Martin Murray

Mrs. Dalloway and the Finite Transcendental

Existence, Time and Transcendence in Woolf, Husserl and Derrida

Is life like this?[1]

The moment was all; the moment was enough.[2]

Indiscipline

At first glance, the association that the subtitle of this paper proposes might seem to be an odd one. The names of Virginia Woolf, Edmund Husserl and Jacques Derrida are not normally linked. Their work is often described according to different disciplinary designations. Their common intellectual concerns are taken, by implication or default, to be peripheral or null. Woolf is thought of a novelist, diarist or journalist. Though her work is frequently represented, in one way or another, as critical (for example of literary convention, or because of its aesthetic or intellectual discernment) it is not usually called philosophical. Husserl is sometimes presented as the most technical (and hence for some the most philosophical) of philosophers.[3] Although his work is not indifferent to linguistic or textual ambiguity or potentiality, it is not presented as in any way literary. Unlike some philosophers influenced by him, such as Heidegger, and like some contemporaries who share his concern for logical exposition, such as Frege, Husserl does not examine or exploit the purpose or effects of literary or linguistic style. It's less easy, in disciplinary terms, to say what Derrida's work, rather than Woolf's and Husserl's, is, but not difficult to find often quite strident protestations concerning what it isn't. Some philosophers claim that this work, or the work it has influenced, is too literary (for example too concerned with apparently tropic dimensions of texts) to be properly philosophical.[4] Literary critics claim, among other things, that it is too philosophical (alternately too technical or immaterial) to grasp the (alternately stylistic or material) stuff of literature.[5] This paper is going to question all of these claims. It will be suggesting that Woolf's work is not just, or even primarily literary, but also philosophical. It's treatment of some philosophical issues, for example, will be presented as more tolerant, less reductive and hence in a sense more philosophical than some of Husserl's. By the same token, some of Husserl's analyses will be shown to reveal an intermittent resistance in his work to the reduction, as well as to the indulgence, of ambiguity, which uncovers a disposition in them that might

happily (as philosophers in the logical tradition sometimes say) be called literary. Derrida's work will be invoked in order to bring all this about, and will be presented as no more or less philosophical than it is literary.

Anticipating the way in which Derrida's work will be presented raises two issues: deconstruction and presence. These issues will instruct what follows, even if they also, for reasons which should become apparent, frustrate it. Analyses by Derrida will be invoked in order to show that, while he also holds to them, Husserl unsettles a number of important philosophical presuppositions or prejudices. A similar strategy will be examined in Woolf's work, and might be claimed as literary except that she will be seen to mobilise it *against literary* prejudices, and in what might be called philosophical terms. This anticipation of the following work can be restated in both a more thematised and a more particular way.

Derrida's concern, briefly stated, is with the metaphysics of presence.[6] This philosophical tradition, which continues a theological one, and which instructs Western tradition *per se* takes presence to be what is essential about existence. This presence is not just physical. Rather it is metaphysical, where this term stands for what it *is* that instructs the physical from above or within or, in other words and according to it's Greek root, beyond *(meta*) the physical (*physis).* This (for example formal, ideal or even empirical) essence of existence is presented as primary (for example as *a priori* or originary) or inevitable (for example historically or causally). Existence is thus seen as essentially and ultimately a matter of the presence of something. More precisely, it is seen as the presence of something, either to something else, or to itself. It might involve, to take some privileged examples, the presence of spirituality, world or self to each other, themselves or a self. However, this primacy of presence is only achieved by way of more or less discrete or declarative metaphysical work. This work institutes maintains and promises the priority of presence, in whatever embodiment or form. This presence is asserted over what is taken as its opposite or derivation. But this antithesis or derivation of presence also commands what it is apparently subordinate to. If presence is marked by its opposition to non-presence (if it is fundamentally marked out by not being non-presence) then it becomes apparent in terms of what it is not, as well as what it is (for example in itself). Indeed, the only possibility that this might not be so involves presence never being apparent in terms of anything but itself. This condition can only be presented, or rather repeated and therefore represented, as tautological, as

presence as presence. Presence is instructed by, just as much as it commands, non-presence. Deconstruction is, among other things, the means of showing that this is so.

