstein in pursuing his own, independent, further investigations. It is simply 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. (Eliot 177)

Asch adopts Joyce's "mythical method" in *Pay Day*, but not according to Eliot's prescription (Eliot 178). The "futility and anarchy" of contemporary history is evident in both the execution of Sacco and Vanzetti and the dimly lit consciousness of Jim Cowan, but the ordering and controlling myth that gives the story its structure and vision is the temporal framework of the novel. For both Joyce and Asch, the temporality of their twenty-four hour novels is more of an ordering and controlling principle than any use of antique mythical parallel, and rather than giving "shape and significance" to the "futility and anarchy of contemporary history," it serves to further enhance and extrapolate from it. Asch's vision of America exposes its futility and anarchy by "manipulating a continuous parallel" between the futility and anarchy of his protagonist's consciousness and that of the historical events of August 23, 1927 within the ordering temporal framework of the twenty-four hour novel. It is a modernist vision of America in which the experience of lived time is the only myth that provides order and vision.

## Chapter 3: Richard Wright's *Lawd Today!*: The Crisis of Cultural Nationalism in the Twenty-four Hour Novel

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"I, too, am America." –Langston Hughes

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*Lawd Today!* was the first novel[27] Richard Wright wrote, and the last of his novels to be published—posthumously, in 1963. The brutal realism and pessimism of Wright's first novel, as well as its lack of traditional plot and characterization, are two reasons for the difficulty he encountered finding a publisher for it. Another and probably more plausible reason was the reluctance of white publishers in the 1930s to print a story so rife with the frankly and often crudely depicted sexual lusts and obsessions of black male characters—lusts and obsessions that often involve white women. Also probably the least highly acclaimed or read of his novels, the book is a formal and experimental departure from the style for which Wright is best known in works like *Black Boy* and *Native Son*. Showing more clearly his debt to the form and style of high modernism, Wright's epigraphs from Van Wyck Brooks, Waldo Frank, and T. S. Eliot illustrate his melding of realism and naturalism with modernist philosophy and formal tradition. Penned in the 1930s, a period when Wright's Communist sympathies and affiliations

[27] The first novel Wright wrote was completed in Chicago in 1931. In her biography of Wright, Hazel Rowley explains what we know of that novel now, and how it was lost:

> "It was about a black woman he called Myrtle Bolden, who grew up on a plantation in the South, taught school, married, had four children, then went North, where she was abandoned by her husband and eventually died of hunger and neglect. Wright gave her his grandmother's maiden name, Bolden, but it was his mother's life he was thinking about. 'Our women are the most circumscribed and tragic objects to be found in our lives,' he would write in *12 Million Black Voices*. 'They are black, they are women, they are workers.'
>
> Then, one day, there was no food in the house. Wright, in despair, tore up his novel and burned it. The next morning he did the thing that shamed him more than anything else: he went to the Cook County Bureau of Public Welfare to plead for bread. (Rowley 66)

were at their height, many critics see the story of Chicago postal worker Jake Jackson as a critique of petit bourgeois culture within the Depression-era African-American community. Like *Ulysses* and *Pay Day*, *Lawd Today!* is set on a very particular date: Lincoln's Birthday, Friday, February 12, 1937. Throughout the novel, the voice of a radio broadcast is heard describing the Civil War, the Gettysburg Address, the Emancipation Proclamation, and other hallmarks of a presidency that dramatically altered the status of African-Americans. The contrast between the solemnity and magnitude of these descriptions and the troubling futility and rage of Jake's life amid the violence and poverty of the African-American community of which he is a part functions as a descant[28] providing ironic social and historical commentary on the state of cultural nationalism in the interwar U. S.

In part based upon Wright's own experiences as a nightshift letter sorter in Chicago postal service in the 1930s, the novel's depiction of Jake Jackson offers a grim picture of interwar, Depression-era African-American life. Black cultural nationalism was a major concern of many African-American writers during this period. The effects of Northern urbanization and modernity were thought by many to be separating African-Americans from their common cultural experience of rural Southern folklore and life. For many others—including Wright—this common cultural experience was rather an "unwanted common black culture" born of the shared traumas of slavery and segregation (Dawahare 452). Wright saw multi-culturalism and modernity as the keys to unraveling a

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[28] As William Burrison explains in "Another Look at *Lawd Today*: Richard Wright's Tricky Apprenticeship":

> Lincoln's birthday is "used as a kind of counterpoint preface to the action of each major part, provides effective bathos…It also functions as a reminder of the Civil War at a time in America when another civil war, following race riots and a seething mood of discontent among whites themselves whereby 'one half of 'em's mad at the other" (p. 158), seemed not so improbable. (Burrison 438-9)

violent, racist, and sexist "psychology of nationalism" (Dawahare 451). With his characteristic combination of Marxism and psychoanalysis, in *Lawd Today!* Wright paints a picture of social malaise, but does not posit an antidote. The original title of the novel was, tellingly, "Cesspool." The alienation and anonymity of urban life that pervades so much of modernist writing becomes, for Wright's protagonists, an even darker and more sinister location. For oppressed minorities and workers, the modern city is less like a waste land and more like a cesspool—a stinking abyss of geographical, occupational, and cultural dislocation that is ridden with abject poverty, disease, and violence and from which there is no escape. The elements of the modern city that make it the perfect setting for modernist literature—people, media, technology, industry, energy, light, and sound—also make it the setting for conflict, stratification, pollution, oppression, exploitation, and violence.

