Proust, Woolf, and Narrative Rhythm

LILIAN RÁCZ

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Abstract: This paper offers an analysis of the intersections between temporality and narrative rhythm in Marcel Proust's À la recherche du temps perdu *(1913–1927) and Virginia Woolf's* To the Lighthouse *(1927) within the narratological framework provided by Gérard Genette in his seminal critical work,* Narrative Discourse *(1980). Genette's classical work is a taxonomy of narrative that pays special attention to the way temporality structures prose. Genette introduces concepts such as* anachrony *and* anisochrony *to the analysis of Proust's* roman fleuve *to demonstrate that narrative rhythms emerge through such intricate variations in temporal order and duration. Woolf's prose has been subject to thorough narratological analysis (Banfield, Levenson, Phillips, etc.), including various examinations of temporality in her novels (Auerbach, Ricœur, Sheehan, etc.), but the temporal rhythmic movement in* To the Lighthouse *has not been discussed in the joint context of Genette's narratology and Proustian temporality. This paper seeks to broaden the scope of analysis of narrative rhythm in the Woolfian novel while also highlighting the depth of Proust's influence on Woolf's prose style. I argue that the temporality of* To the Lighthouse*, similarly to the* Recherche*, is characterised by anachronies and anisochronies on the narrative levels of story (*histoire*) and discourse (*discours*).*[1]

This paper is an investigation of time as it is treated in Marcel Proust's *À la recherche du temps perdu* (1913–1927) and Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse* (1927) within the framework proposed by French narratologist Gérard Genette in his critical study, *Narrative Discourse* (1980), originally *Discours du récit* (1972). As one of the prominent

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writers of British literary modernism, Virginia Woolf has been at the centre of academic attention for decades when it comes to gauging the innovativeness of modernist prose.[2] Despite the breadth of research on the form, style, and temporality of Woolf's novels, no endeavour has been made to closely examine the intersections of time and rhythm in her prose within the framework of classical narratology. I offer a review of Virginia Woolf's stylistic, structural, and thematic choices in her fifth novel, *To the Lighthouse*, based, on the one hand, on classical narratologists' differentiation between temporalities of story (*histoire*) and discourse (*discours*), and on the other, on Genette's examination of the *Recherche*. I also consider Genette's conclusions on the *Recherche* in my analysis of Woolf's novel, since the extent of Proust's influence on her prose style and treatment of time can hardly be disregarded, even with a scope as narrow as this paper's. In what follows, I argue that—similarly to what Genette has found in the case of Proust's *Recherche*—anachronies and anisochronies strongly influence the narrative structure of prose. But, while Genette argues for the rhythm-making effect of anisochrony, I argue that the two types *together* create meaning-making textual "rhythms" in the temporal structure of *To the Lighthouse*. I further argue that the sense of stagnation that permeates the novel is portrayed with Genettian anachronies, while on the level of discourse narrative speed and movement are perceivable through varying types of anisochronies.

Genette, Narrative Temporality, and Rhythm

Narrative Discourse is as much a comprehensive and grammar-inspired taxonomy of prose as it is a succinct investigative work of Proustian narratology with newly conceived terminology. Following the formalist-structuralist trend, Genette bases his idea of dual temporality on the distinction between narrative discourse

2 Hungarian researchers, like Judit Bánházi (2024), Nóra Séllei (2012), and Krisztina Kitti Tóth (2017), have published extensively on Woolf, touching on topics such as cyclical time, cultural self-reflexivity, and artistic performance. Narratological perspectives and temporality have been the centre of much attention in international Woolf studies. In *The Phantom Table: Woolf, Fry, Russel and the Epistemology of Modernism* (2000), Ann Banfield observes the modernist form of *To the Lighthouse* as an elegiac novel, while Paul Sheehan (2015) and Jesse Matz (2018) discuss the treatment of time in *To the Lighthouse* from a philosophical perspective. In his chapter written for *The Cambridge Companion to* To the Lighthouse (2015), Michael Levenson uses classical narratology, including Genettian terminology, to examine Woolf's complex use of perspective in her novel.