What should become apparent by way of deconstruction, then, is that metaphysical argumentation is dependent for its (present) principles, aims and ends, on what it claims to be independent of. Because this is so, close examination of it reveals a tension or ambiguity between its apparent discoveries or claims and its omissions or renunciations. This tension necessitates but also disrupts metaphysical assertions. In Husserl's description of what exists, for example, it leads to a necessary encounter, with, and sometimes an admission of, what is irreducible to presence, but also to a subjugation of this in the service of knowledge. The concomitant dependence and difference of states of presence and non-presence discoverable in and through Husserl's work can be registered by examination of two moments in it. This will be undertaken shortly. An initial Husserlian description of phenomena will first of all be considered. It will be suggested that although this description is carried out in the name of a quest for logical (and therefore, at least in Derridian terms, metaphysical) foundations, it does not find presence to be phenomenologically primary. Subsequently, Husserl's important elaboration of what this foundation means for psychology will be considered. It will be found to impose a principle of presence on phenomenological apprehension, which will nevertheless be shown to bear traces of a concomitantly excluded non-presence. The first moment examined in Husserl's text (where non-presence will be most marked), will involve a spatial displacement of presence (which will render it no longer simply *here*). In the subsequent instance (in which Husserl's assertion of presence is most marked), an imposition and disruption of presence will occur, in some significant respect, temporally (and will impose and disrupt the present *now*). In each case, what will be stressed is what escapes from or unsettles as well as what supports metaphysical argumentation. In at least one sense, then, Husserl's work will be held up as unphilosophical as well as philosophical, by means of which it will open a correspondence with what might be interesting about Woolf's writing.

Not least in terms of this correspondence, Woolf's writing can be treated, as it most commonly is, as literary. This has already been indicated, as has a less common contention that this writing is also non-literary, or even anti-literary. More precisely, it works against literary convention. Just as there is an aspect of Husserl's philosophical work that overturns philosophy simply understood, there is an aspect of Woolf's that

carries out a destruction of a certain sort of literature. This destruction is not apocalyptic. It is carried out, not unlike Heidegger's attempted destruction of the history of ontology, from within its object and in order to transform as much as nihilate it.[7] In so far as some of Heidegger's work can be seen, albeit not simply or uncritically, to be continued in Derrida's (just as some of Husserl's is in Heidegger's) Woolf's can be seen to be involved in something like deconstruction.[8] Now this does not mean that Woolf's intellectual claims or inclinations bear any strict correspondence with Derrida's. What it might mean, though, is that Derridian suggestions can be made about the way in which Woolf's writing, like Husserl's undermines as well as sustains a certain sort of tradition, along with the conventions that characterise it. This paper is an attempt to show as much. It will do so by putting the work of Husserl and Woolf together in a way that distinguishes, relates and blurs what is carried out in both of them, as well as what is encountered by each of them traditionally.

Of course, the tradition encountered, disturbed and transformed by Woolf and Husserl is not unitary. That they can be identified, respectively, with literature and philosophy means that there must be some difference in or between what each or both of them inhabit and escape. What has also already been indicated, however, is that the location of both their residence and escape is sometimes mutual. Woolf and Husserl are sometimes for and against something similar, if not the same. Now if this something can be called metaphysics, which it can, this once again does not make them simply Derridian.[9] Metaphysics is not always the same thing for everyone. What Derrida calls metaphysics, and aligns with a prioritisation of presence, is not exactly the same, for example, as what Heidegger calls metaphysics as onto-theology, or what the logical positivists describe as metaphysical idealism. Though she sometimes explicitly comments on philosophy, Woolf has little to say about metaphysics *per se*.[10] However, Husserl, Wolf and Derrida can all be seen to develop and interrogate thematics which can be and sometimes are designated metaphysical. Notably, and in explanation of the title of this paper, they can all be seen as concerned with a theme taken up in metaphysics of all sorts, including both literary and philosophical metaphysics, that is transcendence. The detail of this claim will follow. For now, its enough to note that a question of transcendence instructs the philosophies that all of these writers are keen to examine, challenge or develop, whether it is described as spiritual, ideal or (importantly for current purposes) temporal. It would be tempting to say that it's towards an examination (or an examination of the examination) of this transcendence that the present paper

works, except that what follows will not sanction advancement or presence, or make any claim to transcendence.

Inexperience

During the early decades of this century both Husserl and Woolf were undertaking an interrogation of a certain sort, or at least of equivalent sorts, of objectivity. Woolf's enquiry into it will be considered in a moment. For Husserl, perhaps as much as for Derrida, the objectivity in question is metaphysical. For him, it arises from a theoretical and methodological misunderstanding and misapplication of logic, particularly by science. This error is empirical. More precisely, it occurs when logical, scientific, or logico-scientific arguments involve empirical presumptions or procedures.[11] Reduction of existence to objects of experience (which can of course be scientific as well as individual) leaves something of it out. For reasons that will have to remain a little enigmatic until they are explained in a moment, this can also be put conversely, by suggesting that empirico-logico-scientific objectifications also misrepresent existence by leaving *nothing* out. This apparent contradiction corresponds with a tautology, which is presented, on behalf of Husserl, by Lyotard, thus:

