Cognition, Emotion and Consciousness in Modernist Storyworlds

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The Feel of Experience

Edited by

Margrét Gunnarsdóttir Champion

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Alexander Venetis is writing his PhD dissertation at the Department of English at the University of Amsterdam. In his monograph, provisionally entitled *The Metaphysician of the Mind: Virginia Woolf, Modernism & Consciousness*, Venetis historicises Woolf's notion of consciousness by reading her essays and novels, published between 1915 and 1927, against the background of Bloomsbury's aesthetic formalism, early analytic philosophy, psychodynamic psychology and Edwardian literary realism. Alexander has published texts and presented conference papers on Woolf, Edwardian literary realism, Bloomsbury aesthetic formalism, Kant's aesthetics, Shakespeare, William James, Bertrand Russell, Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan, and French Surrealism. He is a board member of *PsyArt, the Foundation of Psychology & The Arts*, founded by the late Prof. Norman Holland in 1993. To date, Alexander has taught in the Departments of English, Media Studies, Art History and Literary Studies at The University of Amsterdam, The Netherlands.

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through a Scientific Lens, from which the chapter on *Wolf Hall* included here is taken. It also has sections on monarchical history and politics, Shakespeare, lyric poetry, and what brain science is revealing about the benefits of learning about the humanities. His blog, "Winks Thinks: Words Made Electric," can be found at michaelawinkeman.com. He teaches English, drama, and mathematics at St. Rose Academy in Denver, Colorado, USA.

EDITORS' INTRODUCTION

The stuff of fiction

At issue in this volume of ten essays is fictional world-building that evokes "the feel of experience," a sense of life that extends beyond mere registering of the real or of self-recognition. In particular, modernist literature – as well as literary works imbued with the modernist aesthetic – experiments with form, style and method, searching ways to make "the accent [fall] a little differently" (Woolf, 1984, 162), to emphasize the hidden or the marginalized, to, in Virginia Woolf's words, invent "a different outline of form," challenging to the understanding, "difficult for us to grasp, incomprehensible to our predecessors" (162). Woolf's influential essay, "Modern Fiction" (1925) anticipates the conceptual vocabulary of contemporary literary scholars in its concern with stories as mental territories where life itself is not merely reflected but intensely *felt*, a potential other world to dwell in, to move in, to perceive in as a sentient, experiencing being.

In furthering her modernist agenda, Woolf juxtaposes the imperative of "the moderns" to cultivate "the method that brings us close to life" to the immaculate "craftsmanship" of the Edwardian novelists, singling out Arnold Bennet as a *materialist* who divorces "the great clod of clay" of the real world from the subjective experience of living in and connecting with objective reality. Bennet wields "his magnificent apparatus for catching life," the solidly woven textures of outward appearances, but fails to sustain an organic world (159). "Life escapes," says Woolf, and even if she refuses to offer an empirical definition of "Life," she motions toward her own vitalist aesthetic, which at the same time underpins "the new outline of form," the narrative constructions of the moderns:

> Life is not a series of gig lamps symmetrically arranged; life is a luminous halo, a semi-transparent envelope surrounding us from the beginning of consciousness to the end. Is it not the task of the novelist to convey this varying, this unknown and uncircumscribed spirit, whatever aberration or complexity it may display with as little mixture of the alien and external as possible? We are not pleading merely for courage and sincerity; we are suggesting that the proper stuff of fiction is a little other than custom would have us believe it. (160)

The *stuff* of fiction then is composed in radically different ways from the materialism of the Edwardians. Even though Woolf is impatient with Bennet's materialistic descriptions, she does not advocate abstraction as the proper realm of art, in the sense as, for instance, Roger Fry preferred Post-Impressionist formalist inwardness, its "disinterested" status, to the ideologies of modernity.[1] Rather Woolf's aesthetic, as expressed in both her criticism and her fiction, embraces both a devotion to the concretely vernacular as well as to the formally sublime: in fact, in another related formulation from "Modern Fiction," she exhorts writers to observe the reciprocal dynamics between inside and outside, the way mind and body interact to sift impressions from the material world, the embodied nature of consciousness:

> 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. (161).

The sensual intermingles with the intellectual, mind with body, spirit with flesh in the creative endeavour to evoke "Life," the feeling itself of existence.

Similar critiques and exhortations are to be found in one of Woolf's posthumously published essays, "The New Biography," where the conception of "personality" as the crux of biographical writing bears resemblance to felt life in fictional worlds. Here, again, "the magnificent apparatus" of Edwardian writers is taken to task for inert appearances, where biographical plot, life as a "series of exploits," eclipses subjective experience as well as recipients' empathy and potential identification with a fellow human being. The adherence of such as the biographer of Edward VII, Sir Sidney Lee, to the truth of facts alone is comparable to Bennet's materialism, failing to construct a vital storyworld:

> he failed to choose truths which transmit personality. For in order that the light of personality may shine through, facts must be manipulated; some must be brightened: others shaded; yet in the process, they must never lose their integrity. (150)

As opposed to the "clay" of Sidney Lee, James Boswell's *Life of Johnson* (1791) shows an imaginative grasp of what a person is, and through conscious artistry – "[he] chooses; he synthesizes" (152) – triggers in

[1] Morna O'Neil in her introduction to *The Edwardian Sense* discusses Roger Fry's essay "An Essay in Aesthetics," published in the *New Quarterly* in 1909.