(*discours du récit*) on the one hand, and story (*histoire*) on the other, with narrative discourse further split into narrating (*narration*) and narrated text (*récit*) (33). This is a dual structure of what Monika Fludernik calls *tokens* and *types*, or of particulars and abstracts, inspired by Saussure's *langue* and *parole* scheme (88).[3] The story-discourse scheme is part of the theoretical lineage of Russian formalists' *fabula* (story) and *sjužet* (plot), especially Vladimir Propp and Viktor Shklovsky. Fabula is the skeletal version of a story, while *sjužet* signifies the different ways the fabula may be narrated (Fludernik 4). Genette was not the only one who made use of this formalist scheme; the most definitive figures of structuralism were all influenced by the nature of the *fabula-sjužet* paradigm. In *Story and Discourse* (1971), Seymour Chatman argues that "the story is the what in a narrative that is depicted, discourse the how," also acknowledging that "the Russan formalists, too, made the distinction" (19–20). In *Introduction to Poetics* (1981), Tzvetan Todorov juxtaposes two narrative levels which he describes as "the universe represented" and "the discourse representing it" (29).[4] Similarly to his contemporaries, Mieke Bal contends in *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative* (1985) that "it is even customary to speak of a double linearity: that of the text, the series of sentences or sequences; and that of the fabula, the series of events" (68). These structural levels are constitutive of narrative texts because they represent one of the most basic principles of storytelling: that the subject and the mode are two entirely separate elements of narrative, and Genette recognises that the existence of story and discourse presupposes separate temporalities on the two different levels.

Genette's concept of story time and narrative time in *Narrative Discourse* is a dual conception of narrative temporality theoretically rooted in Gunther Müller and Chistian Metz's ideas. In "Erzählzeit und erzählte Zeit," an essay included in the collection *Morphologische Poetik* (1974), Müller notably perceives the duality of narrative time, distinguishing between *Erzählzeit,* the time it takes to "consume"

3 The inspiration of linguistics, specifically Saussure, is not new in structuralism or narratology. From the 1950s, linguistics informed Franz Karl Stanzel's morphological typology of narratives as well as the taxonomies of Todorov, Barthes, Genette, Mieke Bal, Gerald Prince, and Wayne C. Booth throughout the second half of the twentieth century. Saussure's definitive influence on structuralism can also be seen in, for example, Barthes's "Introduction à l'analyse structurale des récits" (1966) and Todorov's various works such as "Les catégories du récit littéraire" (1966) or his contribution (the part titled "Poétique") in *Qu'est-ce que le structuralisme?* (1968), written by Oswald Ducrot, Tzvetan Todorov, Dan Sperber, Moustafa Safouan, and François Wahl.

4 *Introduction to Poetics* is the English translation of Todorov's "Poétique" from *Qu'est-ce que le structuralisme?*.

(narrate or read) the story, and *erzählte Zeit*, the time span covered by the story itself (270). Genette also mentions—as his other inspiration—Metz's idea of narrative as a "doubly temporal sequence" (18). Indeed, in *Film Language: A Semiotics of the Cinema*, Metz explains that "there is the time of the thing told and the time of the telling (the time of significate and the time of the signifier)" (18).[5] At the same time, David Wittenberg calls attention to the fact that all "pre-Genettian" endeavours to grasp the "structurally inescapable *gap*" between *Erzählzeit* and *erzählte Zeit* seem to fall short in presenting "the restlessness or volatility" of *Erzählzeit* (122). Perceiving this "gap," Genette considers discourse time "pseudo-time" due to its own dependency on fleeting, easily changing durations. He contends that since "the narrative text … has no other temporality than what it borrows, metonymically, from its own reading," we must "accept literally the quasi-fiction of *Erzählzeit*, this false time standing in for a true time" (34). Discourse time may be understood either as the time it takes for the reader to "consume" the narrative text or as the inner duration of the narrative act. The problem with the first interpretation, why its time cannot be "real" nor steady, is that different readers require different amounts of time to read a text of given length, which makes it impossible to fix one "speed of execution" as the norm (Genette 86). As for the second interpretation, the issue is with the lack of plausibility when it comes to isochrony. Isochrony happens when the duration of the narrating act equals the duration of the narrated story, making it a "reference point, or degree zero" (87). Since narratives normally produce anachronies and anisochronies (that is, variations in order, duration, and frequency on the level of *Erzählzeit*), isochrony remains a hypothetical narrative state (88).

Temporal digressions such as *anachrony* and *anisochrony*, introduced by Genette, highlight time as a definitive thematic and stylistic aspect in the *Recherche* and attest to Proust's technical mastery of managing time in prose (40, 88). More importantly, anachronies and anisochronies are also rhythm-making elements of narrative. Rhythm has remained a notoriously vague concept in narratology as it can describe different aspects of prose poetry. As Fludernik explains, F. K. Stanzel distinguishes between narrative profile and narrative rhythm, where the first is "the ratio of narrative passages to dialogue," while the second is "the sequence of narrative passages, dialogue, comment, and description" (96). Bal notes that "the movement back and

5 Thomas Mann had made a similar distinction as early as 1924, observing the disruption in the fictitious nature of temporality in *The Magic Mountain*. In the novel, he compares the "actual time" of narrative presentation—which he likens to music—to the "imaginary time" of narrative content (541).

forth from present to past to present is the story's basic rhythm" (69). Concerning Woolf, Emma Sutton analyses the literary and musical rhythms of Woolf's early prose in "'Putting Words on the Backs of Rhythm': Woolf, 'Street Music,' and *The Voyage Out*" (2010). Based on Genette's analysis of Proust's text and my own examination of Woolf's *To the Lighthouse*, Genette's concept of rhythm is most suited to describe the temporal structure of Woolf's prose, as it characterises Proust's and Woolf's signature prose style.

