

TEMPORALITY IN LIFE AS SEEN THROUGH LITERATURE

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For sequel volumes see the end of this volume.

TEMPORALITY IN LIFE AS SEEN
THROUGH LITERATURE
Contributions to Phenomenology of Life

Edited by

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Thanks are due first of all to our colleagues who came from different parts of the world to offer their views to discussion, enriching our thinking and its perspectives.

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A-T.T.

THE THEME / LITERATURE AND TEMPORALITY

EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION: TIMING OUR LIFE

1. LIFE, SENSE, REASON, ORDER

Our life passes, everything we cling to passes, and we pass along. The acute awareness of the passing of life has from time immemorial set apart the fully conscious human being from the rest of animalia.

Fully conscious human beingness is indeed above that of the simpler animals. It is endowed with will and deliberative/selective powers for planning. Human beings compare, calculate, foretrace in imagination their moves in existence. Individuals become aware of their interactions and “measures,” of the proper timing of functional moves so as to guarantee their success by coincidences, proper successions, simultaneity as well as by avoidance among the innumerable steps that could be followed. They can be not only acutely aware of the “timing” of life functions in their own rules of unfolding but also concurrently aware of the independent timing of circumambient life conditions, of the world, nature, others, society, etc., of both the predictable and the unforeseeable. Briefly, the human being realizes that he or she is essentially a temporal being *in se* and just as much a being sustained upon other coincidental temporal beings, and upon the temporal conditions around him.

Human beings construct endlessly, and their accomplishments are continually destroyed, if not by natural processes and cataclysms, then by their own doing. Each new culture thrives on the cemetery of a previous one whose dreams of achievement and glory are extinguished. That culture perdures only through its traces in memory and its interpretation by the succeeding culture. These traces are transmuted by the new ideas, sensibilities, aspirations of the incoming cultural thrust.

Chronos of mythology devours his own children, and we often have the feeling that “in the course of time” unforeseeable turns of events may or will destroy the endeavors we have been pursuing step by step toward completion, timing our constructive initiatives with greatest care and assuming that the ground of our blueprint will endure; but if it shift the entire edifice will

crumble. Everything existing stands amid a ceaseless flux of becoming — nothing stands still. All the same, human beings do not give up.

Awareness of this mutability might have been the primordial conscious instance awakening the living being, as living, to plotting a course of existence. This awareness multiplies “inwardly” as functional networks unfold and become entangled with “external” life functions and “external” circumstances. Along both of these lines the living beingness unfolds carried by its own processes as much as by enacting them itself in conscious steps. Each person enacts them itself out of its very own impulses as much as by following a path that it delineates itself within the circumambient milieu. In its propulsions it registers much success when it moves in compliance with current conditions and is defeated when it fails to negotiate them. This holds for all living beings.

In the history of humankind this awareness advanced the hypostatizing of the inevitable “coming to be and passing away,” as Aristotle puts it, into an ontological power governing all, one that strikes with lightning, breaks the mast, and shifts the winds shaping human destinies: time. Life itself, however, has come to dispel this centuries-old view.

2. LIFE'S QUEST FOR REASONS

It is life itself that forces us to change the focus of our reflective attention. Nature itself, the nature in which human beings endure, brings about the main and essential factor of life in its mutability and temporality: order.

As already stated, the human being does not abandon himself or herself to the outcomes of neutral combining forces. Such an attitude would leave us prey to blind necessity, to a senseless doom. On the contrary, we question, impelled by the logos within, all the data available by which our planning may be informed. We seek “reasons,” causes, effects.

We have to cope within and without with life's exigencies. We have to follow adroitly the winds propitious to our projects. We have to try to avoid pitfalls, knowing that unforeseeable changes menace us. We have to contend with life's turnabouts in order to advance and move toward our goals. This convergence with our own temporality itself is our life. It takes place in innumerable avenues, directions, modalities — as many as are actively functioning, carrying on and projecting our generative, unfolding, and extinguishing course. We hope to grab hold on some main strings of its dynamics, at least in our conscious assessment, but we are also aware that the mechanism of our life enactment has profound bearing on dimensions of our beingness that we do not control — or are not even aware of as possibilities and which lie

mute within the deep spheres of our active beingness that are not fully known to us. The interactive effects of our dealings within the human community and the world of nature also escape our comprehension and even our awareness.

Amidst uncertainty as to possible outcomes, as to “cause” and “effect,” amidst invisible “reasons” — directives, intents, tendencies, hazards — the reflective human being is pressed, impelled by the questioning bent of his or her beingness to wonder, to ask, to interrogate, to seek “reasons” for the turns of life’s route. Here we oscillate between faith in our freedom to forge each of us a destiny out of life, one redeeming its tormenting struggles, and despair over the contingencies of the lifestream.