readers a fellow feeling, producing "an incalculable presence among us which will go on ringing and reverberating in widening circles however times may change and ourselves" (150). The so-called "new biography," works by Woolf's contemporaries, Lytton Strachey, André Maurois and Harold Nicolson, approximate Boswell's masterpiece, but are still struggling to obtain "the aim of biography [which] is to weld together [. . .] the granite-like solidity" of truth and "the rainbow-like intangibility" of personality (149). In short, like the post-Edwardian novelists, the new biography experiments with its representational worlds, searching new methods to vitalize art in the encounter between "granite and rainbow."[2]

As this essay collection seeks to demonstrate, the major modernist writers – alongside Woolf herself, D. H. Lawrence, James Joyce, T. S. Eliot – as well as those anticipating or extending their aesthetic – George Eliot, James Agee, Walter Evans, Hilary Mantel – in diverse ways, probed, what contemporary narratologists now see as a basic element of narrative, *experientiality*, in order to project and enhance an existential feeling, what David Herman has also, in a more global definition, called the "consciousness factor," which is "narrative's capacity to emulate through its temporal and perspectival configuration the what-it's-like dimension of conscious awareness itself" (2009, 137-60).[3] If in fact, as Herman seems to suggest, and that in her seminal book, *Towards a 'Natural' Narratology* (1996), Monika Fludernik asserts, experientiality constitutes narrativity as such, that is, the ontological ground for narrative, then the common ambition among the scholars in this volume is to investigate the ability of modernist (and modernist inflected) literature to manipulate these narratemes, these intrinsic elements of storyworlds, and in the process implicitly argue with Woolf that the interest of the texts under scrutiny in embodied cognition enables the sensation that Life itself is at stake and that like the readers of Boswell's *Life of Johnson*, "[we] may sit, even with the great and good over the table and talk" (150).

Cognition, emotion and consciousness

Cognition, Emotion and Consciousness in Modernist Storyworlds: The Feel of Experience taps into the rather recent cognitive turn in literary

[2] "The New Biography" is in essence a review of Harold Nicolson's *Some People* which Woolf admires but finds wanting in "the irony with which [personalities] are created, [stunting] their growth" (154).

[3] Excellent presentation of the concept of experientiality is in Marco Caracciolo's entry in *the living handbook of narratology* (2014).

studies, which is particularly marked in research on narrative. One of the most avid proponents of, as he phrases it, the explorations of "the nexus of narrative and mind," David Herman places this research within post-classical narratology, that is, work that builds on (mostly) the French structuralists – Roland Barthes, Gérard Genette, Algirdas J. Greimas and Tzvetan Todorov – and that enriches these analysts' concepts "with research on human intelligence either ignored by or inaccessible to the classical narratologists, in an effort to throw light on mental capacities and dispositions that provide ground for – or are grounded in – narrative experiences" (2012, 14). Herman's own work is exemplary for this shift in theoretical vantage point where not only conceptual renewal occurs but also expansive metanarratological observations which "reassess the terms in which questions about narrative have been formulated until now" (15). Thus, the idea of "*narrative worldmaking*" is at the center of Herman's reconsiderations, a conception which goes beyond structuralist codifications to "encompass the referential dimension of narrative, its capacity to evoke worlds in which interpreters can, with more or less ease or difficulty, *take up imaginative residence*" (14; my italics). These last words, that I have marked in italics, seem to speak directly to Woolf's essay, "The New Biography," I discussed above, the modernist artist's pleas to fellow writers to experiment not only with form but also with the constructions of worlds that draw on real readers' life experiences – concrete, referential, embodied textual spaces.

Indeed, Herman's interdisciplinary interests, an approach to literature benefiting from diverse "research developments across multiple fields, including discourse analysis, philosophy, psychology, and narrative theory itself" (14) enables him to raise new questions about "the fictional minds of modernism," and to suggest that instead of the longstanding critical view of the inwardness of modernist psychological fiction, the experimental writing of such as Woolf, Lawrence, Joyce and Mansfield (all foregrounded in this volume) reveals that consciousness "at once [shapes] and [is] shaped by larger experiential environments, via the particular affordances or opportunities for action that those environments provide" (2011, 259-40). As Ricardo Miguel-Alfonso states so succinctly, for Herman,

> the mind in modernist narrative reaches beyond the self, is a distributed mind, and is alien to the internalism of Cartesian cartographies that divorced mind from the external world. Herman thus opposes the critical commonplace that modernist fiction participated in a psychological inward turn and developed new strategies to delve into psychological depths and argues instead that "modernist narratives can both be illuminated by and help illuminate postcognitivist accounts of the mind as inextricably

> embedded in contexts for action and interaction." (Miguel Alfonso, 2020, 10; Herman 2011, 249)

