

## RESURGENCE, OR THE SINGULAR ENERGIES OF UNBIDDEN RETURN: THE EXAMPLE OF WOOLF'S "TIME PASSES"

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1. Resurgence, understood as the forceful re-emergence or coming to light of the subterranean, the forgotten, the repressed, the marginalized, the oppressed, the hidden – not to mention the dead, whose spectral energies and claims should not be underestimated – is semantically distinct from repetition, revival and return, although common usage tends to neutralize its peculiar force and employs it as a loose synonym of all the above. It is perhaps worth recalling that resurgence is neither a trope nor a concept (unlike “repetition” which does duty as both); while Nietzsche’s “eternal return” is redolent with mythopoeic association, we cannot inscribe “resurgence” into a similarly rich tradition of philosophical inquiry as the notion has not, to coin a phrase, been sufficiently problematized. I base this observation on my reading of the introductory chapter to Deleuze and Guattari’s *Qu’est-ce que la philosophie?* (1991), aptly entitled: “Qu’est-ce qu’un concept?”. Here, the authors postulate a number of attributes which enter into the definition of a concept as such. These are, briefly: a *history* of prior investigation wherein the concept is continuously reactivated and remodelled; a *devenir* or becoming in the course of which it enters into productive resonance with other concepts in response to given sets of problems; a *mode of existence* characterized as multiple and open-ended: the concept is an aggregate of components which are themselves potential concepts-in-the-making and so on to infinity (21-37). Resurgence does not belong in this company. The term has not attracted the close theoretical attention that might have honed it into a familiar and flexible conceptual tool. It suggests, to be sure, a psychoanalytically-inspired energetics of repression and release, it speaks of forces defying censorship, of defences breached and shattered – but its sense is not fertilized and broadened by those related ideas which the concept proper gathers to itself as it continues, in a labour of co-creation, to shape the life of thought.
  
2. This is not to disparage the word. Over-reliance on the concept can sagely reterritorialize the work of interpretation and vampirize a text. “Resurgence” is innocent of

philosophical association and this may work in its favour. But the tools of philosophy may be required to help us think through its unusual semantics. We could speculate thus: if the energy or force unleashed by resurgent phenomena is imagined as a line of flight – to use the language of Deleuze and Guattari – might we then gain some insight into its nature? “Les lignes de fuite”, writes Guattari in *La Révolution moléculaire* “ [...] créent une aspiration irréversible à de nouveaux espaces de liberté” (111). This is the affirmative, emancipatory connotation actualised by resurgence. But there is a darker side to the line of flight, as pointed out by the authors of *Mille plateaux*: “... le danger est [que la ligne de fuite] ... tourne en destruction, abolition pure et simple, passion d’abolition” (280).<sup>1</sup> Primarily identified with connection and desire, a line of flight is a process of experimentation never exempt from danger, potentially culminating in madness, psychosis, or death.<sup>2</sup> The fundamental ambivalence inherent in the line of flight can equally be seen as that which divides resurgent energies against themselves, for these are prone, as we shall see, to decay, go awry and bend themselves upon destruction.

3. In view of this ambivalence, it seems not unreasonable to look to the minimal guarantees of etymology and usage to gauge the extension of the word, a useful preliminary if we intend – as we do – to enlist its services in the reading of a literary text. The Latin root (*surgere*, to rise) is the signifier’s semantic core: a *resurgent* phenomenon is, first and foremost, mobile and forward-moving or ascendant. This sense of energy and momentum is vividly captured in the primitive “surge” which the derivative “resurgence” incorporates and repeats in weakened form. The *-ence* suffix may indicate, the *OED* tells us, a noun of action, or, as is more frequently the case, one of state or quality. Resurgence encompasses both; if we accept that there is a *resurgence* of interest in ethics, we refer to a process and acknowledge a result – the rekindling of an interest followed by the fact of a cultural visibility. We come finally to the prefix, the *re-* of resurgence, which announces the endless dialectical play of inhibition and overcoming. What has once surged forth, the prefix promises, is bound to reappear; resurgent energy is never spent, merely consigned to latency.