Proust's innovation related to narrative rhythm and time contributed to Virginia Woolf's outlook on the possibilities of prose. In 1925, she recommends Proust to a friend as "a modern with a zest," while in 1927, she calls him "far the greatest modern novelist" (*L3* 166, 365). After 1922, her most innovative novels also show the clear influence of his style: *Mrs Dalloway* (1925) with its use of the Bergsonian subjective-objective time scheme,[6] *To the Lighthouse* (1927) with its thematic and formal focus on temporality, and *The Waves* (1931) with its extreme formal experimentation through the intersections of lyricality and narrative rhythm. Still, it is her 1927 novel that is arguably the most directly "Proustian" of her whole *oeuvre*. Owing to the limited nature of this study, I will solely focus on the treatment of time in *To the Lighthouse* (1927), to which, as I argue, Genette's method of analysing *À la recherche du temps perdu* can be applied, showing Proust's influence on Woolf's narrative style.

Genette, Proust, and Narrative Rhythm

According to Genette, anachronies mark "connections between the temporal *order* of succession of the events in the story and the pseudo-temporal order of their arrangement in the narrative" (35). Narrative is inherently linear due to the natural sequentiality of its components; words and sentences normally follow each other

6 Time was a definitive subject of scientific and philosophical studies in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, and Henri Bergson was at the heart of modernising the concept of temporality. His most impactful writing is *Essai sur les données immédiates de la conscience* (1889), translated to English as *Time and Free Will: Essay on the Immediate Data of Consciousness*. In it, he differentiates between external or objectively measurable time and internal or subjectively perceived time, calling the latter *durée*, also known as duration in English (91). Proust knew Bergson personally; he was Bergson's student at the Sorbonne in Paris and later also became related to the philosopher through a family marriage (Bergson married Proust's cousin). Bergson's influence on Proust has been a central topic of academic interest. Among others, Fernand Vial explored the Proust-Bergson connection as early as 1940. In recent years, for instance, Suzanne Guerlac has revisited the topic in her chapter entitled "Proust and Bergson: Fierce Criticality" in *The Proustian Mind* (2022).

in a given order in the written text. Bal explains that narratives continually strive to achieve certain characteristics of visual art, such as "density" or "simultaneity"; and in doing so, they move beyond simple linearity towards more complex structures such as "double linearity" (68). In Bal's words, double linearity is "the text, the series of sentences or sequences" and "the fabula, the series of events" (68). Genette's anachronies are changes in the order of events on the level of Propp and Shklovsky's *fabula* and *sjužet*, establishing a basic textual pulse. As Bal also states, the way linearity is broken relays important information as to the narrative such as the placing of emphasis, effects of aesthetics and suspense, perspectives, and possibilities of interpretation (69). The two main types of anachrony, *analepsis* and *prolepsis* signify retrospective and prospective methods of storytelling. Proust's analeptic narrative technique plays its most significant role in the first volume of the *roman fleuve*, which is probably the reason why Genette did not take anachrony, as a temporal variation, as influential as anisochrony (88).

Yet, the first volume is likely the most impactful in terms of narrative-temporal complexity as well as thematic significance in the series; thus, its anachronous aspect is proportionally all the more emphatic. Proust's prose brims with the purpose of unification through both minuscule and grandiose temporal movements and rhythms. Accordingly, the aging, insomniac Marcel, who is the main narrator and protagonist of the story, starts telling the tale of his childhood by jumping back in time. Admittedly, this would not constitute an irregular narrative in and of itself, but Proust puts his own twist on analepsis. By having Marcel return to his present old age repeatedly from the different stages of the past he revisits, he establishes a "dispatching," rhythmic style of narrative (45). Christian Metz, whose theoretical work admittedly informed Genette's *Narrative Discourse*, argues in *Film Language* that instead of a self-serving stylistic choice, fragmentation and repetition are the central point of the narrative in Godard's *Pierrot le fou* (218–219). This argument also stands for Proust's *Recherche*. As Hugues Azérad and Marion Schmid contend, Proust's novels are "shaped by a productive tension between fragment and whole" (69). Indeed, the temporal fragmentation of the first volume of the *Recherche* creates a powerful sense of continuity despite, or perhaps through, the fragments of an inner sense of wholeness. Accordingly, the anachronous spatio-temporal movement of *Du côté de chez Swann* (*Swann's Way*), which is the first volume of the *Recherche*, presents the protagonist's inner hesitation to start his own story. This points to the "unavoidable

difficulty of beginning" (46) which Proust himself would have also experienced when writing Jean Santeuil, an earlier version of *À la recherche du temps perdu*.