> Basically, the assumption at the root of all empiricism is the claim that experience is the sole source of truth for all knowledge - but then this claim must rely, in turn, on the proof of experience.[12]

This doubling up of logic can be found in all empirical argumentation. It can even be seen in the philosophy of Locke, who, at least according to A.J. Ayer, is 'officially regarded as the founder of modern empiricism'. Ayer points out, surprisingly but quite accurately, that Locke, like Descartes, concentrates his philosophical attention on ideas, but that he does so for quite different reasons.[13] Locke does not admit any significant doubt about the empirical veracity of sense data. He does not, like Descartes, see ideas as prior to, and untouched and undistorted by, such data, and so neither does he make a claim, as Descartes famously does, for ideal or rational self-consciousness. Ideas, for Locke, are not independent of sense. Rather they are the figurations of it to which experience gives rise. They mark particular concatenations of sense, and it is on their basis that the existence of external objects which stimulate sense can be inferred. Deductively, then,

objects cause sense data which is figured as ideas that give objective proof of existence. This account might seem neat enough, but it does not adequately solve the problem of knowledge of objects. If as Locke asserts, the mind is 'white paper' without what is given to it by sense, then how can it be separate enough from sense to know it, or what it might reveal, or for that matter, know itself. Locke tries to solve this problem of ideas only being dissociated or homogeneous percepts by claiming that they become ordered by perceiving each other. Knowledge is thus the 'agreement or disagreement of two ideas'.[14] But if ideas are not independent of sense, this amounts to saying that knowledge is sense of sense. If knowledge, for example in self-consciousness, is something other than perception, this is contradictory, if not, it is tautological.

In their desire to find or found something consistently examinable logic and science objectify phenomena, but these objectifications become problematic. They do so not only where objectification is taken to be a function of psychological or objective knowledge, but also where the object is apparently autonomous. Such objectifications can only exist in their own terms, and involve a sort of epistemological paralysis or spasm. Strict understanding of the object as object either denies it any alterior (for example contingent or subjective) constitution, or admits this alterity only as (objective) identity. Pure objectivity involves an exclusion of what can be alternately described as *something* non-objective or *nothing* objective. In either case, what is excluded turns up in the paradoxical as well as logical definition of the object as itself. This observation by Husserl obviously anticipates the Heideggerian theme of the forgetting of Being and Derridian remarks concerning logocentric repression.[15]

What, then, can phenomenology be concerned with if not with an object? Put simply, phenomenology is primarily concerned with *this.* It is concerned with what is 'given' before constitution as an object (for example graphically, linguistically or ideally), before, that is, the duplicities of uncritical objectification. Phenomenology refuses to prejudge *what*, exactly might be given (although it might ask *how* it might have become so). It also, at least initially, suspends a question of *who,* or *what* it might exist for. All of this brings about what is commonly known as the phenomenological 'reduction' (which term is a little misleading given what has just been shown about phenomenology's anti-reductionism). Phenomena are

things in their 'originary givenness', and phenomenological attention, which is not yet epistemological or scientific, is directed towards 'immediate data' before it is objectified.[16]

This description of phenomena holds off some of the dangers of objectivity, albeit temporarily. Why it cannot hold them off permanently will be shown shortly. For now, it might be worth examining the status of phenomena a little more closely. This examination will reveal something unique about it, and, by implication or extension, about existence. This, in turn, will reveal a crucial correspondence between Husserl's work and Woolf's.

The 'immediate data' that is 'given' in phenomena is described by Husserl as essential. The phenomenological essence thus apparent, despite being pre-objective, is factitious. How can this be? For Husserl, the fact is not something objectively identifiable, and therefore describable as necessary or inevitable. On the contrary, it is significantly, even if not completely, contingent. Lyotard sums up Husserl's argument thus:

> It rests upon the fact, defined as 'the individual and contingent'; the contingency of the fact is related to the necessary essence, since to think of its contingency is to think that it belongs to the essence of the fact that it could be otherwise.[17]

The fact is only what it is (it is only *this* fact) by possibly being otherwise. Without this possibility, it could only ever be what it was, is, or will be. Such an inevitability, in so far as it could be absolute, in other words totally necessary or non-contingent, would be tautological, that is not significantly factitious at all. Because contingency is necessary to their constitution, there are no absolutely necessary, and therefore no absolutely objectifiable, facts.