4. Can common usage help us gain firmer purchase on the term? Resurgence can be given an affirmative or negative spin because its energies can direct themselves, as indicated earlier, to emancipatory or catastrophic ends. Let us investigate the more positively-inflected uses of

<sup>1</sup> *La Révolution moléculaire* and *Mille plateaux* qtd. in Sasso et Villani 210-211.

<sup>2</sup> G. Deleuze et C. Parnet, *Dialogues* 168-169.

the word. A cursory search conducts us to a possible point of departure: a magazine called, simply, *Resurgence*. This is a UK-based publication with a global readership, established in 1966 and devoted to raising awareness of green issues. Its content reflects intriguingly upon its name. *Resurgence* is sharply critical of economic short-termism and denounces the environmental ravages wrought by the profit motive, but adopts a politically soft approach, supporting and praising local initiatives to recycle waste or clean up the water supply, showcasing ethical commerce pioneers like the late Anita Roddick of *Body Shop* fame. *Resurgence* predicts global catastrophe induced by greed and calls for a “moral” economy, one of whose founders is identified as none other than Adam Smith.<sup>3</sup> The magazine puts itself in the service of “soul, soil and society” and promotes the values of “earth, art and spirit”.<sup>4</sup> Its brand of resurgence has roots in an ideology that combines spirituality of Buddhist inspiration with idealism; this means it can roundly condemn the global financial order without seriously challenging its underlying logic and value-system, an inference we draw from the emphasis on “ethics”, “morality” and “responsibility” as desirable supplements to existing economic practices, the use of colour (subtle, eco-friendly earthtones), the tasteful fine-art photographs of a remarkably *unpolluted* natural world. Resurgence here is a still small voice, reminiscent of Hegel’s *belle âme*, calling for justice and affirming hope in an increasingly corrupt and degenerate world. We often find this euphoric/ pathetic connotation peculiar to resurgence mobilized in contexts where the resurgent in question is subaltern or marginalized (First Nations, Aborigines, cultures of the diaspora...) and its use in such cases is specious. Typically, it is the hegemonic culture that qualifies such voices as *resurgent*. It harnesses the upbeat connotations of the signifier to stress the symbolic gains of the emergent, and by the same token downplays its own involvement in a history of repression. The term elides the material realities of struggle, litigation, the ponderous bureaucracy involved in the becoming-visible of a minority. In the (self-impelled?) *resurgence* of the once-marginalized, there is *élan*, excitement, heroism, even romance – the signifier neatly compresses to an instant of incandescent triumph the long and arduous processes of self-affirmation that may lead, over time, to a hard-won measure of cultural visibility.

5. What of the less affirmative uses of resurgence, which endow the signifier with its peculiar ambivalence? The word is frequently used to denote the unwelcome reappearance

<sup>3</sup> *Resurgence*, N°245 November/December 2007. With remarkable prescience, the issue devotes a whole section to discussing proposals for a “moral” economy. The reference here is to the article by Andrew Simms, “Moral Compass” 22-23.

<sup>4</sup> I quote the inside cover and cover respectively.

and wildfire propagation of phenomena perceived, in a given conjuncture, as disturbing if not life-threatening, as in the following run-of-the-mill but exemplary instances:

1 There are, at least, reasons to hope that the *resurgence* of the far right in Italy is not as worrying as it might appear. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2008/may/02/italy.thefarright>. 20 May 2009).

2 The *Resurgence* of Jihad & The Specter of Religious Populism (article title, SAIS<sup>5</sup> review published by the affiliated Foreign Policy Institute, Vol. 27, N° 1, Winter-Spring 2007, Johns Hopkins UP). The above is one among countless references to a *resurgence* of Islam/ Islamic fundamentalism in the Western media.