Anisochrony is presented through the varying speed and tempo of narrative. As Genette puts it, "the speed of a narrative will be defined by the relationship between a *duration* (that of the story, measured in seconds, minutes, hours, days, months, and years) and a *length* (that of the text, measured in lines and in pages) (87–88, emphases added). In other words, speed synthesises the temporal and spatial values of the text and shows the relative slowness, fastness, or even steadiness of the storytelling. Genette creates a systematic list of rhythmical variations in speed in the whole of the *Recherche*. For instance, "Combray," the first part of *Du côté de chez Swann,* covers ten years in about 140 pages, while the following significant section in the first volume, "Un amour de Swann," only covers two years in around 150 pages. Another example is the eighteen-month-long story of Albertine narrated, according to Genette's count, in 440 pages which even contains a description of two days that takes up 215 pages (92). The *Recherche* has an overarching pattern of gradual slow-down. As the narrative progresses, it takes Proust increasingly longer, in terms of number of pages, to have Marcel narrate scenes of decreasing duration in terms of hours, days in the story, producing a sense of "*increasing discontinuity*" (93).

The two types of anisochrony, speed and novel-tempo both have the ability to contribute to narrative rhythm. "Novel-tempo" is the result of the "succession and alternation" of narrative movements such as summary, pause, scene, and ellipsis (Genette 94).[7] The basic rhythm of the novel was understood for long as the interchanging of summary and scene, at times complemented by the occasional use of descriptive pause and ellipsis. Todorov, too, observes in "The 2 Principles of Narrative" (1971) that description and narrative "presuppose temporality that differs in nature" (38). Genette points out, however, that Proust uses these movements unconventionally, noting that the "Proustian narrative does not leave any of the traditional narrative movements intact" (112). Instead of recreating the usual novel rhythm of summary and scene, Proust alternates scenes with ellipses while abandoning summaries almost completely in his work. This replacement adds a contrasting "all-or-nothing" atmosphere to his prose. The nature of descriptive pause is also essentially changed in the *Recherche*. Todorov, for instance, explains that

7 Related to memory narratives, Shipra Tholia and Amar Singh discuss in their article that these movements influence the roles of memory in prose. According to them, the organisation of memory and remembering gives rise to the five fundamental rhythms that shape the progression of narrative.

describing something in itself does not mean creating a narrative. Something has to happen, action needs to take place in the form of a change, for instance, for narrative to be rightly established ("The 2 Principles of Narrative" 38). In contrast, Proustian descriptions are active, narratively imbedded contemplations "highly active in truth, and containing 'a whole story'" (Genette 102). In other words, descriptions in the *Recherche* do not put a stop to the natural flow of the story; instead, they constitute narratives in their own right. They are full of "impressions, progressive discoveries, shifts in distance and perspective, errors and corrections, enthusiasms or disappointments" (102).

Genette thus shows in *Narrative Discourse* that Proust boldly upturned almost all normative rules of temporality in narrative. Proust's innovation in prose is not *l'art pour l'art* in the sense of being self-serving. However, it *is* indeed *l'art pour l'art* from the viewpoint of what he was trying to communicate through the temporal structures of the *Recherche*. Time for Proust is not simply a tool to convey a message, nor is it a segment of structure to manipulate that message; it is both the means *and* the end. It contributes to the discourse and the story of the *Recherche* simultaneously, shaping the structure and the content of the novels. Indeed, *À la recherche du temps perdu* is a series of covert detective novels: Proust's hero seems to have lost something at the beginning of his narrative (time) and finds something at the end (himself), though the two, what he lost and what he finds, admittedly "can either coincide nearly or completely" or "can be a world away," to use Mann's words in *The Magic Mountain* (541). Marcel sets out to retrace "where time went" in *Du côté de chez Swann* through his involuntary memories, and finally finds the answer, to life and to art, in a grandiose moment of epiphany at the end of the seventh and final volume, *Le Temps retrouvé*. Paul Ricœur calls the suspension of time that occurs here in Proust's work "extra-temporal being" (144), which is, as William C. Dowling explains, "the position from which the true artist gazes through ordinary existence to realities that are outside time" (92). I argue that Marcel's epiphany is not truly about extratemporal phenomena but rather about the realisation that life, the self, and narrative are inseparably intertwined with time. The pseudo-time of *Erzählzeit* may "suppress the *now* … or the *here*," it is also a constitutive part of temporality, and vice versa (Metz 22). Be that as it may, the journey through both time and the self could not have been successful without Marcel's unique way of remembering, nor could have been the novels as intensively engaging, perhaps even musical, without the effect of temporal rhythms. The greatest value in Genette's analysis

is thus its ability to show the many layers of temporal movement that characterise Proust's style and the effect they have on the story and the discourse of the *Recherche*, shaping the novels both structurally and thematically.