The lengthy depiction of Jake's shift sorting letters at the post office in Part Two: "Squirrel Cage[29]," suits the purposes of both making an explicit claim about the alienation and isolation of the modern laborer as a cog in a capitalist machine, and using the stream of consciousness narrative in a day-long timeframe to emphasize the quotidian psychological existence of such a cog. As Jake hand-sorts letters from around the country, shifting his swelling feet and allowing his mind to wander, the reader is made excruciatingly aware of the inanity and futility of Jake's occupation:

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[29] A "squirrel cage" is a reference to the treadmills found in the cages of many pet rodents, including squirrels. Interestingly, it is also a rotor in a type of induction engine. The rotor is a cylinder mounted on a shaft, and takes its name from its resemblance to the aforementioned type of rodent exercise equipment.

In her diary entry for Monday, May 26th, 1924, Virginia Woolf describes the experience of writing her own twenty-four hour novel, *Mrs. Dalloway*, in similar terms:

> And I like London for writing it, partly because, as I say, life upholds one; and with my squirrel cage mind it's a great thing to be stopped circling. Then to see human beings freely and quickly is an infinite gain to me. And I can dart in and out and refresh my stagnancy. (Virginia Woolf, *A Writer's Diary*, 61)

He lifted a full sack of mail from a truck, tossed it to the table, dragged it towards him, dumped it, and flung the empty bag over his shoulder into a canvas gurney. He rubbed his hands together and looked at the mail. He did not want to touch it. Then he began to sort, letter by letter. The cold mail chilled his fingers. Already his throat was getting dry from dust; he wished he had remembered to buy a plug of tobacco. He heard Slim's cough bubbling in his throat incessantly like water bubbling in a fountain. Bob stood about a foot away from the table, half bent over, afraid to let the bordering of wood touch his middle anywhere. In order to take as much weight off his feet as possible, Jake leaned heavily against the table as he worked. His feet began to sweat and the calves of his legs numbed slowly. As time passed all the noises gradually fused into one general din and imperceptibly dulled his senses. A strong light directly above his head worried his eyes and he looked at it about every five minutes, frowning. The eight long hours loomed ahead like a series of black pits, and he tried not to think of them. He could not find a suitable position for his body; he rested his weight on one side for a few moments and then the other. He crossed his feet, uncrossed them, stood awhile with one foot on top of the other, then straightened, sighing. The edge of an envelope caught irritatingly under the tip of a thumbnail and he threw it aside with such violence that Slim asked with concern:

"What's the matter?"

"Nothing," he breathed. (Wright, *Lawd Today!*, 130-131)

An approximate third of the novel is given to Jake's shift in the "squirrel cage" of the Chicago post office, and approximately a third of Jake's day is spent here. As he listens to the tubercular cough that is slowly and painfully ebbing away his friend Slim's life, and watches Bob's syphilitic contortions as he struggles to make it through the shift with only one scheduled and strictly monitored bathroom break, Jake's thoughts pursue themselves around their squirrel cage. The sense of impotence, frustration, and paralysis—or, rather, like the treadmill metaphor invoked by the section title, constant motion without any forward movement—that dogs Jake through his day results in much of the violence and rage that consumes him and of which his violent treatment of the mail is only a tiny fraction. The novel begins and ends with Jake's brutal physical and psychological abuse of his wife, Lil. His habitual mistreatment of his wife almost costs him his job in the course of the day, but the novel ends with another bloody fight and Jake drunk and unconscious on the floor as Lil cries in the dark:

> "Lawd, I wish I was dead," she sobbed softly.
>
> Outside an icy wind swept around the corner of the building, whining and moaning like an idiot in a deep black pit.[30] (Wright *Lawd Today!*, 219)

The "deep black pit" of Jake and Lil Jackson's lives is full of senseless violence and impotent rage that makes the ennui and emotional paralysis that have become the clichéd hallmarks of modernist writing look like a child's game in comparison. The violent cycles of their lives are products of a racist and sexist class system that is the true object of Wright's brutally incisive gaze in this novel. Wright shows only a tiny fraction of this endlessly repeating cycle of Jake's life in the same way that he shows us only a tiny

[30] This Faulknerian sentence would echo again in that famous passage of *Native Son*, as Bigger murders Bessie: "Outside in the cold night the wind moaned and died down, like an idiot in an icy black pit" (Wright, *Native Son*, 236).

fraction of the endlessly repeating cycles of racism, sexism, and class struggle that have been perpetuating stories like Jake's as a part of a national legacy. Wright employs the modernist trope of the day-long novel to emphasize the crisis of cultural nationalism and the very intimate violence it inflicts upon Jake and the people around him. *Lawd Today!* is the only modernist day-long novel to focus on the experiences of a minority and member of the working class, and in his capable hands, the subgenre becomes a powerful mode of social and political commentary as well as philosophical and narrative theory. Time is a unifying element in this novel as well as in the others examined, but in the context of Jake Jackson's life, the picture brought together by the day-long frame only emphasizes the cruelty of the endlessly repeating cycle, and the brutal violence of life lived inside of it.

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Penned in the mid-1930s while he himself was working as a nightshift letter-sorter in the Chicago post office, Wright was unsuccessfully seeking a publisher for the manuscript of *Lawd Today!* in 1937, at the same time that his essay, "Blueprint for Negro Writing" first appeared in the pages of *New Challenge*. In this influential essay, Wright argues for the necessity of the African-American writer to be aware of the nationalist implications of his life and writing while at the same time seeking to transcend those implications and articulate the experiences of African-Americans. For Wright, the psychology of nationalism was racist, sexist, and violent. Multi-culturalism and modernity—through Marxism and psychoanalysis—were the keys to escaping it. As Anthony Dawahare explains, the "imagined community" of nationalism was perceived by Wright and others as being more divisive than communal:

> Like many contemporary theorists, Wright viewed nationalism as an historical phenomenon that constructs what Benedict Anderson has termed "imagined communities" for people who in fact are anonymous to each other but wish for social communion. Wright also perceived nationalism as a divisive political ideology that must be supplanted with a Communist ideology he believed necessary for the emancipation of the working class. But Wright's most significant contribution is his synthesis of Marxist and psychoanalytic concepts in his effort to portray critically the insidious appeal of nationalistic ideas to the infantile desires of working-class men. For Wright, the danger posed by nationalism was its unconscious appeal to the psyches of male workers. (Dawahare 54-55)

In order to combat the "insidious appeal of nationalistic ideas" and the falsified and divisive nature of its "imagined community," Wright sought to raise the consciousness of how these ideas infiltrate and damage the psyche of the worker, and of the African-American worker in particular. Indeed, one of the most pervasive and obvious aspects of Jake Jackson's character is his almost complete lack of awareness—of himself, especially, but also of the world and everyone around him. He blindly asserts the innate superiority of a nation that subjects him to a menial and abject existence as a second-class citizen in a racist system of oppression. He perpetuates both the system itself, and the stereotypes upon which the system feeds. Wright's portrayal of the murky stream of Jake Jackson's consciousness emphasizes the insidiousness of the nationalist ideals being forced upon the psyches of workers and minorities. The effects of such ideology are both politically and intimately violent.

By opening himself to the multi-cultural and the modern in order to more fully and completely articulate the experience of African-American workers, Wright viewed the African-American writer as especially responsible for this vital consciousness raising:

> Negro writers must accept the nationalist implications of their lives, not in order to encourage them, but in order to change and transcend them. They must accept the concept of nationalism because, in order to transcend it, they must *possess* and *understand* it. And a nationalist spirit in Negro writing means a nationalism carrying the highest possible pitch of social consciousness. It means a nationalism that knows its origins, its limitations, that is aware of the dangers of its position; that knows its ultimate aims are unrealizable within the framework of capitalist America; a nationalism whose reason for being lies in the simple fact of self-possession and in the consciousness of the interdependence of people in modern society.
>
> For the purposes of creative expression it means that the Negro writer must realize within the area of his own personal experience those impulses which when prefigured in terms of broad social movements, constitute the stuff of nationalism…
>
> …This raises the question of the personality of the writer. It means that in the lives of Negro writers must be found those materials and experiences which will create a meaningful picture of the world today. Many young writers have grown to believe that a Marxist analysis of society presents such a picture. It creates a picture which, when placed

> before the eyes of the writer, should unify his personality, organize his emotions, buttress him with a tense and obdurate will to change the world." (Wright, "Blueprint", 101-102)

The current state of nationalism Wright describes in "Blueprint for Negro Writing" and illustrates in *Lawd Today!* is one that has dispossessed African-Americans, and particularly lower middle-class city-dwellers like Jake Jackson and his friends[31]. Distanced from their cultural origins by geography, work, and racially prejudiced media, urban African-Americans during the Depression era were at a triple-remove from a sense of a nationalist culture. In Wright's own experiences—of leaving the South for the "opportunities" of the urban North in Chicago; of being relegated to a series of menial working class jobs and denied educational opportunities; of being constantly subjected to a racist media bombardment touting a insidious, nationalist ideology—he had more than enough of the "personal experience," "materials and experiences," necessary to "create a meaningful picture of the world today." In *Lawd Today!* Wright crafts this meaningful

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[31] Mark Sanders explains in *Afro-Modernist Aesthetics and the Poetry of Sterling A. Brown* that after the Great Migration

> African American individual and cultural identity was forced to adjust to the new demands of the city and industrialization. As a result, African American culture entertained new concepts of individuality and tried to rationalize new feelings of alienation. (Sanders 11)

Wright's earliest work can be seen as his own grappling with these new and often failed concepts of individuality in conflict with the divisive and alienating ideologies inherent to these new demands. Anthony Dawahare refers to these failed concepts of individuality as "'vague' cultural nationalists":

> One therefore finds cultural nationalist identifications most eroded in his male urban protagonists from the 1930s, namely Jake Jackson from *Lawd Today!* And Bigger Thomas from *Native Son*. Jake and Bigger represent Wright's view of what happens when a first generation of "debased" male feudal folk are subjected to the modern ideologies and practices prevalent in Northern urban centers (specifically Chicago): They become, as Wright explains of Bigger, "vague" cultural nationalists because, even as they are forced to identify as black, they do not identify with the black culture of their parents ("How Bigger Was Born" 527); Bigger, Wright tells us, "had become estranged from the religion and the folk culture of his race" (513). Bigger and Jake are "Negro nationalist[s] in a vague sense" only because of their "intense hatred of white people" (527), which serves (in place of a strong folk identity) to strengthen their identification as "black." (Dawahare 57)

picture through his Marxist framework and personal experiences, as well as a narrative temporality that frames his meaningful picture into a literal "today."

Wright also perceived that the historical trajectory of these divisive nationalisms was accelerating in the twentieth century:

> As he writes in *12 Million Black Voices* (1941), Wright perceived "a complex movement of debased feudal folk toward a twentieth-century urbanization" that has occurred at a historically rapid pace. The more or less homogenous black consciousness and cultural community resulting from provincial, Southern material conditions was in the process of being eroded by modernization […] For Wright, the feudal black peasantry's liberation lay not in preserving or developing a black 'national' culture in the South, but in an historical overcoming of 'black' identity and cultural nationalism. In other words, Wright only provisionally accepts the unified cultural identity of the postwar 'New Negro,' since he favors a 'multi-cultural' identity in the process of further socialization by modernity…Wright lauded the historical movement toward modernity wherever he saw it. (Dawahare 56)

Modernity—through the Communist Party and psychoanalysis—would bring about this desired multi-cultural identity Wright embraced. For Wright, a specifically black cultural nationalism would perpetuate the divisiveness of nationalist ideologies that were already so damaging to the African-American community. The articulation of this alienated African-American experience would raise the consciousness of those alienated, make them aware of their place in the insidious ideological system, and allow them to control

and shape their own identities outside of those ideologies. Marxism's emphasis on the value of the worker and work, in combination with the emphasis on the individual's experience in psychoanalysis, provided Wright with an ideological vehicle for giving shape and meaning to one's experiences of alienation and oppression. The narrative temporality of the day-long or twenty-four hour subgenre provided the structural vehicle for a story that would emphasize the oppressed worker's individual experience within a larger social system.