3 Global Warming May Be Contributing To The *Resurgence* Of Malaria. (<http://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/40023.php>. 12 May 2008)

4 This week, the BBC investigates the knife carrying culture in several other countries, in an effort to find the roots of its tragic *resurgence* in Britain. <http://fastcase.blogspot.com/2008/07/worldwide-knife-crime-survey.html>. 28 April 2009)

6. A rapid attempt at synthesis, on the basis of the examples given above: it would appear that resurgence can signify a mode of return proper to peripheral, near-extinct or extreme phenomena which, despite one's best efforts, perpetually menace the body anatomical or politic from without. We should add straight away: the hegemonic or governing body, elected or self-proclaimed representative of the people. The signifier "resurgence" neatly reveals the ideologically-loaded metaphorical intertwining of disease and extremism, frequently denoting as it does the rise and proliferation of both. Whatever is recognized and accommodated by the mainstream political culture cannot by definition be *resurgent*. Whatever is expelled – a pathology, social ill, "radical" element – develops much of its lethal vindictive energy in response to the force expended on keeping it at bay. It is, in the popular phrase, what returns, in untimely fashion, *with a vengeance*. Like the Gothic in the Age of Enlightenment or the Ghost in Hamlet, canonical examples that lead one seamlessly to the notion of spectres and spectrality magisterially explored by Jacques Derrida in his *Spectres de Marx* (1993). Derrida's book is ostensibly concerned with the apparently defunct yet ineliminable ghostly presence of Marx within the post-Cold War world order. In a phrase which happily echoes the remarks made above, Derrida makes the following claim:

Au moment où un nouveau désordre mondial tente d'installer son néo-capitalisme et son néo-libéralisme, aucune dénégation ne parvient à se débarrasser de tous les spectres de Marx. L'hégémonie organise toujours la répression et donc la confirmation

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<sup>5</sup> School of Advanced International Studies at Johns Hopkins.

d'une hantise. *La hantise appartient à la structure de toute hégémonie.* (69, emphasis mine)

7. The resurgent phantom is produced by the dominant order which then organizes its exclusion; it remains at the margins, prone always to states of resurgency, to adapt a phrase of David Punter's.<sup>6</sup> What forms might such phantoms assume in our own time and place? Political philosophy might well reply: most prominently, those of violence. Recent work by leading political theorists explores the sources and nature of contemporary social violence: Žižek's *Violence* (2008), Georges Labica's *Théorie de la violence* (2007), Rancière's *Chroniques des temps consensuels* (2005), Etienne Balibar's influential essay "La violence: idéalité et cruauté," in *La Crainte des masses* (1997). In simplified and pared-down form, the arguments advanced by Balibar (and echoed by Žižek) are premised on the observation that there are two interdependent forms of violence at work in contemporary life: an "ultra-objective" violence and a "subjective" or "ultra-subjective" violence. "Ultra-objective" violence appears to have no perpetrator; it is embedded in the social conditions generated by capitalist economies (the creation of populations living below the poverty line, the homeless, the unemployed, the *sans papiers*...); "ultra-subjective" violence has an identifiable agent, it is violence with "a human face" – we see it, on the one hand, in isolated criminal acts (homicide, shootings, knife-crime, racist incidents, rape, mugging, vandalism etc), and on the other, in the excessive passion and irrationality imputed to fundamentalisms (Balibar 407-418). In classic Freudian tradition, the strategies enlisted by liberal democracies with regard to these forms of violence are those of disavowal and projection; objective violence is denied while its corollaries (social violence, fundamentalism) are sensationalized and demonized; in this very process – to return to Derrida's formulation – the hegemonic structure organizes repression, and in so doing leaves the door open to the resurgence of a multitude of spectres. For there is always more than one spectre, as the title of Derrida's book suggests. They haunt in packs. There is the spectre of discord with the other who threatens my enjoyment - man-in-the-street, neighbour, colleague, partner; the spectre of unprovoked racially or sexually-motivated aggression; the spectre of terrorism, ever-resurgent in the ambient rhetoric of security and the external trappings of surveillance; and least obtrusive but most pervasive the spectre of Capital, the invisible hand that shapes the fate of millions.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Punter describes the emergent bourgeoisie as the "in-between" class in which the Gothic has its sociological roots, and wonders "...what a bourgeoisie can ever be but emergent, *prone always to states of emergency.*" *Gothic Pathologies* 13, italics mine.

<sup>7</sup> A point made cogently by Žižek in *The Fragile Absolute* and repeated, almost *verbatim*, in *Violence* 10-11.