Genette, Woolf, and Narrative Rhythm

Time functions not only as a central theme in Woolf's fiction but also as a crucial aspect of narrative innovation, shaping all levels of narrative in her novels through experimental temporal rhythmic structures. Highlighting the innovativeness of Woolf's subjective temporality in *To the Lighthouse*, Erich Auerbach claims,

> The important point is that an insignificant exterior occurrence releases ideas and chains of ideas which cut loose from the present of the exterior occurrence and range freely through the depths of time. It is as though an apparently simple text revealed its proper content only in the commentary on it, a simple musical theme only in the development-section. (540–541)

In other words, Auerbach notices the rhythm that is created in the text through Woolf's treatment of time, only he ties it to Woolf's use of "multi-personal representation of consciousness" (541). In *Dying for Time: Proust, Woolf, Nabokov* (2012), Martin Hägglund approaches Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway* by connecting the significance of temporality, underlined by Ricœur, with the novel's treatment of trauma. He explains that the characters are always "in the process of comprehending past experience (delay)," and "their present experience can be apprehended only in retrospect (deferral)" (63). Jesse Matz notes Woolf's tendency to be "reminded," whereby a sensation induces memories, not only with the influence of Henri Bergson but also with her method of "tunnelling" ("Time" 168). Tunnelling meant a way of recalling the past "by instalments," only as much as necessary (Woolf, *D2* 272). This method was, thus, a naturally occurring form of rhythm in prose for Woolf, a process that can be examined as a form of anachrony. Genette, however, directly associates rhythm with anisochrony, claiming that anisochronic movement is more important to the overall "rhythm" of narrative than anachrony, like in the case of Proust's *roman fleuve*. For Genette, *anachrony* is the disruption in the chronological order of narration, while *anisochrony* is characterised by synthesising different

temporal and spatial aspects of discourse time. He contests in *Narrative Discourse* that although anachrony and anisochrony both have the power to separately organise the temporal structure of prose, "a narrative can do without anachronies, but not without anisochronies, or, if one prefers (as one probably does), effects of rhythm" (88). In my view, *both* contribute to the complex web that Genette calls "rhythm" in narrative. Anachrony and anisochrony co-operate in *To the Lighthouse* to magnify the temporal embeddedness of the narrative discourse and create a rhythmic structure that is as perceivable as it is in the *Recherche* for Genette.

The temporality of *To the Lighthouse* is organised by the chronotopic identities of three sections: "The Window," "Time Passes," and "The Lighthouse." The three segments were always intended to be logically interrelated, as an early draft of the novel shows that Woolf's intention with the tripartite scheme was to create "two blocks joined by a corridor" (Woolf qtd. in Goldman 30–31). The different placements in time and space of the various sections can be examined most clearly by looking at the use of anachronies, or "various types of discordance between the two [temporal] orderings of story and narrative" in the text (Genette 36). In *To the Lighthouse*, these discordances help establish a diegetic rhythm through the respective chronotopic stance, or situation in "time space," of the three sections (Bakhtin 84). The specific ordering of events in the first and third sections serve to juxtapose the two mirroring blocks through their opposing anachronous characteristics.

"The Window" is proleptic, or future-focused, and in the question-answer paradigm of the two blocks, it signifies the "question." The very first sentence of the novel refers to a future event which is indeed hardly certain, as Mrs Ramsay says reassuringly, "Yes, of course it's fine tomorrow," referring to the weather, to which Mr Ramsay responds characteristically, "'But,' said [James's] father, stopping in front of the drawing-room window, 'it won't be fine'" (Woolf, *To the Lighthouse* 3). The second part of "The Window" starts with another answer to the unheard question of James as Mr Ramsay says, "No going to the Lighthouse, James" (13). The third section begins with Mrs Ramsay consoling James by saying, "perhaps you will wake up and find the sun shining and the birds singing" (14). Martin Hägglund observes the emotional and temporal significance of James's connection with the journey to the lighthouse, noting that James's "double relation to the future" is based on a pattern of hoping and being disappointed (57). On the level of the story, the unfeeling nature of the father's answer stands in contrast with the mother's compassionate approach to the boy's sadness. The difference in how they approach

the boy's great "passion" will also be a significant part of why James struggles with his father as an adult, having remained stuck in the past over the pain of never visiting the lighthouse as a child. On the level of narrative, this also establishes, in the present of "The Window," the pattern of young James's recurring, anticipatory, yet unheard questions about when the family would visit the lighthouse. Furthermore, James's proleptic inquiries and Mr Ramsay's monotonous recitals of classical poetry serve as textual rhythm in the novel. Teresa Prudente writes that Mr Ramsay's linear thinking is portrayed "as a circular and aporetic process, whose pattern is underlined by Woolf's … syntactical symmetries and repetitions" (5). Like Mr Ramsay's monotonous recitals of classical poetry, James's unspoken proleptic inquiries strengthen the sense of repetition and immobility that permeate the first section of the novel.