Now its possible to attribute just this sort of view to Woolf, or to suggest that her writing facilitates it. Woolf, not unlike Husserl, is willing to accept and even assert that contingency effects the facts of existence. Like Husserl, and in a way that will be revealed, Woolf sees this contingency as being both

spatial and temporal. That is, she is concerned to not only show that what is here or there might not be, but also that it is continually changing. These two aspects of contingency are of course inseparable. For now, however, the first will be examined in Woolf's work. The second will necessarily be implied by this examination, but will only be dealt with explicitly later, after it has been analysed in the context of its treatment by Husserl. Various references will be made to Woolf's fictional and critical work during the remainder of this essay. One section from *Mrs Dalloway* will be referred to quite closely: the opening section, in which Clarissa Dalloway crosses the West End of London from Mayfair to Piccadilly to buy flowers for her forthcoming party.

Before reference is made to Woolf's fiction, it can be noted that her critical work exhibits a resistance, and even an opposition, to objectification, particularly in so far as it is effected by literary convention. For example, Woolf takes the Edwardian novelists Wells, Bennett and Galsworthy to task for a practice that is skilled only in its construction of a recognisable literary world, a world that is plausible only because it is in conformance with literary expectations. In the case of writers like Wells:

> The writer seems constrained not by his own free will but by some powerful and unscrupulous tyrant who has him in thrall, to provide a plot, to provide comedy, tragedy, love interest, and an air of probability embalming the whole so impeccable that if all his figures were to come to life they would find themselves dressed down to the last button of their coats in the fashion of the hour.[18]

Literary critical accounts of plot and tragedy are usually of their status and use as *formal* resources. This does not necessarily mean that they are anti-realistic ones. On the contrary, formal (or, according to contemporary modalities, structural) devices are said to be mobilised in the service of an appearance of actuality.[19] It is in these sorts of terms that Woolf is able to describe Wells, Bennett and Galsworthy as 'materialists'.[20] Experience is reduced to a crude literal (formal and material) objectivity by literary convention, just as, according to Husserl, it is reduced to a crude empirical one by conventional modern epistemology. Plot becomes the consecutive objectification of events, which is 'labour thrown away',

description the cataloguing of 'bells and buttons innumerable' and characterisation a succession of 'Joans and Peters'.[21]

Something (or perhaps no-thing) is concomitantly trapped and lost in such a construction, or procedure. Like phenomena as described by Husserl, it is only knowable by virtue of the fact of its contingency. Woolf alternately calls it the 'spirit' and 'inspiration'. She also calls it 'life', apologises for the vagueness of the term, then notes that other critics are no more or less accurate in calling it 'reality'.[22] The 'essential' stuff, of literature, according to Woolf is, or can be understood as, contingent.[23] Literature, then, should treat the material at hand without prejudice, assume a form that is appropriate to it, and eschew the objectivisation that results from 'methods' (Woolf's quotation marks), since 'any method is right, every method is right, that expresses what we wish to express...'[24] One thing that might be expressed, or in analogous Husserlian terms 'given', in and by literature written thus, is something like phenomena understood in the manner described above. These now literary as well as philosophical phenomena would, accordingly, be pre-objective. Apprehension of them would involve suspension of their determination as (literary, philosophical, or for that matter any other sort of) objects.

Instances of the appearance of such phenomena are common in Woolf's work. A fairly well known example might be the youthful impressions registered at the beginning of *The Waves* by its six main characters.[25] These impressions are vivid, but not identifiable as the properties of particular or typical objects. They are sensuous, but not, at least in a philosophical sense, sensible (apart from anything else, this indicates why Woolf is so preoccupied with the development of aesthetic *sensibility*). It is not clear whether or not they are real. A less well known example of such phenomena in Woolf's work might be the mark on the wall in her short story "The Mark on the Wall". It is described as being like a number of things, both real and imaginary, its status remaining undetermined until the final sentence.[26] Other examples are to be found in *Mrs. Dalloway*. While crossing Victoria Street form Westminster to Piccadilly, Clarissa Dalloway hears Big Ben's chime, a sound that is to recur throughout the text. It is a repetitious sound, and like phenomena according to Husserl, not simply single or multiple, and thus not simply numerable.[27] Description of it stops short of granting ontological status. On apprehending it...'The leaden circles dissolved in the air'. This apprehension recedes as it becomes apparent, and is of something that might or might not be material,

immaterial, or graphic. Shortly after it appears, some objects are designated, but in a way that makes them appear to blur into one another. Something is invoked in them, but only after a passage through them, and then only contingently, as never just one thing. It is bought forth:

> In people's eyes, in the swing, tramp, and trudge; in the bellow and the uproar; the carriages, motor cars, omnibuses, vans, sandwich men shuffling and swinging; brass bands; barrel organs; in the triumph and the jingle and the strange high singing of some aeroplane overhead was what she loved; life; London; this moment in June.[28]

Inalterability

One of the impressive things about this passage is that is that it makes a passage beyond things. It doesn't just pass through them. What it manages, in a word, is transcendence. But this transcendence is of a very particular, and even quite peculiar, sort. It does not exceed what it transcends. What it is borne from ('the...trudge, motor cars, ...strange high singing') is no more or less worldly or particular than what it attains ('life; London; this moment in June).