3. LITERATURE, A CANVAS FOR LIMNING A WORLDVIEW

Could we not say that the most profound impulse of the plastic artist is to prolong, freeze, make permanent the presence of fleeting color, shape, and texture? And is not the deepest purpose of a writer, especially a narrator — novelist, biographer, historian — to find the hidden reasons of personal life courses, of the successes, defeats of the protagonists chosen or conjured? Ultimately, do not writers hope to reach beyond even that and glimpse as reflected in individual fates some universal law? Literature, and especially the novel, quests for reasons, and beyond for the meaning, the sense of life. The present collection of studies, continuing our ongoing inquiry into the deepest fonts of the specifically human significance of life, is devoted to pursuing some of the main perspectives with which literature in search of reasons reveals to us — or at least puts us on the path toward understanding — the turns taken in our lives that determine the sense of our existence.

Always operative, whatever the perspectives within which the writer seeks to situate his inquiry, is the cultural climate of a given period, the then common vision of the world and the human place in it, a vision shared by the writer and within which he sees his protagonists and their life struggles, aspirations, successes, and defeats as upon a canvas. In the classic novel the world of life within which the protagonists conduct their existence, with all its turmoil, natural or manmade — war, plague, cataclysm — we find a stable background with lasting values and commitments against which the author depicts the course of events, for the fiction that is the novel is meant to evoke actual life and follow its patterns, with departures from the norm in their way affirming the lasting norms and values. It is enough to mention Manzoni’s epic *The Betrothed* as an example.

In Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century literature, in French, German, Polish, English literature in particular, author and reader shared a worldview

that was ever present, the cultural product of the period. Yet, as we see in the penetrating analysis in a study by Piotr Mróz in this collection of studies (pp. 131-...), this shared worldview has undergone a radical upheaval in our time.

The classic worldview embraced the vision of the Great Chain of Being and was committed, whether approvingly or critically, to the view that world of humankind is governed by rational principles. Thus authors like Goethe, Boleslaw Prus, Dostoyevski, Melville, Dickens, Eliot aimed at revealing a perduring metaphysical structure or reality (p. 132) as well as the essential human character. It is with respect to this worldview that the life course and the struggles of protagonists were depicted and interpreted. This was a worldview in which there reigned a subjacent order, a rational perspective within which the authors themselves participated “in this great cause: the defense of the stable order based upon truth, justice, unity and order” (p. 133). The tragic world events that unfolded from the beginning of the Twentieth Century shattered this vision of reality and, it seemed, any lasting foundation of reality. A “state of far-reaching, all-embracing intellectual, moral uncertainty soon led to a complete thoroughgoing revolution of all previous convictions and truths” (p. 135). Several were the causes of this upheaval undermining if not uprooting the vision of order that saw in life a subtending metaphysical ground. There were the unimaginably tragic events in the world, there was the philosophical current of Bergsonism, and there was Freud’s giving primacy to the role of the unconscious in our lives and not to the human powers of reasoning. These developments have shaken faith in the continuity of life over time. This vision of a discontinuous world, evident in the emergence of new directions in literature and the fine arts, reflect a world and reality that has lost any stable and solid structure. And so the timing and spacing of the events of life is being abandoned as the basis for ordering the world/reality.

4. THE CALL FOR REASON, SENSE, LIFE ORDER

In the history of philosophy the greatest minds have sought to find the origins, the laws, the telos of life and of the world, finding it in principles of reality / universal rules, or alternately in the unfathomable depth of human consciousness and its constitutive principles. These approaches have evolved with the cultural drift of humankind and with the demands that each inquiry has made for more adequate explanation of the phenomena of life coming to the fore in each succeeding epoch. In our day, “time,” with which we seem to contend for our survival, is receiving particular attention. First of all, there is the unprecedented effects upon human life and nature of our developing

technologies, so that our experience of life has changed right down to our everyday existence, changed particularly in the intensity of the hold world affairs have upon us. Life in general has seen an "acceleration" that our everyday personal life has to submit to.

And so time and the temporality of life as well as of ourselves has to be interrogated, for its nature and status, till now assumed, are being put in doubt. The greatest question before us is this, whether life's progress is to be credited to time as a universal or whether, on the contrary, this progress by its own innermost order "times itself." Is it not simply our own experience of temporality that hypostatized accounts for the traditional view of time as a universal?

It is the question of life's ordering, of life's own "order," that is at stake, and it is to that question that the present volume's investigations are dedicated.

Our Occidental culture — which on the whole has had a cherished faith in a universal vision of the world, life, humanity — is in transition from modernity to postmodernism. It is as if the human mind has been transformed. That vision has been attenuated beyond recognition, for faith in a universal order of things has evaporated, with our concerns fragmenting along the lines of an unprecedented plurality of schemata, in the process of which we have lost the order among categories that no longer communicate. Hence our universe is become a chaos for which we have no map by which to orient ourselves and no steering wheel by which to negotiate our way. Moving from outcome to outcome, from day to day, in a rational fog and without a compass, we seek the nearest points of orientation amid the onrushing waves of life.

We have to find points of stable if dynamic linkage in life. Ordering is not only the law of existence, of the world, of the individual life, it is also an indispensable rule of the human cognizing/constituting mind, with which we create our world.