The closing block of the novel is centred around the act of revisiting, even correcting the past, portrayed by the use of analepsis, or retrospection, in an atmosphere of continued stagnation. Despite the apparent physical mobility that characterises "The Lighthouse" on the surface, the mental immobility of the family remains intact. The Ramsay family is significantly smaller now with the passing of Mrs Ramsay, Andrew, and Prue, whose absence is painfully apparent in the small boat. The remaining members of the once lively Ramsay clan wade through the rhapsodic tides into the direction of the lighthouse and reminisce on past wrongdoings, carrying the past in their boat with them, unable to let bygones be bygones. For instance, James continues "dreading the moment when [his father] would look up and speak sharply to him about something or other" (174–175). He still recalls being refused the chance to see the lighthouse: "'It will rain', he remembered his father saying. 'You won't be able to go to the Lighthouse'" (177). Cam is also thinking about Mr Ramsay, but she sees the two versions, past and present, simultaneously:

> Look at him now, she wanted to say aloud to James. (But James had his eye on the sail.) He is a sarcastic brute, James would say. He brings the talk round to himself and his books, James would say. He is intolerably egotistical. Worst of all, he is a tyrant. But look! she said, looking at him. Look at him now. She looked at him reading the little book with his legs curled; the little book whose yellowish pages she knew, without knowing what was written on them. (181)

What she sees now is not the man and the tyrant who could behave with his children in such a detached, unkind manner, but the frail, finite, mortal human being, with his curled legs and little book. Cam knows he posits no danger now and wants to show that to James—but both get lost in the sea of the past.

> The sea was more important now than the shore. Waves were all round them, tossing and sinking, with a log wallowing down one wave; a gull riding on another. About here, she thought, dabbling her fingers in the water, a ship had sunk, and she murmured, dreamily, half asleep, how we perished, each alone. (181–182)

The final boat journey to the lighthouse communicates on the surface that "we are visiting the lighthouse now," yet the presence of past elements is much more definitive than being mindful of the here and now. James cannot forgive, Cam cannot let go, and Mr Ramsay—the man he once was—is gone. Lily Briscoe is the only person who can seemingly free herself from the shackles of the past while also recreating an identity. In a moment of artistic triumph over time, she manages to finish her painting of Mrs Ramsay after her initial struggles. With this, Woolf completes a significant cycle in the text and graces the character of the true artist with a renewed sense of identity.

The ending of the final block strongly resembles the conclusion of the *Recherche*. The question-answer paradigm of the two blocks in *To the Lighthouse* echoes the diegetic structure of the *Recherche*, and the final section of *To the Lighthouse* gives a quasi-answer to the main question of "The Window." In Proust's *roman fleuve*, the main question of the narrative is "where has time gone?" The answer Proust provides, after a journey of thousands of pages and decades of narrated time, is that time can be found in the enclosed circle of the self, as well as in the eternal cyclicality of creation. If the question and the answer were indeed worded in Woolf's novel, they would probably be the following: "When will we visit the lighthouse?" and "We should have," respectively—echoing the chronotopic stances of the two blocks. The real, and quite dire, message of "The Lighthouse," and even more specifically that of the boat journey of the family, is that much gets lost—such as time and identity—in the stasis created by mixing up the past with the present, when there is no willingness to face reality and accept change.

Besides the effects of anachrony, variations in anisochrony also contribute to an overall sense of rhythmicality in *To the Lighthouse*. As Bal writes, "rhythm is as striking as it is elusive" (89). This is precisely why it is significant to acknowledge what Todorov calls "the problem of time" in *Introduction to Poetics*; that is, the duality of the Genettian story (*histoire*) and discourse time (time of *discours du récit*) (29).

While the anachronous patterning provides the basic rhythm of *To the Lighthouse*, especially its *erzählte Zeit*, anisochrony establishes even more complex rhythms on the level of *Erzählzeit* and, by extension, in the whole narrative. The first and third parts of Woolf's novel, or the two "blocks," take up one day each in terms of duration and 110 and 59 pages respectively in terms of length. Organising the story around a single day is a classicist theatrical act and, Paul Sheehan explains, one of modernism's major temporal rhythms (51). For instance, the one-day scheme was used by James Joyce in *Ulysses* (1922) and Woolf in *Mrs Dalloway* (1925). Nonetheless, Woolf structures the two "blocks" of *To the Lighthouse* around one day each and refers a separate temporal frame to the middle or "corridor" section—instead of building the whole novel on the classic one-day scheme.