Jake Jackson and his wife and friends are trapped in a system of which they are largely ignorant. Jake's ignorance in particular is employed as a tragicomic[32] element of the novel. As he sits down to the newspaper and breakfast in the morning, his wife and the reader are treated to his commentary on current events, from Hitler's rise to power to Einstein's theories of space and time, and the problem with Communism:

> Jake turned the page.

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[32] William Burrison places *Lawd Today!* squarely within a long American tradition of the tragicomic:

> Undoubtedly, Richard Wright had a comic genius. But the times he wrote in as a black American called more for an angry tragedian. Wright was certainly angry enough. Nor was he bereft of the gift to dramatize and articulate through fiction, essay, and biography the grievances, as they really were, of more than eight million black folks. As critics have observed, *Lawd Today* does contain "naturalistic" elements reminiscent of Crane's *Maggie* (the beating scenes with Lil, especially), Lewis's *Babbitt*, Farrell's *Studs Lonigan*, and certain objectivist features—i.e., media infiltration—in Dos Passos and Joyce. But in his use of comical manias (bordering on the old personality typology of the four humors), of a tricky psychological narrative perspective, of puns and symbol play, of fool/trickster motifs, and of ironic foreshadowing and justice, Wright was writing in a vein closer to the tragicomic tradition of Poe's "The Cask of Amontillado" and "Hop-Frog," Hawthorne's "My Kinsman, Major Molineaux," Melville's *The Confidence Man*, "Benitio Cereno," and "Bartelby," Dostoyevski's *The Double*, Crane's "The Blue Hotel," Hemingway's "The Killers," Faulkner's "Spotted Horses," Kafka's "The Metamorphosis," *The Trial*, and *The Castle*, and even, for all the minute realism, Joyce's *Dubliners* and *Ulysses*—a tradition which Ellison was after him to follow in. One senses as well a kinship with Claude McKay's earlier Gingertown stories (such as "Brownskin Blues," "The Prince of Porto Rico," "Mattie and Her Sweetman," and "Truant") and with some of the later bittersweet Jesse B. Simple vignettes of Langston Hughes. *Lawd Today* is, after all, the closet Wright was to come to the spirit and style of the Harlem Renaissance. (Burrison 439-440)

COMMUNISTS RIOT IN STREETS OF NEW YORK.

"Gawddamn! Wonder how come the police let them guys go on like that? Now them guys, them Commoonists and Bolshehicks, is the craziest guys going! They don't know what they want. They done come 'way over here and wants to tell us how to run *our* country when their *own* country ain't run right. Can you beat that for the nerve of a brass monkey? I'm asking you? Why don't they stay in their own country if they don't like the good old USA? …And over in Roosia where they in power folks is starving to death. And now they want to put us in the same fix. What's wrong with folks when they act like that? If they get in power and tell you to do something and you don't do it, then they lines you up against a wall and shoots you down! That's no lie, I was reading it just the other day in the *Tribune*…"

"But Jake!"

"Hunh?"

"Folks is starving over here, too."

"Aw, you talk like a fool!"

"The papers said so."

"Nobody but lazy folks can starve in this country!"

"But they can't get no work."

"They don't want no work!"

"And they burned a colored man alive the other day."

"Who?"

"The white people up in this country."

> "Shut up! You don't know what you're talking about!"
>
> "Well, they *did*!"
>
> "How you know?"
>
> "It was in the papers."
>
> "Aw, that was down South, anyhow."
>
> "But the South's a part of this country."
>
> Jake stopped chewing and stared at her.
>
> "Woman, is you a *Red*?" (Wright, *Lawd Today!*, 32-33)

Jake's ignorance and confusion provides a constant illustration of how he is caught between fraught identities and nationalisms. He idealizes a South of his boyhood filled with swimming holes and fishing and sunshine, but shakes his head over the Jim Crow laws and hard manual labor that sent him northward. He fantasizes about a black empire taking over the world but takes pride in the power of the U.S. military. He dismisses the unemployed and hungry as being lazy but is forced to beg for his job and borrow money in the course of the day. He is infuriated by the racial discrimination he and his friends have experienced but thinks Hitler's plan to exterminate the Jews shows good sense, and resents West Indians and Filipinos. Jake's sense of himself and his place in the world is at best fragmented and at worst delusional. The violence and futility of Jake's life and that of his wife and friends constitute a cultural cesspool—a literal shit-hole for meaning and purpose. Wright indicates in "Blueprint for Negro Writing" that the route out of the cesspool does not lie in what is at best a troubled American nationalism, but rather through a grasping and understanding of one's place in it as a means of controlling and transcending it. For characters like Jake Jackson and Bigger Thomas, these insidious

nationalist ideologies spread and take root through a pervasive, racist, and divisive media presence.