As I have argued often, life proceeds according to its spontaneous propulsions by timing itself. This is an ordering that no scientific invention may radically alter, even as science seeks to unravel it for the sake of "improving" it to accommodate human desire. No technology may reverse the succession of the course of events. It is the events themselves that establish order; they carry an intrinsic project — "order." Here is the thread of the logos of life promulgating and carrying life, bringing it about.

This ordering of life is the key not only to life's surging, its maintenance, its extinguishment, leaving space for successors, but also to its intrinsic sense. This ordering is not the fruit of an anonymous universal of time but of the dynamic unfolding moves and steps of living itself. Living progress times itself.

5. LITERATURE IN SEARCH OF A NEW UNIVERSAL ORDER

A new order has to be sought despite the difficulties our era presents to believing in its possibility — the above-detailed emergence of philosophical distrust or outright rejection of all faith in order. The denunciation/renunciation of the “logocentrism” of classic thought as unjustifiable and a falsification of reality in tandem with the disparaging of faith in the capacity of our conceptual and linguistic forms to treat reality undermines any attempt at discerning an order and rational sense of the world. Wittgenstein’s reduction of thought to a “language game,” by denying the universal validity of the linguistic representation of reality, has battered the various forms of the “deconstructive” attitude and is depriving us of any conceptual framework for apprehending the world, life, ourselves with adequacy and so has undermined the very ground on which we presume to live.

On the rebound, however, the literary presentation of reality is being called upon to seek a new, more adequate, more “definitive” order of things.

Even while rejecting the hitherto valid ordering of the world, individual life, society, etc., the postmodern author seeks a new vision. Order is the prerequisite of existence, reality, life. Rejecting the system of universal ordering with its logocentric principles, denounced for being preestablished and omnipotent, rejecting all ordering of reality, means abandoning understanding of reality, performing our life functions simply as a matter of vital necessity, depriving our life of its sense. Thus contemporary writers have recourse to topsy-turvy experiments, like reviving remembrance so that it eclipses the vivid present, transposing the knots of events into the shade of memory, or cutting events asunder in order to reveal a supposed hidden meaning. This is, indeed, to deprive the life routine itself of any sense other than utilitarian necessity. The contemporary novelist or playwright is seeking the sense of life’s instants in links that are hidden to the eye but which inwardly make of them an existential continuity.

And, indeed, if a universal ordering of elements and forces is to be abandoned, if universal principles and concepts cannot be maintained, being merely mind-concocted devices that do not stretch to any embracing whole, if faith in an all-explaining metaphysical schema may not be held, where shall we look if not to the temporality of events itself for principles of a linkage that shapes meaning, that manifestly maintains or perhaps even subtends reality? We see here in our collection of essays numerous attempts undertaken by authors to seek new linkage in and meaning for life.

Contemporary postmodern authors seek knots of sense in experimental deconstructive efforts. They seek significance within disrupted temporal

sequences and so reveal how the moral significance of events, feelings, judgments, and choices depends on their timing (see R.M. Painter's study, pp. 173-...) and how the search for the sense of human destiny calls for pursuing the origin of life down to its source, creation itself (see the study of Alira Ashvo Muñoz, pp. 3-15). We invite the reader to imbibe the fascinating presentations in this volumes with this new quest for meaning in mind, for they show that no matter how we cut, displace, reshuffle, or distort the line of unfolding developments, of events, it is in their subjacent temporal constitution, coherence, continuity in succession, intergenerative coalescence that their sense is shaped and the order of the entire course generated. It comes to the fore that it is life's temporalization that generates its nuclei of sense, ultimately bringing about the order that maintains the continuity/discontinuity of life and the sought for origin of life.

The logos of life proceeds in establishing sense, reason, the rationality of becoming in temporalizing moves. Thus the logos/sense of life is modulated along infinite constitutive/generative lines, metamorphic transformative knots, issuing finally in aspirational planning, the throwing forth of imaginative bridges, the conscious carrying out of the creative upsurge and quest in human deliberative action and creatively enriched endeavor.

Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka

SECTION I

A TEMPORAL CHORA

Alejo Carpentier's narrative 'Journey Back to the Source' stylistically takes the behavior of a chora, as in Julia Kristeva's *Polylogue* (J. Kristeva, *Polylogue*, Paris, Seuil, 1977, 57), the melody and consciousness as a performance. In this case another peculiarity is added by being a chora kept alive in someone's memory, since the main character, Marcial, is deceased, constituting a presence not a character in a proper sense, as in Husserl's reformation of a conscious subject. This quality helps to substantiate a metaphorical birth, mainly that of the character's persona, procuring a birth born as imminence of existence. The arising and stepping beyond the common possibilities of any mortal being forms a creation of movement, which is what Hegel named the experience of consciousness. The movement is created through the temporal planes, which in the narrative allegorically also become musical notes.