Transcendence commonly, and even not so commonly, understood takes place *above* what it transcends. It involves passage to a higher state of, for example, experience or awareness. This state, which is usually one of clarity, often involves a kind of comprehensibility. This would make it comprehensive or comprehensible, a totalisation of understanding or experience. This totalisation would effect, or have caused, something that is both more essential and more complete than the circumstances that it might have come out of. This, for the most part, is what transcendence means: the expansion or reduction of thought or experience towards or in the service of something ultimate or fundamental. Transcendence can, for example, be spiritual or mental. It can be explained theologically or philosophically. In most cases it involves a kind of unity, of origin, understanding or purpose. In this sense, and in all of the others mentioned so far, it is founded on, motivated by, and pursues metaphysical principles of presence. For reasons given at the beginning of this paper, it thus becomes a matter for Derridian deconstruction. It also, in the form just sketched, is quite unlike the transcendence apparent in Woolf's writing. Transcendence

described by Woolf is quite different, and sometimes bears an uncanny resemblance to transcendence complicated by Derrida.

One way of showing this, which will be undertaken shortly, is to give an account of a Derridian deconstruction of a certain aspect of the philosophy of Husserl, and then to compare this with descriptions of moments of transcendence in the writing of Woolf. As indicated earlier, this will involve scrutiny of a second set of instances of presence, and of the complication of presence, in the work of Husserl, and then Woolf. In both cases, instances and complications of presence will be temporal.

It has been suggested that Husserl's description of phenomena involves a certain resistance to metaphysical impositions of presence, particularly the presence of objects reductively understood. According to Derrida this dimension of Husserl's work is countered by another which more obviously operates in accordance with metaphysical presuppositions and procedures.[29] To the extent that it can be treated independently, the metaphysical dimension of Husserl's work can be traced in terms of a certain genealogy. It can be seen as having been significantly influenced by Brentano's psychology, which includes presuppositions that are Cartesian.

It has been seen that phenomena, according to Husserl, should be understood as what is given, before any determination of that 'givenness' as objectivity. This suspension of the question of *what* is given can obviously be seen to frustrate philosophical and scientific research. How is study possible if it is not clear *what* it is that is to be studied? Husserl suggests that enough about phenomena is apparent for study through direction of attention to *how* it is manifest.

As well as including a sense, albeit undetermined, of the existence of phenomena, this concern with *how* phenomena becomes apparent inevitably raises the issue of apprehension. Husserl addresses this issue by taking into account not only that any phenomenon is given, but also that it is given for something or, more precisely and significantly, someone. It is at this point that Brentano's influence becomes apparent. Brentano was concerned to distinguish psychical from physical phenomena. He did this by attributing consciousness to the psyche. He claimed, furthermore, that consciousness is always consciousness of

something. Husserl's description of phenomena as existing for something is the corollary of this. Although Husserl's philosophy resists psychologism, his acceptance that phenomena exist for something, or someone, includes a presupposition of intentionality. According to Brentano's use of the term, which instructs the whole phenomenological and even existential tradition, intention (from *intentio*) describes a holding of something in something, namely ideas, or signs *(Vorstellung*, which, like ideas are signs of or for something) in consciousness. This existence and holding of something in consciousness is reflective (what is held reflects what it is held by in being held by it) and therefore derivative of a model of existence that is Cartesian. It will become evident that, despite the suspension of ontological and epistemological determinations claimed by it, Husserl's philosophy cannot escape what is determined for it by this lineage.[30] What this amounts to is a philosophy that ultimately locates meaning in ideas apparent in consciousness. In order for this meaning to be *ultimately* guaranteed, it has to shown to be transcendent. This transcendence maintains a principle of presence. What Derrida's argument shows is that both this presence and this transcendence are compromised from the outset by being dependent on what can also be opposed to them. Transcendental idealism, and the self-presence of consciousness that should accompany it, is only possible in and through the worldly or mundane (that is the non-transcendent non-ideal) and in a being that is not always consciously present to itself. All of this can be elucidated now, by means of a slightly more detailed summary of the argument from which it is taken in *Speech and Phenomena*.[31]

As explained above phenomena, for Husserl, exist for something, and do so by way of something. More precisely, phenomena exist for consciousness in signs. What's more, this existence for consciousness is provided by consciousness, intentionally. Signs are meaningful in so far as they are granted sense by consciousness. Conversely, consciousness is confirmed by being able to give meaning to signs, including and perhaps especially 'I', the sign for itself. Signs are given meaning by consciousness which is confirmed as existent in being that which gives meaning to signs (note the Cartesianism of this gesture). In order for identity in thought to make sense consciousness and signs must cohere, they must be co-instantive. This means, crucially, that they must be present, to each other and themselves. According to this way of thinking, a sign can only appear if it is present to a consciousness which, in order to grant it sense, must be present to itself.