The essays in *Cognition, Emotion and Consciousness* also approach the modernist mind within this renewed interdisciplinary context, casting light on the felt life of the text, on the intertwinings of "granite and rainbow," via perimeters that belong to both the storymind and the interpreters' embodied existence.[4] Sharing a scholarly interest in the "nexus of narrative and mind," the authors investigate textual patterns and strategies that enhance the understanding of how the phenomena of cognition, emotion and consciousness function as entrance points to the vitality of storyworlds. In the process, recent developments in cognitive literary studies such as cognitive narratology and affect theory are utilized as well as foundational disciplines, that continue to afford meaningful analyses of minds in fiction – classical narrative theory, literary aesthetics and phenomenology. My own essay, "The Ethical Chronotope in Modernist Prose: The Example of D. H. Lawrence's ´Odour of Chrysanthemums´," initiates the volume and the first section, "The Modernist Short Form." The larger concern here is with the modernist epiphany as a cognitive event which can profitably be approached via Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of the chronotope, a time-space compound, both "a formally constitutive category of literature" and an "indispensable form of any cognition" (1981, 84; 85). In order to historicize the concept by grounding its epiphanic presentations in the modernist aesthetic, I analyze Lawrence's short story "The Odour of Chrysanthemums" as prototypical for *threshold* chronotopes in the modernist short form in particular (novella, short story and poem), transformative textual moments which open unto not only a character's heightened awareness of life and death, but unto the rapture of the creative imagination itself in its active encounter with the ethical immanence of literary language.

The second essay in this section on the modernist short form, Arzu Kumbaroglu's "A Genettian Analysis of the Unfamiliar in James Joyce's 'Eveline'," probes consciousness in Joyce's story from *Dubliners*, making a case also, as my discussion does, for the cognitive valence of time-space thinking, albeit from the theoretical vantage point of Gerard Genette's work with narrative discourse. By honing Genettian concepts related to narrative time, to the disjunctions between story and discourse – the anachronies of

[4] Besides Herman's cognitive poetics, recent representative studies are Miguel-Alfonso (2020) and Jaén & Simon (2012). A modernist cognitive scholar, Melba Cuddy-Keane favours "storymind" over "storyworld" because it connotes active, processual thinking rather than an accomplished product (2020).

analepsis and prolepsis – and to narrative mood – distance and perspective – Kumbaroglu is able to trace the protagonist's patterns of thought as she anxiously undulates between the familiar and the unfamiliar, the nostalgia for home and the fearful yearnings for escape from the confinements of her life. The Genettian analysis of how memory works affectively to retouch, even to falsify, the past indeed highlights consciousness in Joyce's story as a central, dynamic event; it further facilitates a view of Joyce's narrative method in an early work, where experiments with thought representation as flows of associations anticipate the fully accomplished stream-of-consciousness style in *Ulysses*. Following Kumbaroglu's essay and concluding this section is Liu Huiming's "T. S. Eliot and the Avant-garde: Sense, Energy and Gender," an examination of two of Eliot's early poems, "Rhapsody on a Windy Night" and "Preludes," first published in the Vorticist magazine *Blast* in 1915. Huiming's chapter adds a study of poetry to the collection, leaving no doubt that symbolic lyrics also build fictional worlds, embodied spaces inhabited by cogitating personas. Eliot's poems are contextualized in terms of avant-garde ideology, especially the gendered approach to culture and the arts, propounded by movements such as Vorticism, Imagism and Futurism. Huiming explains the masculinist ideas of Ezra Pound, Wyndham Lewis and F. T. Marinetti among others through the lens of the philosopher Carolyn Korsmeyer and the cultural historian Constance Classen, who have explored the connection between Western philosophy and the hierarchy of the senses, supported by stereotypical ideas about male reason and female sentimentality. Even if published in one of the Vorticist organs and referring to avant-garde sensibilities, Eliot poems stake out a mental landscape saturated with feminine sensuality and the senses of touch, smell and taste, thereby undercutting the binary truisms about the superiority of the detached gaze of the male.

The modernist novel, especially the work of Virginia Woolf, is the topic of three chapters in the second section. Alexander Venetis' "The Exaltation of Otherworldliness: Bloomsbury Aesthetes on Consciousness, Form and Affect" provides a helpful historical context to Woolf's writings about the novel, discussing in some detail Edwardian social realism, pitting Woolf's modernist agenda against H. G Wells' pragmatic vision, as articulated in his essay "The Contemporary Novel" (1912) in particular. While Venetis acknowledges Woolf's nuanced and sophisticated thinking about literary form, he searches ways to fully understand her conception of truth in fiction by tracing the influences on her within the Bloomsbury milieu she engaged with so deeply, especially the work of Roger Fry and Clive Bell, both avid promoters of post-impressionistic abstraction and of the artistic object as autonomous beauty and truth. Even if Woolf eclipses (what she calls) "the

cotton wool of daily life" from her major aesthetic preoccupations, Venetis notes that the ordinary and extraordinary are intertwined in her fiction, and that the real is manipulated "in pursuit of the rims and edges of the experiential horizon, which is a quest for the beyond of the pictorial and imagistic."