Human consciousness as a whole is vast like the ocean and is also constantly fluctuating through a variety of depths, through the prism of time and space; each individual is a unique entity with the possibilities of a conscious being which imprint energy in actions and conceptualizations. Western thought has stated that death constructs a dialectical paradigm of pure presence and absence. To be born is to transform one's essence through time. In its search to find the answer to the question of being, Western philosophy has always determined Being as presence. Marcial's character is more a presence since, after he ceases to be, he undergoes transformation by the musical recollections, a previous temporal plane, going so far back as to arrive at the primordial beginnings of the earth's creation, continuing in a realm in which only the essence of time exists, the creation of the universe.

'Temporization', in these terms, is not a new 'ground', a simple origin, but rather, as Derrida says in dissemination, 'marks' an irreducible and generative multiplicity ... forbidding an exhaustive and closed formalization of [the text], or at least a saturating taxonomy of its themes, its signified, its meaning. (Jacques Derrida, *Positions*, Chicago, Chicago UP, 1981, 45)

Time here is perceived as multiplicity, a dissemination that marks opposites and continues on. This notion of endless time is connected with the idea of

the existence of God, since without this all powerful entity, death can only be considered the end of time.

Le temps n'est pas la limitation de l'être mais sa relation avec l'infini. La mort n'est pas anéantissement mais question nécessaire pour que cette relation avec l'infini ou temps se produise. [Time is not the limitation of the other but its relation with the finite. Death is not an annihilation but a necessary question in the relation it has with the infinite or the time it produces.] (Emmanuel Lévinas, *Dieu, la Mort et le Temps*, Éditions Grasset and Fasquelle, Paris, 1993, 28)

Time is also central to the conception of music and as such takes a prioritized function within its production. Due to the inclusion of musical concepts and allusions, the text also has to be perceived as a musical performance. The author gives a performative aspect to the narrative by inserting the musical allegations at key instances when the narration undergoes a temporal change. It is not through linguistic structures but by phenomenological consciousness that the narrative develops, following Marcial's fragmented time, double time, the one in the story and the one in the internal narration, the one on earth and the one in the journey. Narrated in a zigzag pattern he continuously and increasingly journeys towards the primordial time. Temporal perception is the underlying basis for the fragmentation of time and textual reality is the transformative force elaborated through the musical awareness. The circularity of the *cannons cangrisans* is being followed. This is a Baroque musical structure in which notes are played and then the musicians play back each note exactly from the last, continuing in a receding mode until they arrives again at the first, creating a perfect audible circularity.

De acuerdo con las exigencias de este tipo de piezas, la primera voz canta un tema dado, mientras, la segunda voz canta su copia en retroceso, es decir, empezando por el final y concluyendo por el principio, de derecha a izquierda. De esta manera se escucha la primera nota junto a la última, la segunda junto a la penúltima, etc ... [In accordance with the demands of this type of score, the first voice sings a theme; meanwhile the second voice sings the same backwards, that is to say, it begins from the end and concludes in the beginning, from right to left. In this way one hears, the first and last note together, then the second next second to last, etc ...] (Antonio Benitez Rojo, *La isla que se repite*, Ediciones del Norte, Hanover, 1989, 248)

A psychological analysis of time (Freud and Lacan) perceives time from the present to the past, the future and so on, in a non-linear fashion (Jacques Lacan's theories of the inverted bouquet, based on Freud's theories of temporal perception). The narrative is trying to simulate this technique of perception, going backwards, forwards and backwards. There is abundant evidence in the narrative about these temporal discrepancies; the oppositions create unity, identity, immediacy, temporal and spatial over what might at first be perceived as distance, difference and deferment. Very subtly, the narrator describes the time discrepancy:

Era el amanecer. El reloj del comedor acababa de dar las seis de la tarde. [It was dawn. The clock in the dining room just struck six in the evening.] (Alejo Carpentier, *Cuentos completos*, Barcelona, Editorial Bruguera, S.A., 1981, 70)

Later we are clearly told:

Marcial tubo la sensación extraña de que los relojes de la casa daban las cinco, luego las cuatro y media, luego las cuatro, luego las tres y media ... [Marcial had the strange sensation that the clocks in the house were marking five o'clock, then four thirty, then four, then three thirty ...] (Ibid., 75)

As readers, we become aware that a new reality is being created, a *tempo nuovo* constituting a quasi-intertextuality, a double reality in reverse being unfolded within the narrative, not a mere repetition of previous events but embarking upon new experiences from the past, expressed in the demarcations of musical sounds. The text acts as a musical score using written language to express what music accomplishes by abstract perceptions which create feelings in those who listen.

The narrative begins with a minor reference to an ancient African ritual, performed by a long-time friend of the deceased, Marcial. In Ancient Egypt it was believed that there was a triad that constituted human personality; *Ka* or the spirit, *Khu* was the soul, and *Khat* the body. Another comparable version states that the triad was formed by *Khaybet*, the shadow, *Ba*, the soul, and *Sahu*, the mummy. *Ka*, being the oldest, began at birth and continued after death, being the invisible double of the body. It is important to mention this because it sets the narration in the performance mode and consequently sets the narrative in a larger time frame, going back to cultural traditions that predated Ancient Greece while at the same time continue in a derived manifestation in Yorubaland now. Consequently the author hints at a transformation of religious beliefs, from Ancient Egypt to Europe, to the Americas, since the story of Marcial takes place in Colonial times. From a philosophical standpoint this sacred passage might contain a critique of Western metaphysics since several traditional African religions conceive a parallelism between the time of the living and the dead; the body serves as a barrier to accessing the time of the ancestors.