8. Are we any the wiser as to the nature of resurgence ? Can we propose a cluster of properties or common traits? Potentially resurgent phenomena include, as we have seen, Nature; the infinite range of human crafts, activities and interests; minorities; disease; political extremism; violence, and the spectre. At the risk of seeing this asystematic list expand into a Borges-style Chinese encyclopaedia, one might want to add *water*, bearing in mind the secondary, geological sense of *resurgence* (borrowed from the French *résurgence*) which the *OED* lists as “the fissure through which a stream re-emerges at the end of an underground part of its course; the re-emergence of such a stream”. These are sites, communities, collectivities, events, uncountables or abstractions. The resurgent is emphatically not the discrete, the individual, the subject, the person or the self. It is *not-I*. The process of resurgence presupposes, it would appear, a de-subjectivation or de-individualization. If the resurgent in question is a political grouping or cultural phenomenon, the value given to the term (positive/pejorative) will vary with the reader’s affinities and tastes; in this sense too “resurgence” refers the individual back to group alliances, to a *habitus*.
9. Whatever returns to haunt us with a vengeance is rigorously unquantifiable, indeterminate and unbiddable, like ghosts or memory. One of the most brilliant depictions of the constitutive plurality of the resurgent as spectre is Toni Morrison’s eponymous creation, *Beloved* (1987), who is, at one and the same time, a manipulative and vengeful young woman bent on ruin; the furious ghost of a dead infant; the revenant of an African slave perishing on the sea-voyage to America; a vampire gorging on her mother; a succubus; the spectral representative of an unrecorded history, and an unsatisfied claim made flesh. Putting it in Deleuzian terms, *Beloved* can be thought of as a multiplicity, understood not as a set “with [its] discrete or atomistic members” (Rajchman 53), but as a web of singularities connected by an “and” prior to the “is” of predication – a continually self-transforming surface or “body without organs” whose narrative interest resides more in what she does or makes happen than in the vexed question of what she might *be* or represent.

## Time Passes

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10. It is my contention that a reading of Virginia Woolf’s celebrated novel *To The Lighthouse* (1927) might throw additional light on the nature and dynamics of resurgence, more precisely on the resurgence of the *event* as the latter is modelled and actualized by the

literary text. My remarks will centre on one of the most celebrated passages in the Modernist canon, the middle section of the novel, entitled “Time Passes”. I will provide the very briefest of contextualisations as the extract has attracted close critical scrutiny since its publication. *To the Lighthouse* is constructed as a series of scenes that pivot around a holiday house belonging to the Ramsay family, set on the Isle of Skye. The two outer scenes focus on the Ramsays and their guests, exploring their thoughts and interactions at very different moments in time. Woolf composed the central passage in 1926 and subjected it to several revisions. It describes the Ramsay’s holiday house as it slowly runs to seed, narrowly escaping ruin, over a ten-year period during which it remains unvisited. Terse parentheses refer to the sudden and premature deaths of individual protagonists (Mrs Ramsay; Andrew and Prue, her children), to the persistence and return of survivors (Mr Carmichael; Lily Briscoe). The event resurgent in “Time Passes” is the paradigmatic event of modern times, the Great War. Its untimeliness, caring nought for chronological beginnings and ends, is hinted at from the outset through the indistinction of time, space and vision: “One can hardly tell which is the sea and which is the land” (143), says Prue Ramsay, as the protagonists forsake beach and terrace and make their way home. The gradual onset of twilight and its blurring of earth, sky and sea render the precise computation of nightfall impossible, and announce the singular atemporality of the impending “night” and “darkness” portrayed in Woolf’s text. The passage opens with the prescience of calamity (the war is a ghost from the future) and a powerful sense of imminence, encapsulated in the casual exchanges that animate the first section (Andrew Ramsay’s “It’s almost too dark to see”, Mr Bankes’ “...we must wait for the future to show” (143)). But I anticipate. Let us begin at the beginning, as the title of the sequence gives the reader pause for thought and provides ample grounds for reflection on the interrelations of time, event, and the manner of their resurgence in language.