The "media infiltration" William Burrison identifies as being common to modernist narratives like those of Joyce and Dos Passos is certainly prevalent in *Lawd Today!*—in the Jake's reading of the newspaper at the breakfast table, in the persistent sound of the radio broadcast commemorating Lincoln's birthday, in the junk mail that fills the Jacksons' box, and in the work that Jake and his friends do as nightshift letter sorters for the postal service. All of these aspects of "media infiltration" in the novel cast a very sinister shadow on the idea of an "imagined community" being created by these media, however. Jake's reading of the newspaper reveals both the pervasive influence of fascism and racism in the world, and his blind embrace of the same fascist and racist ideologies that oppress him. The radio broadcast touting Lincoln's accomplishments only sharpens the hypocrisy of a society that celebrates the man who legislated human and civil rights but that still blatantly disregards those rights. The junk mail Jake idly sorts exposes many of the insidious avenues of racial and class exploitation for sale in everything from beauty products to religion. The mail that Jake and his friends sort make them integral cogs in a nationalist, capitalist, and communications system that oppresses and exploits them as workers and citizens—even as it uses them to create the "imagined community" from which they are at once excluded but of which they are an essential part.

When Jake opens the newspaper he joins Benedict Anderson's "imagined community" of simultaneous, vernacular readership:

> […] the very conception of the newspaper implies the refraction of even "world events" into a specific imagined world of vernacular readers; and also how important to that imagined community is an idea of steady, solid simultaneity through time. (Anderson 63)

Jake's participation in this simultaneous readership heightens his shared temporal experience even as it also heightens his alienation, oppression, and lack of self-awareness in the world to which he is connecting. The media of the newspaper is one element of temporal experience—like the unity created by the temporal frame of the day-long novel in which it appears—that exposes the disconnection inherent within apparently unified systems. Jake's mind-and-body-numbing labor as a letter sorter makes speedy global communication by post possible, connecting a nation and world through the written word. This is another example of a simultaneous, "imagined community" in which Jake is at once excluded and an integral part. The mailroom could be a much more grim version of Joyce's "room of the infinite possibilities" that has the potential to unite human experience in time and increasingly simultaneous global media. Instead it is a squirrel cage in which Jake and his co-workers are the rats that make the system that oppresses them possible. Wright's contribution to the subgenre of the twenty-four hour or day-long novel uses all of these elements of "media infiltration" to heighten the sense of simultaneity in order to trouble the sense of "imagined community."

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Characters like Jake Jackson and the more famous Bigger Thomas are in part the products of a society that attempts to silence and prevent them from articulating their experience. The pervasive media presences in both novels and in the lives of both men

model the destructiveness of the nationalist ideologies those medias promote. As Vincent Pérez explains:

> …*Lawd Today* consists largely of scenes of Jake and his Black working-class friends interacting with the urban media culture in the form of radio, newspapers, movies, and advertisements. Upon first reading this experimental modernist novel, one is struck by the ubiquitous media references, reflecting Wright's conviction that media culture pervaded the lives of urban Americans at every level. On the one hand, the novel offers the best evidence for Pudaloff's "mass culture" approach. From the moment that Jake wakes up (listening to the radio) until he returns home late the next morning, he seems to be at the mercy of media culture. As Pudaloff remarks, "early in the novel there are a pointed series of lessons about Jake's enslavement to the media as he responds to the newspapers at the breakfast table" (159). Pudaloff correctly argues that Wright constructs Jake in these sections as the embodiment of "false consciousness." Though written when Wright was a member of the Communist Party, the novel presents Jake as both anti-Communist and anti-Semitic. Wright thus portrays him in these passages as archetypal "mass culture" viewer/consumer—passive, ignorant, manipulable, and therefore unable amid the proliferation of media texts to perceive his true interests. (Pérez 160-61)

The proliferation of media texts illustrates Jake Jackson's alienation and victimization while providing ironic social and historical commentary in a self-reflexive structural

element. The radio program in honor of Lincoln's birthday that opens each of the three sections of the novel and is heard throughout each section has been characterized as a kind of modern "chorus" or "counterpoint" in the text (Margolies 93, Burrison 438-9). The effect is not harmonious, however—the words of the program deliberately clash with the narrative of Jake's day; a day filled with a violence, futility, and rage that belies the results of the Civil War and Lincoln's presidency being touted on the program. Jake's inability to ever completely escape from the broadcast in the course of the day (he can even hear it in his dream as he awakes in the morning), his ignorance of how it functions as a pervasive descant to his own life, and its disharmonious punctuation of the story both helps structures the novel and defines the destructive media presence.

Craig Werner points out that "the journalistic discourse pictured in *Native Son* contributes directly to Bigger's death," and in many ways Jake's day-long journey to a puddle of blood on his bedroom floor is another example of how a pervasive and racist media presence is contributing to a person's demise (Werner 188). The newspaper he ignorantly interprets, the junk mail touting get-rich-quick schemes and miracle cures, the movie posters displaying voluptuous women and their heroes, and even the pornographic pictures his co-workers share follow Jake through his day, fill his thoughts, and lead him farther and farther from a meaningful and purposeful existence. Ross Pudaloff likens this destructive media presence to another form of slavery:

> [Jake] finds a spurious substitute for freedom in the mass media. Early in the novel there is a pointed series of lessons about Jake's enslavement to the media as he responds to the newspaper at the breakfast table…[he is] unable to distinguish mass produced fantasy from personal desire…Both

> Jake and Bigger do not just believe in the values of the movies; they also locate their objects of desire solely within those mass-produced fantasies. (Pudaloff 159-160)

The "mass-produced fantasies" in which Bigger and Jake locate their desires are in part so insidious because they detract from the formulation of personal identity. The identities offered through these fantasies are products of the sexist and racist cultural identifications that deny them meaningful group identities as well as individual ones. These identities are located in images, appearances, and statements that have no basis in reality[33]. Jake repeatedly attempts to construct his identity—and his vision of reality—from these baseless, racist, and sexist fragments, and the result is an increasingly fragmented sense of himself that culminates in lying unconscious and bleeding in shards of broken glass.