The modern concept of time is expressed in a constant rehistoricization of intellectual life in Hegel's principle of subjectivity as *Phenomenology of Mind*, in the introduction. Fundamentally, literature is not only a reduction of the individual play of signifiers, since it plays a role in the controversies that manifest within the intellectual heritage of a nation.

Written in 1953, this short story by Carpentier reveals a mature author creating a very complex narrative, showing a mixture of pathos, tragedy and comedy that unfolds into another parallel narrative, enclosing a sense of

otherness. By this it creates a pertinent question that relates to the theory of authorship and the issue of who is really narrating the story. Attentive readers not impersonality as the narration progress through time in the temporal alteration and the zigzag effect being created with the use of the *cannons cangrisans*. The journey that takes place is central to the story. The text is stratified into layers between the constative and the performative while functioning as a musical score. Is a transformative journey, in the ancient Egyptian religious tradition as the post mortem journey through the temporal. The time change constitutes the paradigm for inventiveness similar to what takes place in Shakespeare's *Cymbeline*.

Time is simultaneously condensed and expanded, as it is both the mystery drama and dreams, the play returns to us more directly, as those forms do, to the transcendental and primal sacred forms. (Arthur C. Kirsch, *Shakespeare and the Experience of Love*, Cambridge, Cambridge UP, 1981, 172-3)

Cymbeline is Shakespeare's last work and has been called an unfinished piece due to the constant temporal changes that take place in the play, culminating with a final time change, when the gods mingle with humans.

Since much is left unsaid in Carpentier's text, the discontinuity sets the difference between what is written, or what the author sets out to express, and the actual intention in the textual operative or what actually ends up being expressed. The text can be divided into explicative and deconstructive phases. The effect thus created permits us to perceive the philosophical inception similar to Plato's *pharmakon*. Saussure has previously clarified that language is a system of differences and similarities, not a grouping of independent meaningful sound units, a system constituted by differences which language constantly tries to overcome.

Inextricably united to the fluctuations of time and presence, lies the function that music provides. Music is constituted by sound, in a system carrying specific and meaningful code. Music and literature are subject to time and space in accordance to how Being is defined (substance defined in time and place). Time is a fundamental key element in music, where energy placed in a temporal-spatial continuum produces sounds executed in temporal specificities, *tempo*, where the temporal function takes precedence and creates a sense of timelessness, audibly, by the perception of a perpetual moving present. Rhythm in music is used to create equilibrium by which symmetry is perceived. In all instances in this narrative, the temporal element functions as a disconnect by the use of sounds, musical and otherwise, creating an odd unifying effect, one that seems clear following the *cannon cangrisans* format. Time, then, is transfigured and canceled, returning to its beginning in perfect

circularity, similar to what appears at the end of *Cymbeline*. By annulling the perception of time, as in music, the narrative remains dependent on the content of the form instead of the form of the content; it is universalized to grasp totality: *Einheitserlebnis*. This sense of timelessness provides a kind of escape route for the main character, a way to free the participating being, which has been excluded from the world and thus remains only located in time, having neither place nor substance.

When promulgated, literature and music teach the reliability of humanity's accrued knowledge. Both manipulate time in accordance with internal laws, disregarding physical ones, in order to achieve an individual's unique time, imposed by the author or composer. Nevertheless, both music and literature achieve infinity by existing after the death of their creator, taking a life of their own.

It is evident that time in literature, as in music, has separate rules from real time. Textual reality is fiction, being real by the implication of its own verisimilitude, and so it is with the use of tempo. The short story belongs to a collection first published in a book entitled *War of Time*. Included in the prologue is a quote by Lope de Vega referring to the incapacity to achieve control over it:

"What captain is this, what soldier of war of time?" Lope de Vega
(Alejo Carpentier, *War of Time*, Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1970, x).

The reader becomes aware of the repetition, circularity and infinity that have been created.

Circularity is structurally achieved through a phenomenological understanding that structurally is in accordance with the use of the Baroque musical structure, the *cannons cangrisans*. Continuing with the format, the text contains a polyphony of voices: one voice sings and a second one later sings the same notes backwards, by which the ending then coincides with the beginning. The text copies it, repeating actions that undo the previous ones. As the narrative begins the demolition of the house takes place in the act of erasing the spatial while the old black man pronounces incomprehensible words, like those of the ancient Egyptian ritual for the dead, and as the deceased follows his journey through time; the one implied in the title.

The narrative thus constructed begins with a destruction that formulates the creation, making its form and content appear similar. The end is the beginning again when the final paragraph culminates with another demolition, a verbal reminder that only in words—ephemeral as they may be—does one have in literature the capacity to remain alive after death, a temporal metamorphosis with the ability to be remembered by others, imprecisely.