11. “Time Passes”: this title brings us up against a paradox, or at the very least a curious contradiction. From a storytelling angle, the phrase “time passes” signifies that nothing much is happening, it refers us to an interval, to the nondescript moments “between the acts”, to a state of eventlessness. In the realist novel and its modern-day derivatives, time is what passes *between* chapters, *between* paragraphs, in the interstices of plot before action resumes. It is the elided or swiftly-passed-over link between significant episodes. To narrativize – over a ten-part sequence – what is apparently announced as a period of eventlessness is a bold move that strikes the imagination. *Time Passes*. If the semantic content of this phrase were to be

rendered by punctuation, it would call for suspension points or parentheses. Imagined as a stage direction (one thinks of Beckett or Pinter), it suggests silence, latency, a pause, waiting-time. Imagined as an everyday utterance (on a par with “time heals all”) it is a piece of received wisdom whose sententiousness cries out to be debunked. When the reader retrospectively measures the thematic tenor of this passage (war, dissolution, death, regeneration, peace) against the title – its frame – she is struck by their dramatic, almost comical incommensurability. “Time Passes”, in its syntactic simplicity, its minimalist assertiveness, has the air of a tranquil platitude. The First World War is a cataclysm of incalculable proportions. The correlation of title to content (time passes : war occurs) requires the reader to assess each of its terms in light of the other.

12. Usable in a wide variety of pragmatic contexts, “Time Passes” poses in explicit fashion the question of its semantic value. In the context of Woolf’s novel, dealing as it does, in experimental fashion, with transition, change, the loss of the past and its uncertain recapture through aesthetic practice, it does not seem out of place to read “Time Passes” as a philosophical prolegomenon. In this limpid title, time emerges from the background of experienced certainties as intrinsically worthy of narrative interest: a problem. What of Time, and the manner of its passing? The title seems to beg the question. The middle section of Woolf’s novel responds by engaging thoughtfully with this very theme.<sup>8</sup> If we read the ten-part sequence as an aesthetic meditation on an intractable philosophical problem – the relationship of calendar time to the temporality of events – our reading might be helpfully framed by philosophy’s intense reflections on these matters. Two prominent and contending theories of the event will be considered here, that of Alain Badiou, and that of Gilles Deleuze.

13. The vocabulary of cataclysm, rupture, trauma, shattering which the War invites (and in terms of which it is frequently described, in the realm of history, philosophy, literary studies or aesthetics) pulls the event in the direction of Badiou. Badiou theorizes the event in his *magnum opus*, a two-part work entitled *L’Être et l’événement* (1988), the second volume of which appeared in 2006 under the title *Logique des mondes*.<sup>9</sup> A concise account appears in his *L’Éthique, essai sur la conscience du Mal* (1993) and it is this I draw on here. Badiou’s event has no temporal extension as such, it is over in a flash, “...évanoui aussitôt qu’apparu” (60); it

<sup>8</sup>For two recent readings exploring the philosophical ramifications of time as explored in “Time Passes” see McArthur 331-346 and Banfield 471-516.

<sup>9</sup>For a comprehensive exposition of Badiou’s and Deleuze’s contrasting conceptions of the event, see J.-J. Lecercle, *Deleuze and Language* 108-118.