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In "Blueprint for Negro Writing" Wright is describing exactly what he has attempted to do with his first surviving novel: "create a meaningful picture of the world today." Jake Jackson's world is meaningful if bleak, violent, and pathetic. The experience of Jake and men like him is rife with the meaning and implications of a nationalism that has separated them both from the culture from which they came and the one in which

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[33] One part of this baseless construction is seen in Jake's careful attention to his appearance. The careful selection of a colorful suit and the painstaking straightening of his hair are two of the first things we see him do in the novel, and his appearance is one of Jake's primary concerns. But as Linda Hamalian explains:

> Jake's life in *Lawd Today* can be examined in terms of the groups to which he belongs and the status to which he aspires. As a member of the Black lower-middle class of the 1930s, Jake worries too much about appearances: he wants to be certain that the man on the street will recognize him as more than a common day-laborer. Hence, he devotes a great deal of time to selecting his clothes. There are a number of rather long passages describing exactly what Jake decides to wear on the day that we first meet him and exactly what intricate process he undergoes in order to straighten out his kinky hair. Jake's values are depicted as superficial, mere reflections of the group attitudes and prejudices untouched by introspection or insight. (Hamalian 74-75)

they now live. The picture Wright creates of a day in the life Jake Jackson and his friends is one of fragmentation, brokenness, and alienation—but it is a picture "unified," "organized," and "buttressed" by a meaningful artistic vision and a unique narrative temporality.

*Lawd Today!* is often characterized as at best an ambitious apprentice novel, and at worst, an interesting failure:

> An ambitious first novel but not a successful one, *Lawd Today* lacks the substance, the thickness of texture which would characterize his later novels. It probably would have been more effective as the short fiction that Wright had originally planned it to be. Nonetheless, *Lawd Today* is an interesting trying-out of the motifs and techniques that Wright would develop more fully in his later fiction. The only theme that remains unsprung is the search for self-identity, and perhaps the absence of that theme, which subsequently would elicit some of Wright's best writing, contributes to its ambiance of insubstantiality. (Hamalian 73)

The "unsprung" theme of a search for self-identity may itself be the theme of *Lawd Today!* and the key to its success. Jake's search for himself is unsprung because of all of the ways that he is impeded from seeking or finding it—primarily by the racist and sexist cultural nationalisms with which he is surrounded. The structure of the novel—both in the limited temporal frame and the pervasive media descant that punctuates the narrative—place Jake's fragmented identity and aborted understanding of it at the center of the novel.

Not all critics agree with the assessment that *Lawd Today!* is an ambitious failure, however, and some find an ironic answer to criticisms of Wright's later and more acclaimed work in his first novel:

> *Lawd Today*…is in some ways more sophisticated than his second [novel], the more sensational *Native Son*, which established his popularity, and to a large extent his reputation. It is ironic that this should be so in view of the fact that *Native Son* has subsequently come to be regarded as a brilliant but erratic work by an author who was perhaps ignorant of modern experimental techniques in prose fiction. For had *Lawd Today* been published when Wright completed it, such an impression might never have gained acceptance. If the novel reveals anything about its author, it indicates that Wright had learned his Joyce, his Dos Passos, his James T. Farrell, his Gertrude Stein only too well. It is not that *Lawd Today* is a hodgepodge of the styles of the above authors—actually, Wright is usually in good control of his material—but that Wright here appears as much interested in craftsmanship, form and technique as he is in making explicit social comment. Indeed, social comment derives from the way Wright structures the novel—twenty-four hours in the life of a Negro postal worker—and the theme does not confine itself to Negro oppression but says something about the very quality of life in urban America. (Margolies 90)

The temporal frame of the novel not only shapes and structures the narrative, but forms an essential part of its theme, creating through the fragmented portion of the repeating

and destructive cycles in one man's life a unified picture of broken community and culture. As Lewis Leary points out in "*Lawd Today*: Notes on Richard Wright's First/Last Novel":

> …we know that it is the only day that Jake will ever have because all other days will be like it, because Jake has been doomed to tedious days…Richard Wright in *Lawd Today* dared the commonplace, the temperate religion, in which neither posturing nor defiance is allowed, but which André Gide has reminded us is the invariable habitation of art. (Leary, "LT" 419)

Not all twenty-four hour novels focus on tedious days, of course—and in many ways Jake's day, although grim and oppressive, even as such is far from tedious. It ends, after all, with being pick-pocketed by a prostitute, fighting with a pimp, and Jake being stabbed by his wife with a piece of window glass. But Leary here gestures toward a fundamental principle of the twenty-four hour subgenre and its modernist origins. The day as a distinct temporal unit is metonymic and emblematic—a small piece of time and of life that represents their totalities—the modernist preoccupation with exposing the microcosm that exists in what appears to be only a fragment. The "daring" of the twenty-four hour novel and of Wright's contribution to the subgenre is not derived from focusing on the commonplaceness or tediousness of quotidian experience, but instead from allowing that which is fragmented and broken to become a unifying and structuring principle. In this way it parallels Wright's goal for black writers in "Blueprint for Negro Writing"—to take the broken pieces of a tragic cultural history and represent them in such a way that they can be used for unification and uplift.