Now this presence, if it is to hold consciousness together, has to be not only spatial but also temporal. If consciousness is not to risk being forgotten, mistaken for something else, lost, or in any way absent or non-existent, it must be present to itself in the present. This is the condition of consciousness and even, by extension, of life. I am what I am by being what I ideally am in my consciousness, or what I am ideally conscious of myself as, now, which in some sense I always have been and always will be. The possibility of the extension of this presence is also that of the unfolding of truth.

What will be shown now, very briefly, and after Derrida, is that this present which Husserl appeals to in order to keep everything timely, and in place, is also absent. Although this could just as well be done in terms of space, it will be done with reference to time.

In order for the present to be properly felt or registered, it must be present to itself. Any deficiency in this presence would compromise its demarcation from past and future, which a deficient presence might then be taken for. This, at least, is how things should be. In order to be what it is, the present must be absolutely present. There are a couple of ways of imagining this. Unfortunately, at least for Husserl's argument, they are impossible, or at least quite difficult to maintain. First of all, the absolute present might be imagined as circumscribed, self contained, or punctual. As I've just suggested, this would necessitate it's demarcation from past and future. The present is what is happening now, not what is gone or what will be. The problem with this demarcation, which looks as if it should be the condition of the absolute present, is that it can never be marked absolutely. As soon as I say that the present is distinct from the past and future *now*, I am allowing a possibility that it might otherwise not be. In other words, I am suggesting that there might be, or might have been, a time when the present is or was not absolutely distinct from the past or future. This last notion need not be mysterious. It is implied, for example, by temporal succession. The only apparent way to overcome this difficulty, and another way of imagining absolute temporal presence, is to make the present absolutely continuous. The problem with absolute presence this time is that it is only what it always had been and will be. That is, it is not differentiated except in its own terms, which makes it tautological, or temporally inclusive to the point of non-distinction. The conditional differentiation of present from past and future is also the condition for the possibility of their assimilation. This condition precludes the possibility

of any of these terms being absolutely present, absolutely distinct, or totally unified. It implies temporal succession and temporal disjunction at the same time.

What's been said so far can be summarised by stating that temporal instances bear traces of each other. These traces can't enable any totally assured temporal continuity in so far as it might be imagined as a continuity of presence. This condition quite radically disturbs any straightforward thinking of time. A temporal instance can only be marked by means of another marking of what precedes and follows it. As well as preventing it from being absolutely present, this alterior marking also makes any such instant up. In an important sense, it is essential to temporal instantiation *per se*. The complexity of this situation is not quite registered by what has just been called temporal assimilation. It is not only that present, past and future are separable instances that might be assimilated, or related. Because the present is only what it is by being marked by what comes before and after it, it is in some sense essentially indistinguishable from the past and the future. Furthermore (whatever that word now means), the present can no longer assuredly found or sustain temporal progression. Nothing can be present without already having somehow been so, or somehow being so in the future. In this sense, the present *is* a repetition. In so far as the present can no longer be absolutely decisively distinguished from the past and the future, it can no longer guarantee their continuity. In this sense presence is *always* repetitious.

As indicated earlier, this causes terrible problems for Husserl's transcendental idealism, and its ideally concomitant self-consciousness. Because, for Husserl, meaning is only or primarily found and held in ideal self consciousness, and because self-consciousness is held together in presence, the only guarantee of meaning is completely continuity, that is infinite transcendental presence. What has just been demonstrated, however, is that presence *per se* is repetitious. Because repetition necessarily involves difference and discontinuity as well as similarity and continuity (each repetition is a different instance of the same) it marks what is singular and finite as well as what isn't.

What this means is that infinite presence, and the transcendence and transcendental meaning that it might guarantee, is caught up, everywhere and at all times, with what it should negate, disperse, or in one way or another rise above. Transcendental principles and aims cannot ever go fully beyond what they transcend,

which they are only ever marked *as* transcending, and hence in terms of. This does not mean that transcendence is impossible, but it does mean that movement towards it is also always necessarily drawn back. Neither is this double movement just anti-transcendental. Just as the repetitiousness of the present instant interrupts ideal continuity, it anticipates and succeeds, and hence in some sense goes beyond, future and past.