The text includes the metaphor of twelve butterflies, signaling the metamorphosis. The literary technique used simulates the musical to achieve a continuous present. Carpentier, a well known musicologist, specialized in the Baroque period. The recovery of lost time in literature is known in Marcel Proust's *A la Recherche de Temps Perdu*, creating a parallelism between both works. Carpentier's main protagonist, Marcial, has a Spanish equivalent of the French author's name. The recovering here is done backwards and forwards, the zigzag pattern, which also alludes to contemporary Neo-Baroque literary techniques of the late twentieth century which signal this new approach, as Fabio Lucas has mentioned:

A estória noa quer ser historia. À estória, em rigor, deve ser “contra a Historia”. A estória, às vees, quer-se um pouco parecida à anedcota. [A story does not want to be a history. A story, in rigor, ought to be a counter-history. At times, a story seems to be a bit similar to an anecdote] (Fabio Lucas, *Do barroco ao moderno*, Editora Ática, S.A., Sao Paolo, 1989, 139)

Stories can be told in more than one way: flashbacks, remembrances, references, and intertextualities, in many ways that evoke multiple possibilities. Most people do not participate in the historical; even historical figures have a personal and public story, and many times they are contradictory. Reference to multiple elaborations or deviations of a single theme and the overly ornate in the Neo-Baroque brings about a sense of completion, established in the repetition. In the text, sounds are mediators of time, altering the dynamics of rhythm and tempo in the plot. As time runs parallel to rhythm and rhythm is the breath of the universe, *Atmen des alls*, music and life are subject to time and space. The essence of being is a universal created from the void, where only time exists.

Attributing the qualities of verbal simultaneity (Jean-Luc Nancy, *Le partage des voix*, Éditions Galilée, Paris, 1982) and the constant repetition in the polyphony of the voices, the text itself becomes multiple as the musical notes unite and multiply in playing the *cannons cangrisans*. This not only alludes to the internal textual format but also to the fact that it creates more than one story, the one being told and the one referred to, the known and the hidden. This is achieved by the fragmentation in the narration and by not completely finishing the narrated events in each of the thirteen episodes, again strictly in accordance with the Baroque format similar to a site of inverse mirrors, a familiar technique in that epoch. Each of the thirteen sections of the narrative concludes in an open ending, suggesting a void, a space or time lapse, which adds to the intrigue in the plot. The reader questions whether there is something missing in the story being told or that simply cannot be said or explained by the narrator in accordance with the proper customs in

vogue at the time. Does this also allude to the obliteration of events in one's memory? Time certainly does that, which might suggest that an occurrence took place that was deviant from proper conduct. Obviously one begins to notice other possibilities here, based on the concealment of details, in the incompleteness of the plot (Jacques Derrida, *La Voix et le Phénomène*, Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 1967). Accordingly the text says:

Transcurrieron meses de luto, ensombrecidos por un remordimiento mayor. [Months of mourning went by, covered in shadows by a greater guilt] (Alejo Carpentier, *Cuentos completos*, Editorial Bruguera S.A, Madrid, 1981, 71).

Nothing more about these events is mentioned later. The narrative continues in reverse mode, as one encounters the previous, a premonition concerning a sinister possibility that had already taken place by the river.

¡ Desconfía de los ríos, niña; desconfía de lo verde que corre!
[Distrust the rivers, child, distrust what is green that runs!] (Ibid.).

Marcial is in mourning for the death of his wife and feels guilty—about what? In the plot nothing is clear, for what remains unsaid is of most importance. The use of gaps in narrating a plot is commonly used now by many Spanish authors, as Rosa Montero explained in an interview:

... no conduce a ninguna revelación. Ningún personaje sabe en definitiva nada. No hay ningún mago omnisciente ... Todos son lamentables y eso es lo que yo creo que es la humanidad: no somos ni buenos ni malos, no heroicos ni ruines, ni felices ni trágicos ... nada en realidad o todo un poco. [... it does not lead to any revelation. Neither character knows definitively. There is not an all-knowledgeable magician ... Everyone is deplorable and that is what I believe humanity is: we are not good nor bad, neither heroic nor low, neither happy nor tragic ... nothing in reality or a little of all.] (Fajardo, Manuel, "Entrevista con Rosa Montero", *Cambio* 16, 426, Feb. 1990, 100)

This is meant to present humanity as such, the absences, the lack of knowledge, improbabilities and incongruencies that form a bulk of ones' existence. Later, when the story is about to end, this passage is retaken and the narrator explains that years later someone remembers the story:

Uno recordó entonces la historia, muy diseminada, de una Marquesa de Capellanías, ahogada, en tarde de mayo, entre las malangas del Almendares. [Someone remembered the story, well disseminated, that of a Countess of Capellanías, drowned, on a May afternoon, between the Yucca plants of the Almendares river] (Ibid., 93).

What is more important, what one remembers of events or what actually happened? We are only told of the discrepancies that occur in relation to

actual events, like old Kodacolor photographs that fade with time; most people partially remember events or forget details. We seem to perceive things differently after years have gone by, time alters perception.