emerges out of a given situation, interrupting it with violence but remaining external to it: “L'événement est à la fois *situé* – il est événement de telle ou telle situation – et *supplémentaire*, donc absolument détaché, ou délié, de toutes les règles de la situation” (61, italics original); it founds an order, though is alien to that which it renders obsolete and to that which it inaugurates: “...l'événement [...] fait advenir “autre chose” que la situation, que les opinions, que les savoirs institués” (60); like Lacan's Real, it resists the order of symbolisation, and does so absolutely. But it leaves traces within the structure it alters, through which its significance can retroactively be grasped. This is the psychoanalytically-informed model of event that prevails in trauma studies: the cataclysmic occurrence that shatters the psyche, an *irruption* that can only make sense belatedly, through a deciphering of traces variously inscribed in dreams, artwork, speech. If the title – “Time Passes” – is assumed to have some connection with the narrative it qualifies, then we are clearly in need of a different model. Here, “Time Passes” is explicitly correlated to the event of war; “Time Passes” is the name given to the narrative sequence within which war commences, plays itself out, and ceases. But Badiou's event knows nothing of the passage of time. The philosophy of Deleuze may supply a concept that is more responsive to our needs. Deleuze's “pure” or “ideal” event is distinguished from a particular happening or accident: “L'événement n'est pas ce qui arrive (accident)” (Deleuze 1969; 175); the pure event has infinite extension in time, having no discernible origin nor end: “...contrairement à l'état de choses, il ne commence ni ne finit, mais a gagné ou gardé le mouvement infini auquel il donne consistance” (Deleuze et Guattari 1991; 148). Actualized within a specific conjuncture or “state of things”, the event is on no account to be identified exclusively with the latter: “L'événement n'est pas du tout l'état de choses, il s'actualise dans un état de choses, dans un corps, dans un vécu, mais il a une part ombrageuse et secrète qui ne cesse de se soustraire ou de s'ajouter à son actualisation...” (148). Traversing bodies and objects, permeating the manifold of sensory experience, Deleuze's pure event is nevertheless quite distinct from the sensible world – it is an atmosphere, incorporeal, immaterial, defying precise location. Effectuated in the skirmish and cut-and-thrust of battle (Deleuze's preferred example), the event is always in excess of its actualization, enveloping the battlefield like a vapour, cloud or mist: “...tout événement est un brouillard de gouttes” (Deleuze et Parnet 1996; 79). Lastly, the event is abstracted from personal experience, im-personal; it has no agent or subject as such, it cannot be contained within a single body, nor accomplished by the lone individual. It

is that which arrives from without, swoops down, engulfs the body and dissolves it in its intangible folds <sup>10</sup>.

14. How does Woolf's text stage or enact the resurgence of the war-event? Let us return for a moment to the attributes of the resurgent as tentatively listed above – we suggested that resurgent phenomena are de-individualized, unspecific, uncountable, collective: events or abstractions. It will by now be obvious that the notion of resurgence and the concept of event – especially in the Deleuzian sense – have much in common. Armed with Deleuze's insights, I would argue that the resurgent, always and everywhere, is precisely the event, in its impersonality, its im-palpability, in the energy of its becoming, which is forever in excess of its localized, dateable effectuation, or its nameable, traceable protagonists. Resurgent in Woolf's passage is the event of war, displaying attributes uncannily similar to those isolated and analysed by Deleuze. The time has come to examine these more closely.

## Airs

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15. "Time Passes" abounds in references to meteorological phenomena characterized by their diffuse, unbounded qualities. Rain, flood, airs that creep around an empty house, wind, storm, vapour and dew constitute the elemental milieu within which events occur, but these same atmospheric manifestations are also the (eminently Deleuzian) correlates of everything that comes to pass. What is the nature of the events evoked here? A house gradually falling into disrepair through years of neglect, a garden running rank. Their restoration through the good offices of Mrs McNab and Mrs Bast. The deaths of Mrs Ramsay and her children, Andrew and Prue, recorded with great economy, in square brackets, almost as asides. The cessation of war. The return to Skye of Lily Briscoe and Mr Carmichael. And, finally, the War itself, nowhere explicitly described as such, yet everywhere in evidence. The wandering airs that enter and explore the empty house in the second, third and fourth sections of the narrative are imagined in converse with books, flowers and abandoned furniture, of whom they ask "Were they allies? Were they enemies?" (144). Elsewhere the errant gusts are described as "advance guards of great armies" (147). The wind, in section six, is said to be

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<sup>10</sup> In the *Dialogues*, Deleuze uses the verb "fondre" to describe the action of a particular event: death. The extract runs as follows: "...le mourir s'engendre dans nos corps, il se produit dans nos corps, mais il arrive du Dehors, singulièrement incorporel, et *fondant sur* nous comme [...] l'oiseau qui survole la bataille." (79, italics mine) While "fondre sur" would most naturally be translated by "swoop" in this context, it is hard to preserve it entirely from semantic contamination by the primary sense of the verb "fondre": to melt, dissolve.