The following two chapters, including readings of *Mrs Dalloway*, *The Waves* and an autobiographical piece, "A Sketch of the Past," can be seen to implicitly confirm Venetis' statement here about Woolf's epistemological ambitions. Deepening our appreciation for the Woolfian storyworld, Chunhui Lu draws on contemporary affect theory as well as on Fredric Jameson's thought in *The Antinomies of Realism* (2013) to argue for the power of the social critique in *Mrs Dalloway*. Critics' assumptions about mimetic representations being the proper vehicle for socially critical awareness are exposed as participating in the kind of essentialist thinking which Woolf dismantles in *Mrs Dalloway* through methods of indirectness, evasion and affective dynamics, textual strategies which truthfully approach the traumatic lives of post-war England. Outlining the composition of structural intensity in Woolf's novel, Hu telescopes the complexity of "aesthetic emotion," how Woolf's writing comes close to impressionistic art in her evocations of life itself "through affective materiality." In "'Even a Tea Party Means Apprehension': Virginia Woolf's Apprehensive Storyworlds," Chen Rupeng also explores the aesthetic potential of affective structures in Woolf's fiction, grounding analysis of expressions, scenes and characters in "A Sketch of the Past," *The Waves* and *Mrs Dalloway*, in the conception of *apprehension*, defined in ontology, epistemology as well as in psychopathology as both a cognitive resource – a mental grasp of circumstances – and psychic unrest –fear, anguish and anxiety. Whereas Hermione Lee, for instance, in her biography offers only autobiographical explanations of Woolf's apprehensive states of mind, Rupeng argues convincingly that these drive the writer's creative engine and constitute "a vital part of her [. . .] engagement with knowledge, feeling and temporality." Significantly, the psychological origin for, what Rupeng refers to as, Woolf's "theory of writing," involving her reflections on "moments of being," revelatory experiences of not only euphoria but dreadful premonitions as well, is explored in the chapter from the perspective of D. W. Winnicott's clinical work on the "original breakdown" and on simulations of this in the psychoanalytic situation. Woolf anticipates Winnicott's ideas in her "faith in writing" as in its spontaneous rhythms, "she can come to terms with the unexperienced devastation that is also an absolutely private part of herself."

The first two sections of the collection, concentrate on canonical modernism, on major writers who sought to rejuvenate literature by experimenting with form and adapting their strategies to the advance of modernity. Despite the disruptive agenda of writers such as Woolf, Lawrence, Joyce and Eliot, however, their work shows a remarkable continuity with literary traditions and faithful adherence to innovative writers of the past – the Romantic poets, Jane Austen, George Eliot, Thomas Hardy, to name a few. Thus, the last section, "Modernist Inflections," goes beyond historical periodization and investigates fictional minds in texts that both anticipate and extend Woolf's "new outline of form." Two chapters are devoted to George Eliot's novels, *Adam Bede* and *Silas Marner*. Karam Nayehpour's "The Tragedy of an Unsympathetic Mind in George Eliot's *Adam Bede*" employs concepts from cognitive narratology, especially from the works of Monika Fludernik, David Herman and Alan Palmer, to consider the tragic trajectory of Hetty Sorrel, one of four protagonists in Eliot's novel, whose self-enclosed, asocial mindset disables her as a member of the small rural community, precipitating her disastrous fate in the narrative. Nayehpour elaborates upon Alan Palmer's notion of "embedded narrative," how a character's consciousness nestles within the world of story and is extended along with its actions, to argue for a "precise, functional and inclusive approach towards the whole of a fictional mind in its social and physical context" (Palmer, 2005, 158). Thus, Hetty's "unsympathetic mind," her unresponsive stance toward other human circumstances that are integral to her narrative agency, remains static, set in stark contrast to the social mind itself, which, however erroneously, interacts dynamically and is susceptible to change and even regeneration. In the following chapter, Naghmeh Varghaiyan's "Metamorphosis of the Social and Individual Minds in George Eliot's *Silas Marner*," similar topics surface, although here a reverse process takes place as the collective mind seems at first the epitome of self-serving bias, blind to the reality behind appearances. By productively employing Palmer's distinctions between "intramental" and "intermental" narrative cognition, Varghaiyan traces patterns of regeneration, revealing – to use Fludernik's conception – *the experientiality*, the felt experience of embodied narrative agents as they undergo "emotional and cognitive rebirth and change."

A valuable intervention into this volume's concern with the modernist aesthetic is Russel F. Mayo's "´The cruel radiance of what is´; Modernism, Documentary, and Anti-Theatricality in *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*." Concerned with James Agee's and Walker Evan's photojournalistic work commissioned by *Fortune* magazine during depression era North America but not published until 1941, Mayo's chapter provides a transatlantic

cultural and intellectual context to many of the issues raised among the authors of the collection. Reading closely three crucial moments in Agee's and Evan's text – involving a photograph, an encounter with Black lives and the cry of foxes – Mayo problematizes previous "cultural consciousness" arguments of commentators such as Susan Hegeman, reassessing Agee's and Evans' documentary in the light of modernist formalism as developed by the aesthetician Michael Fried and literary theorist Walter Benn Michaels. Even if Mayo does not specifically refer to the British context, interesting parallels surface within conceptions such as "absorption," "presentness" and anti-theatricality," interfacing with Chen Rupeng's discussion of materiality in *Mrs Dalloway* where the post-impressionistic image conveys an immediate sensibility within a moment of non-performative being. Indeed, Mayo's chapter confirms the view that modernist storyworlds delineate problems of representation, disrupting conventional mimesis against the grain of dominant forms, even in the established one of documentary reportage. Aptly concluding the volume, Michael Winkelman's "´Richly Textured Scenes´: Woolf Hall, Thomas Cromwell, and Cognitive Narratology" could be seen implicitly to gesture toward the aesthetic ambition of the moderns to engage readers in the "luminous halo" of Life as the chapter primarily examines the narrative techniques of Hilary Mantel's trilogy of historical novels – *Woolf Hall*, *Bring Up the Bodies* and *The Mirror and the Light* – in order to access the vital power behind the "reality effect" of images, scenes and characters. The "richly textured scenes" Winkelman adumbrates have Thomas Cromwell, the protagonist, at their centre, whose personality enthrals because "he remains fluid and mysterious, ultimately unknowable, even to him." In order to get closer to this uncanny power of literary character, Winkelman draws on narratological work by Blakey Vermeule and Liza Zunshine among others as well as on cognitive scientists interested in a theory of mind. Noting the interest within cognitive literary studies in reading as co-creation of text, this last chapter draws attention to our own embodied participation in the world-building of the stories we treasure.

