The Interminable Tapeworm

Time Perception and Stream of Consciousness in Ali Smith’s Fiction

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Paper submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree “Master in de Taal- en Letterkunde, Engels-Nederlands”

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December 2016
Acknowledgments

Thank you to professor Buelens for rejecting my first thesis idea, which luckily lead me to consider Ali Smith as a topic; I thank him for his advice and his guidance, his skepticism and his support. Secondly, thank you to Kate for agreeing to (proof)read this for me and taking away some of my fears and insecurities by sharing her experiences with this thesis writing. Finally, thank you to Ali Smith herself, for never ceasing to be a source of inspiration and amazement.
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Introduction

Since the dawn of storytelling, literature has shown a lively preoccupation with time. It is one of the most inescapable elements in any story, and has been alternately celebrated, cursed, tampered and experimented with. In *Aspects of the Novel*, E.M. Forster defines a story as “a narrative of events arranged in their time sequence” (29), acknowledging thereby the central importance of a time sequence within a narrative. In a memorable phrase, he goes on to refer to time as the “interminable tapeworm”: “[the novelist] must cling, however lightly, to the thread of the story, he must touch the interminable tapeworm, otherwise he becomes unintelligible” (31). Forster himself seems to consider time more as a necessary evil than as something to be celebrated in fiction. Many other novelists, however, have clapped onto it as an opportunity, and many literary innovations have had—even indirectly—something to do with time. Ali Smith—who quotes E.M. Forster’s phrase in her novel-cum-essay collection *Artful*—is one of these novelists who have not turned away from, but rather shaken hands with Father Time in her novels, and have experimented with time in various ways. Many of her novels are remarkable for their innovative treatment of time, and this most interestingly in how she shows time as perceived through the eyes of her characters. In almost all of her novels, Smith makes use of the modernist technique of stream of consciousness, which allows the reader a unique insight into the character’s mind, and allows the novelist to let time, according to the character’s perception, slow down or speed up, jump back into the past, or hurtle forwards into the future. The fact that all of her novels are written from at least two points of view, moreover, allows Smith to toy with time not only within a single consciousness, but also intersubjectively between the minds of two (or more) characters. In this way, her novels give the reader a unique insight into the relationship between individual consciousnesses and time, but also how time influences—and, indeed, determines—the way in which human beings relate to each other.
This thesis seeks to analyze the way in which Smith’s novels explore time, both thematically and formally. While the thematization of time will be investigated externally as well, this thesis will in particular investigate the way in which time is experienced inside a human consciousness. While the representation of inner thoughts is a common element in any type of fiction, it is stream of consciousness that is particularly dedicated to portraying these inner realities, making it uniquely suitable to analyze when investigating internal time perception. Because of this, and in the light of Smith’s personal interest in modernist fiction, the paper will look further into the time-related concepts and ideas circulating in the modernist movement, and how the almost exclusive use of internal focalization influences the reader’s experience of time while reading. To do so, this thesis will first offer an introduction to philosophical concepts with regard to time that were influential for the modernist movement, most notably Henri Bergson’s conception of internal time versus clock time and his introduction of duration. From there on, the paper will split up into two avenues of inquiry that follow from Bergson’s philosophy of time. First, the theoretical framework will discuss two ways in which prose fiction can thematize time, using Mark Currie’s time-related application of what Joseph Hillis Miller first introduced as ‘constative’ and ‘performative’ utterances. The ‘performative’ aspect will then be expanded to include three ways in which internal time can be analyzed, using Harvena Richter’s terminology. Secondly, the thesis will zoom in on a second great corollary of Bergson’s philosophy in modernist prose: stream of consciousness. Here too, a methodological framework will be introduced, this time borrowed from a study on stream of consciousness by Robert Humphrey, on the different techniques that novelists have used to create the illusion of being inside a character’s mind. These two frameworks will then be applied in chapters two and three, which will offer a close reading of Ali Smith’s fiction, focusing primarily on three of her novels: Hotel World, There But For The, and How To Be Both. Chapter two will investigate how Smith thematizes time in her novels, both in their content and their structure, and how the different techniques she uses influence the reader’s experience. Chapter three will focus
specifically on the different stream of consciousness techniques introduced in chapter one. They will be applied to Smith’s fiction, and by means of a close reading they will be juxtaposed and evaluated, thus both confirming and challenging Humphrey’s findings on stream of consciousness techniques.

By focusing on time aspects and stream of consciousness in Ali Smith’s fiction, this paper seeks to inquire how Ali Smith as a contemporary novelist experiments both with one of the oldest aspects of storytelling, i.e. temporal manipulation, and a more recent phenomenon, i.e. stream of consciousness, thereby forming her own brand of fluidity, hybridity, and multiplicity in her storytelling. While this dissertation is structured to discuss temporal manipulation and stream of consciousness mainly separately, there are several points where the two intersect, and the effects of stream of consciousness on temporal awareness, as well as the effect of temporal manipulation on internal thought processes will be investigated. The paper seeks to analyze how Smith reintroduces into contemporary literature a technique that has mainly gone into disuse, and how she both recycles and reinvents the stream of consciousness genre. Lastly, this paper will investigate how Smith uses the novel’s necessary temporality as an advantage, rather than as a necessary evil, and how she tackles “the interminable tapeworm” in innovative and effective ways.
Chapter 1: A theory of mind and time

This chapter will discuss the two central theoretical concepts in this thesis: internal time perception and stream of consciousness in the novel. As a starting point for both, Henri Bergson’s conception of time will be discussed. Bergson was one of the most important thinkers of his time, and his philosophy profoundly influenced several modernist writers. Taking his conception of *duration* as a starting point, this chapter will segue into building a framework for the analysis of internal time perception in the contemporary novel. Secondly, the chapter will zoom in on the concept of stream of consciousness, its different manifestations, and how it can be applied to modern fiction.