Craig Werner describes African-American culture as uniquely and explicitly expressing the characteristic principles of the modernism from which it has so often been segregated:

> At least since Du Bois produced *The Souls of Black Folk*, Afro-American culture has explicitly addressed the central concerns of modernism: fragmentation, alienation, sense-making. DuBois's description of the "double consciousness" emphasizes one particular experience of the fragmented world, an experience that alienates the individual from both the disintegrating community and a secure sense of self. According to Du Bois, the Afro-American experiences "a world which yields him no true self-consciousness, but only lets him see himself through the revelation of the other world. It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others" (364)… Understood from a Du Boisean perspective, then, the central problem confronted by Afro-American culture closely resembles that confronted by mainstream modernism: the alienated individual experiences a profound sense of psychological and cultural disorientation in a world characterized by an accelerating rate of change; he or she subsequently attempts to regain some sense of coherence. The primary difference between Afro- and Euro-American responses to this dilemma can be seen in the tendency of many Euro-American modernists to experience their situation as individual and, to some extent, ahistorical, while Afro-American

> modernists generally perceive a communal dilemma deriving from historical and political forces. (Werner 186-187)

Richard Wright's project in *Lawd Today!* marries the styles, techniques, and structures of mainstream Euro-American modernism to the "communal dilemma deriving from historical and political forces" through the story of a single day in the life of one man. Often regarded as a less successful antecedent to the novels that would make him famous, *Lawd Today!* exemplifies Wright's developing views of the relationship between modernism, nationalism, and African-American culture.

Gillian Johns explains that Wright's twenty-four hour novel was rejected by publishers as a result of the success of this marriage of modernisms he arranged:

> …Wright biographer Michel Fabre speculates that he intended with *Lawd Today!* to present African American readers with "informative" story about their own transition from Southern agrarian to Northern urban life, writing: "[H]e wanted to show Blacks themselves how the shallow, materialistic American ideals actually harmed their community, and second, by unveiling the prejudices of the black bourgeoisie, to reveal the necessity for political education to make the masses aware of their plight" (154-55). But Fabre adds: "Publishers, unfortunately, thought that a 'Negro' novel should be exotic, not informative, while the Communists, repudiating this picture of black life, since it naturally destroyed all their clichés, actually discouraged Wright from trying to get it published" (155). What is indeed of note, then, about the novel's failure with mainstream publishers—potential value for black readers—is that they saw its action

> as too episodic or, as Fabre writes, "just a series of episodes without any real plot" (136). A day in the life of a character bound to his body's needs is nothing if not episodic, but the episodic picaresque narrative—according to Frye the narrative twin of comic drama (45)—served early slave narrators as a way of drawing "the chaos and decadence of the world"; Charles H. Nichols writes that the "rootless, alienated soul" at its center and the "episodic march" of random events offered in "realistic detail" direct readers toward "new kinds of perceptions" about the political organization of the society figured" (283-84). (Johns, 266-67)

The twenty-four hour novel subgenre was viewed by mainstream publishers who rejected *Lawd Today!* as not likely to appeal to African-American readers. Johns points out, however, that the highly episodic nature of the subgenre aligns it with earlier African-American narrative forms. The conventions of the picaresque novel—a realistic and often satirical[34] account of the adventures of a trickster or rogue—lend themselves well to the sense of the rootless alienation of the individual upon which so much of modernist literature focuses. The critique of a slave-holding society intended by the comic but realistic picaresques of early slave narratives find their Depression-era counterpart in Wright's first novel. Jake Jackson's "unsprung" search for identity makes him into a tragicomic picaresque figure that is impeded from self-knowledge by the society his story critiques.

Craig Werner cites Monique Chefdor's definition of "meta-physical picaresque" as a genre that "unites apparently distinct strains of modernism" as one genre at work in

[34] Johns points out in this same article that when *Lawd Today!* was first published in 1963 it was received as satire (252).

Wright's early novels (Werner 192-3). In the meta-physical picaresque the episodic narratives move beyond social satire and the adventures of the rogue figure to examine a more existential and psychic crisis. *Lawd Today!* is one example of this meta-physical picaresque, taking the tradition of the comic rogue figure common to early slave narratives and picaresques and uniting it with a critique of Depression-era American society. The episodic style of narrative common to picaresque, slave narrative, and modernist literature underscores the fragmented and alienated nature of all of these subgenres. The endless cycle of futility and rage taking place in the squirrel cage of Jake Jackson's day, and the dark horror of the novel's final scene create emphasizes the tragic element of an often comically ignorant character. In *Lawd Today!* Wright is marrying Euro-American and African-American modernism, as well as crafting a meta-physical picaresque.

The choice of the twenty-four hour novel subgenre for Wright's meta-physical picaresque is a telling one. The nod to James Joyce's *Ulysses* was never lost on critics, and for many of them made the adoption of a European modernist form and style far too explicit and forced. Werner calls it a "conscious rewriting of *Ulysses*" and Michael Fabre felt that it demonstrated an "often clumsy desire to emulate *Ulysses*" (Werner 190, Fabre 470). Yoshinobu Hakutani points out that Wright had read *Ulysses* while living in Chicago[35], but that for all of its emulation, there is an important stylistic departure in *Lawd Today!*:

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[35] Michael Fabre points out that James Joyce and D. H. Lawrence were two of Wright's favorite authors and that both had a profound influence on his own work:

> Although he read some Aldous Huxley and as a budding poet was definitely influenced by T.S. Eliot, whom he quoted in *Lawd Today*, Wright's contemporary British favorites were undoubtedly James Joyce and D.H. Lawrence. He still remembered Lawrence's sooty landscapes when traveling through England in 1953, but the handling of human

> The most important difference is that of style and technique. Joyce's parodies of English authors and his use of interior monologues, free association, question-and-answer form, and classical allusions are well blended in describing Bloom's world. On the other hand, Wright's use of radio broadcasts, card games, historical references, and his parodies of political systems are all interesting in themselves but may not be well suited for the one-dimensional characterization of Jake Jackson. (Hakutani 166)

Again in this assessment Jake Jackson's characterization is faulted for being shallow and "unsprung" when this is likely Wright's intention for his main character and part of his social critique in the novel, but Hakutani's mention of this perceived fault in conjunction with Wright's stylistic choices for *Lawd Today!* emphasize the connection between Wright's use of a pervasive media presence and the form and structure of the twenty-four hour novel. Hakutani would do well to remember the media presences in *Ulysses,* from newspapers and popular songs to advertisements and pulp fiction, but Wright's use of