In broader, and as it were onto-theological terms, transcendence and transcendental values become apparent in, as well as through non-transcendental ones. The infinite and the finite, the mental and the physical, the spiritual and the mundane become indistinguishable. This indistinguishability, just as it is not entirely non-transcendent, is not entirely non-synthetic. However, because the terms that might become merged in it are only assimilable on the basis of a potential difference (because to say that the same terms are assimilable makes no sense) they can never be entirely synthesised. Transcendence is continually interrupted by and drawn back into what it transcends, but what transcendence transcends conditions it, giving it embodiment and meaning.

Woolf seems to know this. The registration of conscious experience, for her, does not involve any strict maintenance or continuation of a present instant or identity. She recommends the following to writers:

> 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.[32]

This description of consciousness is of one that is contingent, not least in the sense of being subject to temporal change. It reveals a consciousness that is not only effected by as well as distinct from what is outside of it, but also both different from and continuous with a past and future. This makes for a state of consciousness which, temporally as well as spatially, can be thought of as alternately disjunctive and mobile. Perhaps this is why in the first instant the narrative and character of *Mrs Dalloway* is instantaneously drawn back into a different place and time, and, shortly afterwards, into the present and future. As the novel opens Clarissa Dalloway is immediately transported from her doorstep in London in an

apparent present to a garden in Bourton decades previously. Almost as immediately, she returns to Westminster and, as described earlier, advances into Piccadilly and the future.

As she does so, she experiences the moment of clarity referred to at the end of the previous section of this essay. As indicated then, her feeling of transcendence is manifest as, as well as through, immersion in the particular and worldly. The air above is as much a part of the moment as the traffic around her. The moment is as much an insight into 'London' as 'life'.[33]

This 'life', like the one found in the previous deconstruction of life according to Husserl, is finite. Its finitude nevertheless also presupposes the possibility of something beyond the finite, which in exceeding and surrounding it, grants it particularity and circumscription. Clarissa Dalloway muses on this life, and its imminent, immanent beyond as she walks towards Bond Street. She wonders what it means that it will lead to death, and whether it matters that 'she will inevitably cease completely'. Then she wonders whether this is so. In doing so, of course, she is wondering whether life is infinite, whether it goes on beyond death, transcending the material and mundane. If there is any truth in what has been said so far, of course, and if the infinite is only conceivable in terms of, and hence in some sense as, the finite, this going beyond life might take place in life. Conversely, if the finite is always a recollection and departure of and towards the infinite, what takes place in it might also go on after it. Perhaps this is why Clarissa Dalloway is suddenly able to imagine something otherwise unimaginable, something beyond this world continuing in it, as life after death in life:

> ...she being part, she was positive, of the trees at home; of the house there, ugly, rambling all to bits and pieces as it was; part of people she had never met; being laid out like a mist between the people she knew best, who lifted her on their branches as she had seen the trees lift the mist, but it spread ever so far, her life, herself. But what was she dreaming as she looked into Hatchard's shop window?[34]

[1]Virginia Woolf, "Modern Fiction", in *Collected Essays Volume Two* (London: The Hogarth Press, 1966), p. 106.
[2]Virginia Woolf, *The Waves* [1931] (London: Granada, 1977), p. 188.