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SECTION I:

THE MODERNIST SHORT FORM

CHAPTER ONE

THE ETHICAL CHRONOTOPE IN MODERNIST PROSE: THE EXAMPLE OF D. H. LAWRENCE'S "ODOUR OF CHRYSANTHEMUMS"

MARGRÉT GUNNARSDÓTTIR CHAMPION

Illuminations, flashes of insight, sudden raptures and spontaneous emotional overflows are widely recognized features of modernist writing, often gathered under the denomination *epiphany*. Both the artists and literary scholars have probed these phenomena, attempting to define them, the former incorporating them into an artistic creed, the latter taking their cues from, what might be called, a visionary aesthetic. A starting-point for critical investigations is frequently James Joyce's pronouncements in *Stephen Hero*, an early draft of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, that epiphany in art expresses "a sudden spiritual manifestation," triggered by ordinary circumstances, but revelatory of the radiant essence of things (211).[1] The ordinary as a springboard for profound insight is also involved in Joseph Conrad's understanding of "moments of awakening," which abound in his major fiction and often lead to a "double vision," exemplified by Marlow's narration in *Heart of Darkness*, where meaning is glimpsed as a "glow," that "[envelops] the tale which brought it out" (5). In some respects similar to Conrad's conception, for Virginia Woolf, the artist's language illuminates what is hidden in "moments of being," overwhelming ruptures of "the cotton wool of daily life," momentous experiences, as Naomi Toth notes, "revealed but not fully apprehended" (paragraph 10).[2]

[1] *Stephen Hero* was published posthumously in 1944.

[2] In "A Sketch of the Past," Woolf observes, "Behind the cotton wool is hidden a pattern; that we – I mean all human beings – are connected with this; that the whole world is a work of art; that we are parts of the works of art" (72). "A Sketch of the Past" was published posthumously along with other autobiographical writings in *Moments of Being: A Collection of Autobiographical Writings* (1985).

Frequently using the term "revelation" to designate aesthetic insight, D. H. Lawrence seems to value the epiphanic mode of perception, stating, for instance, in "Morality and the Novel," that representation in art is not mimetic capture but "a third thing [. . .] a revelation of the perfected relation between man and the circumambient universe" (171).[3]

The weight attached to visionary moments by these, as well as other early twentieth-century artists, has influenced scholars to theorize them as integral to the modernist aesthetic. From early work such as Morris Beja's influential study *Epiphany in the Modern Novel* (1971) to Wim Tigges' summary anthology *Moments of Moment: Aspects of the Literary Epiphany* (1999), featuring scholars such as Robert Langbaum, Philipp Wolf, Suzette Henke and Jay Losey, investigations have on the whole relied on the subjectivist "high modernism" paradigm which foregrounds a psychological "interior turn" as the distinguishing mark of early twentieth-century artists' radical break with the conventions of realism and the popular didacticisms of the previous century. With the ascendancy of the so-called New Modernist Studies, originating in the work among others of Douglas Mao and Rebecca Walkowitz (2008) as well as a variety of revisionary platforms such as the journals *Modernism/Modernity* and *Modernist Cultures*, the interest in individualized identity themes waned and the aesthetic of epiphany seemed stale, elitist and essentialist. However, again with recent paradigm shifts in literary studies and a broadened interdisciplinary focus, assembling disciplines such as the cognitive sciences and renewing dialogues with philosophical traditions such as phenomenology, theology and the philosophy of mind, the visionary modes of modernist writing are undergoing a modest critical resurgence. Within a context inflected by interest in cognition, Sharon Kim's work is highly valuable, especially her eclectic phenomenological focus on the epiphanic tradition in nineteenth- and twentieth century literary narrative. In an essay on Edith Wharton (2006), Kim seems to underwrite the novelist's critique of the subjectivism of the modernist epiphany, and the attendant valorization of the inspirational and the evanescent, a stance she revises in *Literary Epiphany in the Novel 1850-1950: Constellations of the Soul* (2012). The latter work, in fact, productively interrogates the relation between art and epiphanic insight, noting how modernists such as Joyce and Woolf resisted solipsism and simultaneously explored singularized experience in order to configure "the mutuality of belonging" (2006, 169) and an "encountering look" (2012, 12) that offered "visible alternatives to the gaze that would reify, colonize or

[3] Along with "Art and Morality," "Morality and the Novel" was first published in 1925 in *Calendar of Modern Letters*.