sending its “spies” around the house once more. Autumn trees are the subject of a complex analogy which evokes “gold letters on marble pages” describing “death in battle” (145). These rhetorical figures are to be taken to the letter. They signal, not an allusion, but the literal penetration or invasion of a house by war, an event whose effects cannot be geographically, emotionally or indeed historically contained or circumscribed. The literalization of metaphor has ontological implications: it tells us the war is unconfined to battlefields, to the series of victories or defeats that punctuate its course and decide its outcome. The “being” of war percolates through space and time, reverberates indefinitely in consciousness, and recognizes no boundaries as such; metaphors become the literal harbingers of war, its *agents*, who overrun Skye and make war “happen” there as graphically and incontrovertibly as on the field of battle. This insight is corroborated by the astonishing analogy between a rock hurtling through space and the gentle movement of a shawl as its folds rearrange themselves imperceptibly over time:

...once in the middle of the night with a roar, with a rupture, as after centuries of quiescence, a rock rends itself from the mountain and hurtles crashing into the valley, one fold of the shawl loosened and swung to and fro. (148)<sup>11</sup>

16. What lies behind this aesthetic levelling of incommensurable events? The analogy stresses the ubiquity of the war-event, irreducible to the conventionally imagined “roar”, “rupture”, “rend[ing]”, “crashing” of armed conflict, since it is also an imperceptible process or “setting-in-motion” of events which infinitely exceeds its occurrence, giving rise to ever-changing reconfigurations of the sensible world over time and space. The “roar” and “rupture” of the loosening shawl intimate that both dimensions of the event are equally real and of equal moment. Time wages war on a house as the War rages without, *because* the War rages without; the War *takes in* the house, its contents, its grounds. Resurgent, but gradually, slowly, rooted in a time immemorial, erupting at last “after centuries of quiescence” and plunging into an indefinite time-to-come, the war-event cleaves time in two; the living present of combat, and an infinite past and future, the time of endlessly receding origin and incalculable effect.<sup>12</sup> The analogy juxtaposes these two times or dimensions of the event in yet another sense; the “roar” and “rupture” of the loosening shawl revive a particular moment, an incident, looping the reader back into the comfort of narrative and its chronology. In the

<sup>11</sup> See also : “... the rock was rent asunder; another fold of the shawl loosened; there it hung, and swayed.” (151)

<sup>12</sup> The reader will recognize the allusion to Deleuze's “two times” : Chronos and Aion (Deleuze 1969; 77-82). On the latter see also Sasso et Villani 41-47 and D. Couzens Hoy 215-219.

opening section, Cam and James, the youngest of the Ramsay children, cannot sleep for fear of the boar's skull nailed to their bedroom wall; Mrs Ramsay wraps it in her shawl to allay their anxieties. The "roar" of the material as it shifts, much later, revealing the skull, echoes and amplifies James' "scream" (131), a diegetic event; at one and the same time, the unveiled skull as *memento mori* marks the passage from the diegetic to the "pure" event – death. As conceived by Deleuze, death escapes appropriation by the individual to whom it occurs; it interrupts a destiny from without; it infinitely exceeds the human organism it destroys, endlessly reconfiguring the lives of those affected; it projects one into the dateless time of reminiscence and aftershock (the final part of *To the Lighthouse* deals in part with the disjointed time of the *après-coup*, the aftermath of family bereavement).

17. And so we come at last to the final attribute of the war-event as resurgent in Woolf's text: its impersonality. This is magisterially implied through a number of strategies: the first, to put it in narratological terms, is a defocalisation (most of the sections posit an incorporeal, absent observer-narrator; perception and agency are transferred to animate but non-human instances; winter deals out a pack of nights "with indefatigable fingers" (145), the spring is "wide-eyed and watchful" (150); with the notable exception of sections five, eight and part of the ninth, the chief protagonists are the house, the seasons and the weather). This defocalisation at its most disturbingly extreme culminates in an evocation of "eyelessness"; here even the vague consolations of an anthropomorphized natural world are lost to us:

But the stillness and the brightness of the day were as strange as the chaos and the tumult of night, with the trees standing there, and the flowers standing there, looking before them, looking up, yet beholding nothing, eyeless, and so terrible. (154)