Using irony by opposition, the narrative tells us about jolly events in regression, creating an absurd logic.

... Y, como era de costumbre, los esposos fueron a la iglesia para recobrar su libertad. [And as it was the costume, the couple went to church to recover their freedom] (Ibid., 73–4).

The freedom the couple attained in church as customary refers to wedding vows, which in a reverse mode, tells about the distance and indifference that had grown over years of married life which later culminates with the incident of the wife's drowning by the river. The passing of time over the years created an indifference that characterized their relationship. These metaphors add authenticity to the narrative, a hermetic reality in accordance with Avant Garde Ultraist techniques. Ultraism was a literary movement that began in Europe during the nineteen thirties and 'forties in selected capitals. Authors including Jorge Luis Borges and Carpentier were members.

Metaphors of time abound in this story, creating a semi-poetic construct, an aesthetic mode pertaining to each time period that elapses:

.... Existía un pequeño sótano lleno de frascos holandeses, debajo de las cuerdas, y que en desván inútil, encima de los cuartos de criadas, doce mariposas polvorientas acababan de perder las alas en caja de cristales rotos. [... Existed a tiny basement full of Dutch apothecary jars, under a frame in the useless loft, above the maids' rooms, twelve dusty butterflies just happened to lose their wings in the broken glass case] (Ibid., 88).

Time exists, even for the dead, the time of the ancestors, as attested by the twelve dusty butterflies without wings preserved in the glass case. Ephemerally, the wings of a butterfly vanish, break or decompose to the touch. Inexorably we are told that a simple mischief of the central character during childhood is more than a careless imprudence, it is a reminder of the future breakage of time. Destruction comes from the passing of time, is delicate as the wings of a butterfly. The twelve butterflies, as the twelve hours of the day, formed the time unity. The breakage of the crystal case is a counterpoint to his wife's death, a poetic image of a broken life, a mirror that encompasses what will take place, the rupture of someone's lifetime. The butterflies as mirror of the husband, Marcial, refer to when he remained enclosed in his mother's womb, the source he came from, and the journey of the title that has become the central focus of the story. Butterflies are symbols of the soul, the afterlife, of transformations and rebirth. Parallel to the music and the

temporal references are a game of chess and a game of cards, symbols of the probabilities enclosed in a destiny. One sees it in the following:

Comenzaron a jugar al ajedrez ...
 [They began to play chess ...] (Ibid., 85).

The games of chance and strategy, cards and chess, take precedence, which connects the lack of control in one's life with the temporal. The characters are puppets of time, and of God's will.

Movement in music and through time, rhythm, is what constitutes the journey. There is a historical hermeneutics where music becomes a catalytic agent that enables the narrator to alter and switch through the temporal planes. It goes beyond the textual interpretation to the insightful suggestion of the historical component in cognition. Here the character signifies well beyond him, his family, his contemporaries and humanity itself; he becomes Everyman. And as man he then becomes a child, in a clear reference to a well known Spanish children's song, *Urí, urí, urá* (Carpentier, 88). This child's song, "*La víbora de la mar*" ("The viper of the sea"), deals with inconsistencies, the unknown, treason, power, the irremediable complications in trying to understand reality, one's position in society, the issue of class and what it constitutes for the individual. Turning into fast motion, the narrative uses musical terminology to express the rapid movement of time:

Time goes now in a soft *crescendo*, specifically a *glissando*.

Pero ahora el tiempo corrió más pronto, adelgazando sus últimas horas. Los minutos sonaban a glissando de naipes bajo el pulgar de un jugador. [But now time went by faster, thinning out his last hours. The minutes sounded like a *glissando* of cards under the index finger of a player] (Ibid., 91).

[*glissando*: a slide up or down, played, for example by sweeping the hand across harp strings or sliding the index finger along a violin string. Max Wade Matthews and Wendy Thompson, *The Encyclopedia of Music*, Hermes House, London, 2002, 501].

The author explicitly uses the term "*glissando*" meaning a *pianissimo* effect by which the index finger slides over the strings in unison effect, creating a vertigo sound, with the difference that the narrative uses a harpsichord as referential to the Baroque. This is the performance mode of the narrative, the *glissando* effect in the narration. The play of cards, a human poker game, played as *glissando*, constitutes a metaphor for a fast sliding in time after death and during a lifetime as well, in any human life in which the course of events mostly are left to chance. By referring to the cards it insinuates court figures; kings, queens, and pages, a reference to the Colonial times where the central plot takes place.

In this progressive climate characters finally leave behind all trace of substance, becoming only a presence arriving at the void before creation, the primal source of all creation. The elements enumerated in the story are: earth, night, Eden, chaos, water, earth and nothingness, clay and bareness; all primordial elements. Time deals with movement. Man is defined in time and his movement in time forms the base for forging his story, his own destiny. By definition man has the capacity to create history, his own, through the use of knowledge. Words are expressions of knowledge, and the ability to utilize words and one's intellect is a human prerogative by which man imposes his will against chance in this chaotic world. The exercise of introspection and inquisitiveness aids man responsibly in his quest to control the outcome derived from his time on earth. He uses his individuality according to his will, forging his humanistic conscience.