destroy" (10). Also, Naomi Toth's recent study of the Woolfian epiphany, "Disturbing Epiphanies: Rereading Virginia Woolf's Moments of Being" (2014), counters the New Modernist critique of canonicity and elitism, instead reading the modernist privileged moment in non-binary terms as a dislocating search for meaning as well as a temporal disruption that bonds in a "non-linear relation with history" and thereby "[opens] up to political analysis" (paragraphs 18-19). More firmly anchored in cognitive poetics, Michael Burke's *Literary Reading, Cognition and Emotion: An Exploration of the Oceanic Mind* (2011), making use of empirical studies of readers, linguistics, stylistics and affect theory, examines in some detail how narrative *confluences*, the movements toward revelation in "mood, style, location and themes" (172), activate "the epiphanic leap" of readers so that frequently during narrative closure there occurs a "felt shift in sensuous perception," "an altered state," exemplified in this way by the poet Alan Ginsberg, transported by the closing lines of William Blake's "Ah Sunflower" (Burke: 173):

> My body suddenly felt light, and a sense of cosmic consciousness, vibrations, understanding, awe, and wonder and surprise. Kind of like the top of my head coming off, letting in the rest of the universe connected to my own brain. (1966: 40)

In the following pages, my investigation of the modernist epiphanic mode will draw on the ideas of these critics, attempting to specifically trace the movements from subjective interiority to relational concerns, from a self-preoccupied consciousness to outward mental projections toward, in the words of Ricardo Miguel-Alfonso, "the consciousness of the world" (2020, 4). While I scrutinize D. H. Lawrence's "Odour of Chrysanthemums" as an exemplary epiphanic narrative, several modernist works, especially the short prose form – short story, novella and essay – can be understood to share a chronotopic dynamic: during revelatory moments, the ethical latency of literary language is activated in the encounter with creative minds. Whereas previous criticism tends to associate the experience of epiphany with particular literary elements such as characters, readers and authors, my study engages more broadly with *storymind*, a concept originating in cognitive narratology, referring to networks of mobile textual processes that account for readers' immersion as well as interpretive participation. Thus, in a recent article, "Experiencing the Modernist Story Mind: A Cognitive Reading of Narrative Space" (2020), Melba Cuddy-Keane favours the term "storymind" over "storyworld" and "implied author" because it connotes active, creative thinking rather than an accomplished product: in Cuddy-Keane's understanding, the storymind is

located in "the cognitive processes and pathways that from numerous sources constitute the shaping forces behind a fictional world" (208). Probing the epiphanic in particular as a cognitive event, my concern is primarily with how narrative perspectives temporally and spatially shape experiences so that a transformative culmination occurs involving both characters and readers. My investigation will show that epiphanic culmination is invariably expressed in imagistic language suffused with chronotopic awareness. Making use of both Mikhail Bakhtin's poetics and of recent philosophical interpretations of his work, the following discussion will attempt to delineate a *modernist* chronotope, a time-space image, anchored in the embodied aesthetics of early twentieth-century artists who probed new representations for ethical connection and for a secular faith in responsible and dedicated communities.

Story mind and the fates of the chronotope

In "Forms of Time and the Chronotope in the Novel: Toward a Historical Poetics" (1937; 1981), Mikhail Bakhtin embarks on an ambitious historical project, mapping configurations of space and time in literary narratives across the centuries. Even if the novel *propre*, especially the nineteenth-century variety, constitutes the touchstone of Bakhtin's study, the historical scope is in fact limited, beginning with the ancient Greek novel and culminating in the works of the sixteenth-century author, Francois Rabelais. The detailed analysis of the genres under scrutiny – ancient, medieval and early modern – does, however, as Gary Saul Morson and Caryl Emerson suggest, occur within a dialogic context, later developments in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries forming a dynamic background to pre-novelistic chronotopes and related perceptions of time and space. Thus, as Morson and Emerson state, "although Bakhtin's main impulse is evidently to celebrate the novel since the eighteenth century, he focuses almost entirely on earlier works. We learn what the novel is by examining works that contrast with it or are deficient in comparison with it" (1990, 373). The critics further contend that Bakhtin's discussion resonates with a "prosaic set of values" that implicitly measure the rather naive artistic conceptions of Greek adventure tales, Roman biographies and chivalric romances against the realistic novel's profound probings of "real historical time" and the concomitant depth and complexity of novelistic characters (395). True, Bakhtin's views may not be disinterested but his dedication to neglected works of literary history endows them with a certain dignity and significance: the aesthetics of the pre-novel is mobilized in dialogue with the art of Rabelais, Goethe and Dostoevsky, leading to creative explorations

of seminal concepts of time and space across the literary-historical spectrum.

Fundamental to the development of genres in history, the concept of the chronotope is multivalent and elastic, a shaping cognitive force in art. Although Bakhtin does not develop the conception from a clear-cut definition, he provides instructive parameters, whose elasticity has inspired innumerable literary investigations from perspectives as varied as narratology, reception theory, cognitive studies, ecocriticism and cultural history.[4] "Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel" (FTC) makes it clear from the start that the chronotope is a form of cognition, a factor both in Einstein's relativity theory and Kant's philosophy. Bakhtin contends that he borrows this *episteme*, this knowledge unit, "for literary criticism almost as a metaphor (almost, but not entirely)" and that "what counts for us is the fact that it expresses the inseparability of space and time (time as the fourth dimension of space)" (84). Further, Bakhtin claims only to be concerned with "the chronotope as a formally constitutive category of literature"; cultural spheres outside of the literary will not be under scrutiny (84). Aesthetic cognition is unique, Bakhtin wants to emphasize, and in an important explanatory note he underlines its kinship to Kantian thought as well as its special difference: time and space are "indispensable forms of any cognition," as Kant asserts, but artistic chronotopes differ from Kant's transcendental categories, being "forms of the most immediate reality" (85; note 2). In the novel, the richest aesthetic field of chronotopes, time-space processes are tangible and imagistic,