18. The impersonality of the war-event is further suggested through the imputation of affect (or rather its lack) to natural phenomena; thus a watchful spring spreads herself over the fields "entirely careless of what was done or thought by the beholders" (150) while Nature is assumed to have utterly withdrawn her bounty from the world of human concourse: "With equal complacency she saw his misery, condoned his meanness, and acquiesced in his torture." (153) As the garden luxuriates, the narrator wonders what power might stay the "insensibility of nature" (157). Detached from the human, devoid of sympathy, the war-event plays itself out with sovereign disregard for the personal theatre of desire and need.
19. The war-event as "flood" and downpour (143) brings about the dissolution of

recognizable human form, and in this respect too it eats away at the sense of a coherent, autonomous bodily “person”. The extract that follows refers as much to the indistinction of bodies in darkness as to shattered anatomical remains strewn over a battlefield: the ultimate im-personalization of the individual, subtracted even from the matrix of gender:

Nothing, it seemed, could survive the flood, the profusion of darkness [...] there was scarcely anything left of body or mind by which one could say ‘This is he’ or ‘This is she’. (144)

20. One technique which translates the impersonality of the war-event with singular force is the square bracket. “Time Passes” is punctuated by the occasional parenthetical statement referring to characters encountered in the opening section of the novel. Most of these parentheses speak of death and loss, in highly conventional language. There are two observations which suggest themselves here: (a) the semantic value of the square bracket is such that its content is doubly “recessed” or embedded with regard to the surface narrative (the curved bracket representing the primary degree of embeddedness); the persons referred to are thus effectively sidelined twice over and doubly subordinated within the context of the sequence, which contrives, in this way, to “im-personalize” (or perhaps “de-personalize”) itself the more thoroughly. The strategy is all the more effective since readerly identifications have been mobilized by the hyper-focalization of the opening section (“The Window”), in which the narrating instance accords minute attention to the thoughts and feelings of those very protagonists who, in “Time Passes”, are so summarily dispensed with. Individual loss of life, in “Time Passes”, becomes a footnote to the war-event. (b) The language used is spare and highly conventional: “[Prue Ramsay died that summer in some illness connected with childbirth, which was indeed a tragedy, people said. They said nobody deserved happiness more]” (151). The impersonality of the collective, unspecified subject (“people said”) is foregrounded by the neutrality of register and idiom, contrasting sharply with the poetic intensity of expression reserved for the house caught in time. Impersonality is a function of this “middle” voice and its use of plain, colloquial language. Its words betray neither lack of sentiment, nor its excess, nor indeed a bathetic lapse into cliché; plainness, here, has an ethical dimension. There is no language equal to the event, it is suggested, but that of a common idiom which, given the context of its utterance, shines with the authenticity of “full speech”.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Lacan’s “full speech” or “parole pleine” is unalienated and approaches the truth of the subject’s desire.

21. The above is an attempt to interrogate the notion of resurgence, to explore its affinities with a certain philosophical conception of the event, and to put the two together in a reading of Woolf's "Time Passes". I have considered ways in which the event is (re)actualized through aesthetic practice; the latter stages of my argument focus on the convergence between the Deleuzian event and the Woolfian, exploring the resources used by the writer to suggest the resurgence of war. The final word, appropriately enough, will go to Deleuze and Guattari. In *Qu'est-ce que la philosophie?* the authors designate art, science and philosophy as the three great "forms of thought" (186). While the creation of concepts falls to the philosopher, the work of art produces the *percept* (proper to the visual arts) and the *affect* (proper to literature). Deleuze and Guattari cite Woolf's novels as examples of a literature which, in addition to producing affects, aspires to the status of percept. In Woolf's fictions, they declare, "[l]e paysage voit" (159), a phrase that resonates strongly with the disembodied, highly visual lyricism of "Time Passes". On the strength of her virtuosic experimentation in this sequence, I would suggest Woolf's writing produces not only percepts and affects but guides the reader towards a *concept* of the war-event. I would only add that Woolf's is not a concept philosophy would readily recognize, but rather what Deleuze and Guattari call "une sensation de concept" (187), an expression they reserve for the sensuous form of intellection attained and solicited by abstract art.

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