The two blocks of *To the Lighthouse* are rather slow in terms of narrative speed; both the first and third sections take up little time and more space (scenes of small duration are told lengthily). Yet, the fact that the length of the third section (in page numbers) is only half of the first section's length means conversely that the speed is doubled between the two blocks of *To the Lighthouse*. For comparison, the *Recherche* has few scenes; in turn, they are ever growing in textual length and in number of ellipses, resulting in slowing speed and narrative fragmentation. The increase of speed between the two parts of the novel shows that "asking the question" (or stating the problem) in the first part of the novel is twice the effort, twice the length, as finally providing an answer in the last part. This also echoes Proust's thought process in the *Recherche* where the narrator-hero, Marcel, finds it a struggle to start narrating his story, jumpstarting it multiple times in the first volume (Genette 45–46).

As mentioned before, the other major type of anisochrony, according to Genette, is novel-tempo (94). Signifying the variation of narrative movements, tempo is characterised in the two blocks of *To the Lighthouse* by a series of continuous scenes and a lack of summaries. In fact, the scenes of *To the Lighthouse* are artificially lengthened by the adoption of a multi-perspectival narrative method. Chatman argues that while "classical novels exhibit a relative constancy of alternation between scene and summary," "modernist novels, as Virginia Woolf observed in both theory and

practice, tend to eschew summary, to present a series of scenes" (75). For example, *Mrs Dalloway* does not adopt the "classical" concept of rhythm based on the alternation of summary and scene, but as a novel of "the modernist rhythm," it makes use of the rhythmical ordering of scenes (Chatman 78). Todorov remarks in relation to Proust that *subjectivation* in a text means that events in the story "serve as pretext for long descriptions of the manner in which the event is experienced by one character or another" (41). Woolf, like Proust, places real focus not on objective reality, on what *happens* in a scene, but on the reflections, memories that that scene *induces* in the minds of characters (Auerbach 541). In the *Recherche*, this is perceivable through the narrativisation of descriptive pauses; that is, transforming description, a movement with otherwise zero story time, into a movement that qualifies as scene based on its narrative value.

To the Lighthouse is permeated by a sense of stasis on the level of the story, creating chronotopic immobility, a narrative state in which spatial and temporal progression is suspended. The first part of Woolf's *To the Lighthouse* sketches its matrix through multiple individual and collective perspectives, often with long, detailed presentations of reactions and thought processes. Mieke Bal explains that "the amount of text set aside for each event only indicates something about how the attention is *patterned*," showing "the vision on the fabula communicated to the reader" (89). Indeed, the long scenes of "The Window" without interruptions in the narrative discourse equally dramatise all sentences; none can be easily deemed "less important" than the other. Since scenes are elongated in this segment of the narrative, they feel—as they indeed are—slower: very little time progresses in a great number of pages. Although on the level of discourse, there is no interruption, the long and slow scenes are with a ubiquitous diegetic pause. This stop is due to a dichotomy of temporal omnipotence and suspension in the story. If narrative is a form of time as Sheehan claims, then the suspension of time means putting a stop to the narrative as well—meaning that characters will be frozen in one place, unable to progress naturally (51). Since movement in time or space is not a possibility, the future "does not happen" on the level of story (*histoire*) in *To the Lighthouse*. The family does not visit the lighthouse the next day and characters are unable to move along with their life in time or space. With this narrative technique used in the mirroring blocks, Woolf upholds a constant sense of dramatic tension throughout the novel and emphasises the unavoidable embeddedness of narrative in time.

Similarly to the way scenes form the basis of "The Window" and "The Lighthouse," the middle section of *To the Lighthouse* is organised by the narrative movement "summary." This is a significant change compared to either the rest of *To the Lighthouse* or to *À la recherche du temps perdu* (which notably does not use summary at all). In "Time Passes," summaries are brief, emotionless reports of the unexpected (and often violent) deaths of characters such as Mrs Ramsay, Andrew, and Prue. Summaries are presented in separate paragraphs and are set in brackets, for instance: "[Mr Ramsay stumbling along a passage stretched his arms out one dark morning, but Mrs Ramsay having died rather suddenly the night before he stretched his arms out. They remained empty]" (122). A few pages later, one short paragraph tells of Prue's marriage: [Prue Ramsay, leaning on her father's arm, was given in marriage that May. What, people said, could have been more fitting? And, they added, how beautiful she looked!]" (125). A dreamy, poetic paragraph describing late spring and early summer comes after, which is then followed by the shocking news of Prue's death, again, in brackets: "[Prue Ramsay died that summer in some illness connected with childbirth, which was indeed a tragedy, people said. They said nobody deserved happiness more]" (126). In terms of narrative and structure, the visible interruptions in the narrated text provide a discourse-level rhythm to the text in a way similar to James's questions and Mr Ramsay's poem recitals. On the other hand, they also function as recurring reminders of objective time. As Metz explains, "reality assumes presence, which has a privileged position along two parameters, space and time; only the *here* and *now* are completely real" (22). By interrupting the natural, inner flowing of time, the interruptions shape the sense of temporal structure in this middle section as much as they make us aware of the ubiquitous position time holds in this section especially.