> fused into one carefully thought-out, concrete whole. Time, as it were, thickens, takes on flesh, becomes artistically visible; likewise, space becomes charged and responsive to movements of time, plot and history. This intersection of axes and fusion of indicators characterizes the artistic chronotope. (84)

In their gloss on the concept, the editors of Bakhtin's *The Dialogic Imagination*, Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist, echo Bakhtin's claim about its distinct nature, how it differs from "other uses of time and space [. . .] in the fact that neither category is privileged; they are utterly interdependent" (415). In fact, Emerson and Holquist understand the chronotope almost as a pure cognitive tool that generates specialized knowledge about real

[4] See for instance the recent collection of essays on the chronotope, edited by Nell Bemon et al (2010).

perceptions: “The chronotope is an optic for reading texts as x-rays of the forces at work in the culture system from which they spring” (415-416).

Recently, this understanding of cognitive and methodological value has been problematized and expanded by scholars who take account of Bakhtin’s *oeuvre* as a whole and who contextualize the ideas in FTC within his larger philosophical interests as well as within paradigm shifts within the modern/contemporary literary field. Amplifying the prevalent view of the chronotope as primarily an epistemological category, Liisa Steinby (2013) argues for a continuity in Bakhtin’s work from 1920s texts such as “Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity” (1920-1923) and *Towards a Philosophy of the Act* (1920-1924) through his writings on the *Bildungsroman* (1936-1938) and Dostoevsky’s poetics (1929) up to the theories in “Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel” (1937), a philosophical premise, partly derived from nineteenth-century German thought (e.g. Neo-Kantian and vitalist), which projects a concrete reality as context for ethically autonomous subjects. In *Towards a Philosophy of the Act*, Bakhtin promotes ethical explorations of existence and claims that “philosophy has to be re-established as the study of the actual human act,” thereby indirectly criticizing Kant’s “categorical imperative,” abstract, general moral laws, pertaining to all cultural realms (Steinby and Klapuri, xv). In Steinby’s understanding, at the center of Bakhtin’s “first philosophy” is “the unique ethical act of the individual human subject involved in a concrete event of Being” (xv). In the light of Bakhtin’s persistent ethical worldview, the chronotope then, in addition to its epistemological function, stakes out situations of human agency, where free will and responsible choice operate as potentials for change within the socio-cultural practises of any given (fictional) world. “Chronotopes are about time and space in relation to human action” (Steinby, 118).

In my ensuing analysis of D. H. Lawrence’s short story (which I see as a prototype), ethical insight in a chronotopic setting defines to a great extent epiphanies as cognitive events, specific for the radical aesthetic of early twentieth-century avant-garde writers. Another recent commentator on theories of the chronotope, Bart Keunen, similar to Steinby, concerned with Bakhtin’s philosophy of art, especially his explorations of the literary imagination, focuses on modern temporality and on how the modernist thinker Henri Bergson’s concept of *duration* accords with his Russian colleague’s “prosaic set of values,” his valorization of the (modern) novel as mediator of historical time and potential for change. In fact, Bergson’s modern(ist) conception of time emerges from a critique of his contemporaries’ metaphysical reductions which spatialized time, bracketing

lived experience (Keunen, 36-40). Counter to abstract notions of temporality, Bergson's claim is that the time awareness of perceiving subjects is fuelled by ordinary reality which is always in flux, mobile and dynamic. The Aristotelean tenet that objects on the surface of the world change vis-à-vis stable observers is not viable, replaced by scenarios of mutual change, with an observer's vantage points saturated with temporal flows. Bergson's capture of such a scenario is *durée* or *duration*: "Every observation, Bergson states, occurs from a changing observational consciousness; every state of things is colored by the observer's lived time" (37). When the observing subject recognizes his or her own complicity in flux, how borders melt and states of being merge, a condition of "pure duration" is experienced and "lived time" is perceived as difference itself:

> Pure duration is the form which the succession of our conscious states assumes when our ego lets itself live, when it refrains from separating its present state from its former states [. . .] as happens when we recall the notes of a tune, melting, so to speak, into one another. (Bergson, 2009, 100; quoted by Keunen, 37).