The text formulates a question to us readers, by the act of reading itself, and by doing so it opens many possibilities. The beginning of an interpretation is in fact a response, in this case to the meaning of time, proving the possible that allows the narration to unfold into multiple endings, a partnership of collaboration with the author's intention. Moving from a *priori* to the *posteriori* plane, forwards and backwards, the story follows society and history in a personal memory voyage of transformation. The text then remains plural in the transformation by virtue of interpretation, in a dialectical interpretation (H.-G. Gadamer). The textual polyphony of voices serves as the temporal *chora* when it carries the melody of consciousness in the performance, as Umberto Eco elaborated:

Aucun texte n'a la solidité, la cohérence, l'assurance, la systématique requise si la réponse de l'autre ne vient l'interrompre, et l'interrompant, le faire résonner. [Certain texts do not have solidity, coherence, assurance, the required systematization if the answer of the "other" does not interrupt it and the interrupter creates sense of it] (Umberto Eco, *The Role of the Reader*, Bloomington, Indiana UP, 1979, 99).

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LITERATURE AND THE SENSE OF THE PAST

According to Matthew Arnold, the poet's main responsibility is to appeal to those elementary feelings which subsist permanently in the race, and which are independent of time.¹ To Arnold, the externals of a past action [mean] the poet cannot know with the precision of a contemporary; but his business is with its essentials. The outward man of Oedipus or of Macbeth, the houses in which they lived, the ceremonies of their courts, he cannot accurately figure out himself; but neither do they essentially concern him. His business is with their inward man; with their feelings and behavior in certain tragic situations, which engage their passion as men; these have in them nothing local and casual; they are as accessible to the modern poet as to a contemporary.²

Arnold seems, in this passage, to claim that literature knows a 'subject' not a 'person'. In other words, the author is conceived of only as *the past of his own book*. Indeed, based on this view, "A text is not a line of words releasing a single 'theological' meaning but a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash".³ Therefore, the writer can only imitate a gesture that is always anterior. On the other hand, his only power is to mix writings, to counter the ones with the others, in such a way as never to rest on any one of them. From this point of view, to give a text an author is to impose a limit on that text, to furnish it with a final signified, to close the writing. Author and the book stand on a single line divided into a before and an after; this 'division' has been reflected in a quotation of Lionel Trillings: "Young people who are of radical, social and political opinion are virtually never troubled by the opposed views or the settled indifference of the great modern writers ... it is because that they know that they are to trust the tale not the teller of the tale. They know that, if the future is in the bone of anyone, it is in the bone of literary genius, and exactly because the present is in his bone, exactly because the past is in his bones"⁴ As a matter of fact, there is no reason to think that "writing designates exactly what linguists call a performative, a rare verbal form in which the enunciation has no other content than the act by what it is uttered".⁵

Such views, indeed, remind us that on the one hand, the relation between the past and the present can no longer be conceived as 'survival', 'continuation', or 'legacy', and that, on the other hand, the difference between the present and the past is that the conscious present is an awareness of the past in a way and to an extent which the past's awareness of itself cannot show.

There are, however, so many other views that confirm William Butler Yeats' thought. He writes: I have felt ... that by assuming a self of past years, as remote from that of today as some dramatic creation, I touched a stronger passion, a greater confidence than I possess, or ever did possess.⁶ It seems to me that such viewpoints are based on this fact that sometimes the pursuit of the past is part of an exercise in self-definition and self-knowledge. One chooses moments in the past as landmarks from which to measure one's own position. Indeed, the past and the present are so intertwined, so coalescent in a conscious historical memory and continuity, that the present – despite the fact that it has a spirit which is wholly new and wholly its own – is intimately penetrated and conditioned at every point by the past.

To some novelists and poets, it is only when the past is regarded as dead that we are able to see it plainly. The supposed deadness of the past was a challenge to Browning's virtuoso creativity so that by performing an act of resurrection he could seem to defeat the powers of life and death:

*Bring good antique stuff.
Was it alight once? Still lives spark enough
For breath to quicken, run the smouldering ash
Red right-through
(Parleyings with Certain People: 'With Charles Avison', II, 293–6).*

According to some novelists, the past is a theatre in which problems can be acted out, but in an environment free from modern association, so that one almost produces 'scientific conditions' to study the operations of psychology or social struggle.⁷

The past is a dominant interest for Victorian writers.^{8–12} Most poets of the Victorian periods (1830–1890) had a dominant orientation to their own pasts and the past of their own and other societies.¹³

The pasts that spoke most clearly to the Victorian poets were the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. An episode in '*Lancelote and Eliane*' shows the distance Tennyson has come from the Middle Ages.¹⁴

In general, Victorians had a tendency to reshape the past to make it resemble their own times, but when they were prepared to register its difference from themselves it became apparent that its great utility was that it offered