[3]See, for example, Anthony Quinton, "Edmund Husserl", in *The Fontana Dictionary of Modern Thinkers,* ed. A. Bullock and R.B. Woodings (London: Fontana, 1983), p. 350. Because Husserl's work is quite often as technically complex as Quinton claims, it will not be referred to directly in what follows. It's findings will be summarised, sometimes with the help of accounts of it by other philosophers, notably Derrida and Lyotard.
[4]See, for example, Rodolphe Gasché, "Deconstruction as Criticism", *Glyph* 6 (1979), pp. 177-216.
[5]See, for example, Allon White, "Bakhtin, Sociolinguistics and Deconstruction", in *The Theory of Reading*, ed. F. Gloversmith (Brighton: Harvester, 1984) pp. 123-146.
[6]See Jacques Derrida, *Positions* [1972], trans. Alan Bass (London: The Athlone Press, 1981), pp. 6-7; Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology* [1967], trans. G.C. Spivak (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press), pp. 45-46; Geoffrey Bennington, "Deconstruction and the Philosophers (The Very Idea)", *The Oxford Literary Review,* vol. 10, Nos. 1-2 (1988), pp. 86-87.
[7]'..this destruction is...far from having the *negative* sense of shaking off the ontological tradition.' Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time* [1927], trans. J. Macquarrie and E. Robinson (Oxford: Blackwell, 1988), p. 44.
[8]For evidence of Derrida's concomitant assumption and interrogation of Hedeggerianism see *Positions,* pp. 9-11, 54-56.
[9]Some might argue, with more or less irony, that calling someone or something '*simply* Derridian' is a contradiction in terms. A prior, or further, or counter-irony is that Derridian philosophy shows that all terms can be seen as contradictory, and, even more or less ironically, does so logically.
[10]For some remarks about philosophy (in fiction) by Woolf see her review in the "Times Literary Supplement" [1918] of *Philosophers in Trouble* by L.P. Jacks in Virginia Woolf, *The Essays of Virginia Woolf, Volume II*, ed. A. McNeillie (London: The Hogarth Press, 1987), pp. 208-212.
[11]For the sake of clarity, the following points are worth noting. Husserl is not against logic *per se*. His arguments are directed against empirical logical arguments, such as the ones attributed to Russell's work post-1912 by Ayer. As indicated earlier, logical philosophers such as Russell and Ayer would deny being metaphysical philosophers. Logic, for them, counters metaphysics, which is primarily a form of idealism. See Alfred. J. Ayer, *Philosophy in the Twentieth Century* (London: Unwin, 1984), pp.24,31 and *Language, Truth and Logic* [1936] (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1974), pp. 45-46.
[12]Jean François Lyotard, *Phenomenology* [1956] trans. B. Beakley (Albany: State University of New York, 1991), p. 38.
[13]Ayer, *Philosophy in the Twentieth Century ,* p. 4.
[14]John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* quoted in Bertrand Russell *A History of Western Philosophy* [1946] (London: Unwin, 1984), pp. 589-591.
[15]See, for example, Heidegger, *Being and Time*, pp. 388-9 and Jacques Derrida, *Writing and Difference* [1967] trans. A. Bass (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1985), pp. 196-198.
[16]Lyotard, pp. 32,40.
[17]Ibid., p. 41.
[18]Woolf, "Modern Fiction", p. 106.
[19]See, for example, Colin MacCabe, "Realism and the Cinema: Notes on some Brechtian Theses" *Screen,* vol. 15, No. 5 (1974), pp. 7-27.
[20]Woolf, "Modern Fiction", pp. 104, 105.
[21]Ibid., pp. 106, 104, 105.
[22]Ibid., pp. 104-105.
[23]Ibid., p. 105. This sort of claim, which obviously corresponds with some of Husserl's philosophical observations, raises a number of issues that are addressed by Derrida. It has been shown that Husserl claims that objectivity must be factual, that facticity is necessarily alternative, and that factual necessity, which Husserl calls essence, is therefore necessarily contingent. Derrida shows, conversely, that in order for contingency to be apparent at all it has to be minimally identifiable and that it is therefore not entirely non-necessary, or contingent. This is why, for example, he states that 'apparently arbitrary explanation responds to a profound necessity'. Derrida, *Of Grammatology,* p. 256.
[24]Woolf, "Modern Fiction", p. 108.
[25]'I see a ring,' said Bernard, 'hanging above me. It quivers and hangs in a loop of light.'
'I see a slab of pale yellow' said Susan, 'spreading away until it meets a purple stripe.'
'I hear a sound,' said Rhoda, 'cheep, chirp; cheep chirp; going up and down'
'I see a globe', said Neville, 'hanging down in a drop against the enormous flank of some hill.'
'I see a crimson tassel', said Jinny, 'twisted with gold threads.'
'I hear something stamping,' said Louis. 'A great beast's foot is chained. It stamps, and stamps, and stamps.' Woolf, *The Waves,* p. 6.
[26]Virginia Woolf, "The Mark on the Wall", in *A Haunted House* [1921-1941], ed. L. Woolf (London: Granada, 1982), pp. 41-49.
[27]Lyotard, *Phenomenology*, pp. 39-40.
[28]Virginia Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway* [1925] (London: Grananda, 1983), p. 6.
[29]As Geoffrey Bennington says, the point of showing this 'is not to bring out contradictions, nor to choose one strand of Husserl's thought over another...'. Both aspects of Husserl's work are mutually dependent as well as separable, so it would be naïve to prioritise or denigrate either. Geoffrey Bennington and Jacques Derrida, *Jacques Derrida* (London: The University of Chicago Press, 1993), p. 69.

[30]See Lyotard, pp. 43-47; Moustapha Safouan, *Pleasure and Being.* trans. Martin Thom (London: Macmillan, 1983) pp. 21-22; Franz Brentano, *Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint* [1874], trans. A C. Rancurello, D.B. Terrell and L.L. McAlister (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1973) pp. 77-97.
[31]Jacques Derrida, *Speech and Phenomena* [1967], trans. D B. Allison (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973).
[32]Woolf, *Modern Fiction,* p. 107.
[33]Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway,* p. 6.
[34]Ibid., p. 10.