Similarly, Bakhtin's "prosaic sets of values" develop within a modern understanding of temporality as concretely anchored in everyday experiences which are most satisfactorily represented by the aesthetic equivalent of duration, *the chronotope*. As Keunen states so eloquently, for Bakhtin, chronotopes are "gateways to the specific temporal experience of art" (40) and are "the ideal [concepts] for those literary passages in which lived time occupies a central position" (38). Significantly, modern texts (not always modernist), and especially the novel as a genre mediate more effectively than older prose narratives the relation between time experiences, emotions, actions and the larger scopes of story worlds (e.g. 45). Making a case for an underlying philosophy of the imagination, Keunan attempts to systematize Bakhtin's list of chronotopes – the encounter/the road, the parlor/the salon, the provincial town, the Gothic castle, the threshold – discussed in "Concluding Remarks," a section added to the major essay in 1973. Chronotopic dimensions of a literary text, according to Keunen, generate networks of images which can helpfully be categorized as "images of affect," "images of action" and "images of relation," where the last one clinches a complex semiotic universe, in my view, parallel to the conception of *storymind* as promoted by cognitive narratologists and understood by Cuddy-Keane as creative thinking in language: "the cognitive processes and pathways that from numerous sources constitute the shaping forces behind a fictional world" (208). For my purposes in this essay and as I will explain further in the next section, the chronotope of the threshold and the attendant

images of affect, manner and reconsidered relations comes closest to constituting the gateway into the ethically saturated images of modernist epiphanies. As a turning-point in the narrative – "connected with a breaking point of life" (Bakhtin, 248, 1973; 1981) – the threshold chronotope connotes metaphorically but is nevertheless often associated with architectural features such as windows, doorways, gates, staircases, corridors and hallways: "as well as the chronotopes of street and square that extend those spaces into the open air," extending private intensities into the social world (248). In "Concluding Remarks," Bakhtin links threshold experience in Dostoevsky's works to carnival time-space, an intermingling of private and public experiences to the extent that biographical time is transcended (248). Thus, these narrative breaks carry exceptional imaginative force which, in Bakhtin's understanding, constitutes something similar to artistic thinking in a state of rapture; in fact, they might be interpreted as meta-chronotopes which crystallize the representative function of lived time in narrative fiction. If as Bakhtin says generally about the significance of chronotopes, that "to them belongs the meaning that shapes narrative" (250), then thresholds, in a sense, especially in the modernist epiphany as I will continue to investigate, make possible a transformed relationship between the authorial and the reading mind, a relation of *pure duration*, where "our ego lets itself live" in borderless creative flow. Even if negative or obstructed epiphany occurs in the narrative prose of, for instance, James Joyce's *Dubliners* and several of Katherine Mansfield's stories, the rapturous mental processes impinging on the threshold resemble affirmative bliss in modernist works such as D. H. Lawrence's *The Rainbow* and Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse*. My reading of "Odour of Chrysanthemums" aims to trace the outlines of a cognitive prototype of the kind of epiphanic insight that activates ethical connection and has historical roots in a specifically modernist aesthetic.[5]

The epiphanic image: "Odour of Chrysanthemums"

Because of its structural and stylistic compactness, the modernist short story demonstrates admirably how time-space coordinates mediate experience in literature. In the tale under consideration in this section, chronotopes define major scenes and the way time and space interact and fuse determines emotional and cognitive content as well as points of conflict that lead to

[5] Examples of negative epiphany are – just to name a few – Joyce's "Araby" and Mansfield's "The Daughters of the Late Colonel"; in Woolf and Lawrence, epiphany is often associated with a glimpse into wholeness beneath the "cotton wool."

movement and change. *Lived time* in Keunen's (and Bergson's) sense as awareness of inner temporal flow in organic connection with others is a central concern of Lawrence's "Odour of Chrysanthemums," published in the author's first volume of short stories, *The Prussian Officer and Other Stories* (1914).[6] The story, set in the mining countryside of Nottinghamshire, depicts a troubled domestic situation, similar to that of the Morels in *Sons and Lovers* (1913), Lawrence's autographical novel, that devotes its first part to an unequal marriage where both social class and incompatible temperaments corrode a premature amorous attraction. Similarly, in "Odour of Chrysanthemums," Elizabeth Bates' marriage to the miner, Walter Bates, has at the time of narration, become untenable, the husband favouring the pub and the comforts of alcohol over the wife's cold anger and disillusionment. In fact, the day singled out in the story seems a habitual one in a stretch of days with Elizabeth anxiously waiting at home, all her energies tied up in the expectation that "they'll bring him when he does come – like a log" (187), the husband escorted from the Prince of Wales, unconscious with drink.[7] The sense conveyed by the narrative is that this dreary domestic drama shapes the experiences of both the couple and their two children, that it entraps them emotionally and mentally, dooms them to mundane dysfunctionality.

In order to heighten the effect of dysfunctionality, time and space markers throughout the story indicate mechanical repetition within environs denuded of warmth and beauty. The story's opening paragraph offers a panoramic view of an industrialized landscape, telescoping vehicles of transport – "the locomotive engine [. . .] stumbling down from Selston," "the trucks thump[ing] heavily past," a pedestrian "walking up the railway line to Underwood"; the trappings of Brinsley Colliery – "the pit-bank loom[ing] up beyond the pond," "the tapering chimney and the clumsy black headstocks," "the winding-engine, turning up the miners"; and the withered state of the woods and fields, autumnal as well as subjected to the machine (181). In a recent article, Elliott Morsia astutely remarks on "the intimate connection between the Bates dwelling/family and the railway lines," for example, on how the steps from the cinder track provide an entrance to the "low cottage" and how a second engine actually comes to a halt at the cottage gate, driven by Elizabeth's father (7). Further, the routine activities

[6] For versions of the story and Lawrence's revisions, see John Worthen's introduction in the Cambridge UP edition of *The Prussian Officer and Other Stories* (1983).

[7] All further references to "Odour of Chrysanthemums" are to the Cambridge UP edition (1983).