Time is not merely a tool to express "something" in *To the Lighthouse*; it is *time* that needs to be expressed, on the levels of both narrative and story time. In the second volume of *Time and Narrative,* Paul Ricœur examines time in the Woolfian prose, next to Proust's *À la recherche du temps perdu* and Thomas Mann's *The Magic Mountain* (1924). Ricœur claims that

> all fictional narratives are "tales *of* time" inasmuch as the structural transformations that affect the situations and characters take time. However only a few are "tales *about* time" inasmuch as in them

> it is the very experience of time that is at stake in these structural transformations. (101, emphases added)

Just like Müller, Ricœur focuses his attention on the temporality of *Mrs Dalloway* as one of these "tales about time." I have chosen *To the Lighthouse* as one of the cornerstones of this paper for the same reason Ricœur chose *Mrs* Dalloway; namely, that as much as it is a novel *of* time, it is also a novel *about* time. As Müller analyses the temporality of *Mrs Dalloway*, he observes that, albeit time is the overarching theme of the novel, it does not become the topic of philosophical musings (273). Time, however, takes centre stage in the musings that characterise *To the Lighthouse*, especially the middle section "Time Passes." Jesse Matz explains, "famously centred on 'Time Passes,' a harrowing evocation of time passing without any significant reference to human subjectivity, *To the Lighthouse* very much recognises the reality of the temporality that has nothing to do with the human spirit" ("Time" 165). In terms of story, the fact that the sudden news about previously important characters get interrupted by aesthetic—and nearly philosophical—descriptions of nature turn our attention to the universal dichotomy of mortality and time. It is a form of narrative rhythm that calls attention to the dark irony in that life and death both perceivably progress in "Time Passes." Even though there is evidence of occasional human presence in space, Woolf seems to suggest that though individual life appears quite precious from one's own point of view, in the grand scheme of things, these lives are nothing more than "occasions." I borrow the term "occasion" from Auerbach who uses it in the context of Woolf's scene writing. In his view, action is only there in *To the Lighthouse* to incite and inspire, to give occasion for, inner thought (541). Similarly, human lives are only occasions for highlighting their own fleeting nature in "Time Passes," which stands in stark contrast with the omnipotence of time. With the human element removed in the "corridor" of *To the Lighthouse*, the world becomes "repetition and return, cycles of declension and regeneration" (Sheehan 53). Woolf shows that in such cases the only rhythm reverberating through reality is the lonely rhythm of time itself.

Conclusion

Temporality and narrative rhythm are central concerns in the works of Gérard Genette, Marcel Proust, and Virginia Woolf. Proust's and Woolf's novels are both

novels *of* and *about* time (using Ricœur's words)—meaning that all structural aspects of their prose are directly linked to, and have a consequence on, the nature and role of temporality in the novel. With Genette's theoretical framework of narrative temporality, particularly the concepts of anachrony and anisochrony in *Narrative Discourse* (1983), it becomes apparent that *To the Lighthouse* (1927) is Woolf's most Proustian novel because it is shaped by temporal movements similar to those Genette identifies in Proust's *À la recherche du temps perdu* (1913–1927). The narrative levels of story (*histoire*) and discourse (*discourse*) introduce different layers of temporality in prose, which results in the distinction of *Erzählzeit* (narrative time) and *erzählte Zeit* (story time). The varying relationship of narrative time and story time procedures examples of anachrony and anisochrony—which, in turn, can be regarded as temporal movements, or rhythms. Rhythm marks a definitive structural characteristic in Proust's and Woolf's works. Genette regards anisochrony as more directly responsible for narrative rhythm than anachrony in Proust's prose. As shown in this paper, however, anachrony and anisochrony can both trigger narrative rhythm. Anachrony shows up more on the level of *erzählte Zeit*, while the effect of anisochrony can be perceived on both levels of temporality. This structure informs not only the first volume of the *Recherche* but also *To the Lighthouse*, in which anachronous and anisochronous rhythms work in synthesis as they establish the complex temporality of Woolf's novel.

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Contributor Details

Lilian Rácz is a third-year PhD student at ELTE Eötvös Loránd University (Budapest). Her doctoral dissertation examines the interplay of temporality and narrative rhythm in the works of prominent modernist women writers, such as Virginia Woolf and Katherine Mansfield, as influenced by Marcel Proust's *À la recherche du temps perdu* (1913–1927). Her award-winning 2022 MA thesis analysed music and rhythm as an organising force in the works of Marcel Proust, E. M. Forster, and Virginia Woolf, and her BA thesis explored the Proustian influence on the treatment of time in Dorothy Richardson's pioneering modernist prose in *Pilgrimage* (1915–1957).