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> relationships was the major interest (one might say fascination) which *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, bought in 1933, *Women in Love*, bought in 1937, and still more *Sons and Lovers*, held for him. He was not rich enough to secure a copy of *Ulysses* even in the thirties, and he borrowed the book, a part of his omnivorous readings while working at the Chicago Post Office. The structure and several episodes of *Lawd Today* dealing with twenty-four hours in the life of a Black Chicago postal worker, show a sometimes clumsy desire to emulate *Ulysses*. *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, to which Black Boy was compared by a few critics, is another definite source, and Kenneth Kinnamon has convincingly argued for the derivation of the last paragraph of "Bright and Morning Star" from the end of "The Dead." Wright always admired Joyce immensely, and when Time quoted him as saying that *Wasteland* by Jo Sinclair had thrilled him more than anything he had read since *Dubliners*, this was no light praise on his part. (Fabre 469-470)

In "Blueprint for Negro Writing" Wright himself was careful to point out that the intellectual heritage of a writer has little to do with race:

> Eliot, Stein, Joyce, Proust, Hemingway, and Anderson: Gorky Barbusse, Nexo and Jack London no less than the folklore of the Negro himself should form the heritage of the Negro writer. Every iota of gain in human thought and sensibility should be ready grist for his mill, no matter how far-fetched they may seem in their immediate implications. (Wright, "Blueprint" 103)

elements like radio and junk mail is used far more heavy-handedly and as a stylistic force dominating his main character's consciousness. The use of these media elements as a stylistic technique emphasizes the fragmentation of Jake Jackson's consciousness and identity.

Reinhard W. Sander describes *Lawd Today!* as "a document of a Black writer's coming to terms with the concept of the American Dream" (Sander 94).The fragmentation of Jake Jackson's consciousness and identity at the hands of racist and sexist cultural systems constitutes the main part of Wright's social critique in *Lawd Today!*. The twenty-four hour novel subgenre lends itself particularly well to the portrayal of this fragmentation, and to Wright's purposes as an African-American writer in particular. Both Jake Jackson and Bigger Thomas lack the self-knowledge and cultural understanding to articulate their experiences and make themselves heard above the din of competing cultural nationalisms. Wright's vision, as articulated in "Blueprint for Negro Writing" and illustrated in his early novels, is to articulate these experiences for the Jake Jacksons and Bigger Thomases of the world. The experiences articulated are dark, violent, and despairing—they begin in rage and end in bloodshed. The characters that inhabit these worlds are ignorant, angry, and everywhere prevented from being able to confront and understand their own identities. In the same way that the articulation of these fragmented identities is a step towards overcoming the cultural estrangement that creates them, the temporal framework of the novel in which they appear unites a fragmented picture. Jake Jackson's day is broken by rage, violence, and ignorance, but brought together into a coherent and meaningful whole by its temporal framework. We watch Jake Jackson awake from his dreams, dress himself, interact with his wife and

friends, go to work, and go out on the town afterward. We hear his views on current events, his considerations of his financial situation, his hopes for his career. We laugh at his ridiculousness and become frustrated with his foolish decisions. It is only one day in the life of Jake Jackson, but in many ways it is every day of his life—an endlessly repeating cycle of rage, violence, and ignorance. The waste land of modernist literature is truly more like a cesspool for the protagonist of Richard Wright's earliest surviving novel—a stagnant pool of alienation and despair in which he is unable to see his own reflection, and from which he is unable to escape.

## Epilogue

The twenty-four hour or day-long novel is born in the early twentieth century and during the modernist period with the four novels studied here. It is only the beginning, however, of a subgenre that extends throughout the twentieth century and into the twenty-first and continues to uniquely address new sites of cultural development and crisis.

The parameters and conventions of the subgenre outlined in the Introduction are sustained throughout the later developments of the twenty-four hour or day-long novel. These parameters and conventions only stretch and shift to accommodate the shapes of new cultural developments and crises. Increasing modes of communication, transportation, media, and technological innovation facilitates an increasing number of connections between nations, people groups, cultures, religions, governments, and social movements. Just as with the modernist cultures examined in the first four examples of the day-long novel, however, these increasing connections paradoxically unite even as they divide and isolate. The pace of globalism is both checked and exacerbated by the schisms created by being connected to people and social systems that might never have had any contact a century ago. Another World War, two atomic bombs, a Cold War, countless partitions and several genocides later, the twenty-four hour novel keeps a record of the ways our experiences of being in time are experiences of both public and intimate violence.

The fragmented identities of the postcolonial subject are particularly well-suited to the fragmented temporality of the twenty-four hour or day-long novel. The daily and now global threat of terrorism creates a newly acute awareness of time, immediacy, and mortality in modern life. The speed and ubiquity of global media and communication

create a new sense of simultaneity and new realms of shared experience. The compression of time and space in the urban loci of the modernist twenty-four hour novel is increased and expanded across the world by the advent of the computer, the twenty-four hour news cycle, and the cellular phone.

The twenty-four hour or day-long novel is a modernist invention that has developed and expanded beyond it origins to become a common mode of storytelling in the novel as well as film. Its constant renewal and perpetuity speaks to its strength and power as a subgenre. Part of this strength and power comes of its structural and topical dependence upon the idea of time and human existence in time. The philosophical, scientific, and psychological debates over the meaning and nature of time are—for all of their abstruseness and esotericism—a common and indeed daily human experience. The shape of all of our great debates, conflicts, and discoveries as well as wars, triumphs, and failures unfold the same way: through time, measured in days. The experience of the day is both relative and universal. The key to the subgenre's power lies in the paradox of life in time.

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