1. Founding fathers: Henri Bergson and internal time

In his treatise on “Duration,” Bergson counters traditional Aristotelian thought of time as a measurable entity, and stresses the importance of acknowledging our *experience* of time, which is internal (as opposed to external), individual (as opposed to social), subjective (as opposed to objective), and indivisible (as opposed to measurable). He calls this subjective and internal experience of time *duration*, which he juxtaposes to Aristotelian “spatial time” (Durie 152). Bergson’s main critique of Aristotle’s conception of time was that it treated time in the same way as its sister dimension, space. In her dissertation on Bergson, *Henri Bergson and British Modernism*, Mary Ann Gillies explains what Bergson considers to be the difference between the two, and why the Aristotelian conception of it confuses the essence of what separates time from space: in *Time and Free Will*, Bergson reveals “the confusion of those qualities that Bergson describes as temporal—duration, succession, and quality—and those that are spatial—extensity, simultaneity, and quantity” (Gillies 10). By artificially dividing days into hours, hours into minutes, minutes into seconds etc., time is spatialized, similar to how a square meter is divided into meters, meters into
decimeters, decimeters into centimeters etc. These divisions, however, are artificial, and say nothing about the human experience of time as we are living it. Duration—or durée—cannot be divided into segments because it is internal: “inner time, or experienced time, resists attempts to spatialize it” (Gillies 11). This is why time to Bergson is a quality, not a quantity: it is determined by our individual experience of it, not by objective measures:

This explains that common experience of having time collapse or expand when an individual is under some stress; or of having time seem to fly when we want to prolong some particular experience, yet crawl when we would prefer to see the experience finished. … Bergson’s view of time removes the external standard and replaces it with what the internal sense of time reveals: real time is that in which people live; it is qualitative, not quantitative, in nature. (Gillies 12)

Misleading in Bergson’s description of the properties of internal time, is ‘succession,’ which does not accurately cover the full extent of his conceptualization of it. Most famous in Bergson’s description of duration was his idea of accumulation, for which he famously uses the image of the snowball: “My mental state, as it advances on the road of time, is continually swelling with the duration which it accumulates: it goes on increasing—rolling upon itself, as a snowball in the snow” (Bergson 57). Following this image, the description of time as a ‘stream’ is somewhat inaccurate: human temporal experience does not merely flow from one state to another, but these different states add on to each other. The continual ‘swelling’ can also be defined in more conventional terms as ‘memory’, which forms another central aspect in Bergson’s philosophy: “it is through memory, [Bergson] argued, that our actions transcend predictable mechanical responses to the extent that we bring our accumulated experiences to bear on a given situation. Consciousness or ‘duration’, in which the present is swollen with the past, is the essential feature of our humanity” (Fernihough 69). It is memory, then, that steers the present moment, and not only radically influences human behavior, but also the human experience of that present moment. Understanding consciousness merely as a ‘stream’, then, to a certain extent violates Bergson’s conceptualization of duration: human experience of time is not merely sequential, but accumulative,
and the accumulation determines the present moment. While the distinction remains important to keep in mind, however, Bergson’s opposition to a spatial conception of time remains the same whether the definition accepts ‘succession’ or ‘accumulation’ as a trait of internal time: our experience of time is in continual flux, and “the transition is continuous” (Bergson 57). Moreover, because the transition is continuous, it is impossible to distinguish between one state and the other, because even the notion of ‘state’ assumes a kind of stasis that Bergson rejects.

To analyze internal time in the novel in any meaningful way, of course, lines have to be drawn, and measures need to be used. It is important to point out here that Bergson “does not claim that durée alone accounts for how we live. … We live in an internal world, he says, as well as an external world that we construct by spatializing time. … Bergson recognizes that some sort of combination of the spatialized, scientific time world and the relativistic world of durée accounts for the total experience of living” (Gillies 12-13). On a purely phenomenological level, then, it is possible to make distinctions, because internal time can never be purely experienced as internal time. On a narratological level, the format of the novel itself allows measuring because the novel is partly spatial: even in a novel with an extreme stream of consciousness style, divisions can be made because it uses language, and language is a social structure that can be measured and analyzed.

The aim of this chapter is not, however, to claim that subjective time can be captured with the same measures that are used to construct spatial time. Rather, the analysis of internal time deserves an alternative theoretical framework that appreciates the complexities of time as experienced within the consciousness of a particular character. To make this measurable, however, internal time needs to be analyzed in comparison to objective time. As such, the following paragraphs will focus on the ways in which internal time ‘distorts’ the pace and the chronology of spatial time, and will briefly hint at how the modernist novel consciously sought out these ‘distortions’ that subverted the clearcut temporal structure of traditional chronological narrative. By extreme use of internal focalization, “modernist texts … present us with the very subjective world
of a protagonist through whose consciousness the narrative is focalized” (Fludernik 624); the modernist writer stayed behind the eyes of the character, “unmediated by a narrator’s discourse” (Fludernik 624), and was therefore at liberty to play with time the way human consciousness does as a matter of course.

2. Time in the novel

2.1 Fictional knowledge: the novel in time

While it was Bergson who solidified the importance of an ‘internal time’ aside from clock time, it was fiction that made it concrete. In modernist fiction, there came an increased appreciation for characters’ internal experience of time, amongst others through the introduction of stream of consciousness. The question remains what the value is of this kind of fiction as opposed to philosophy. In other words: what does fiction contribute to knowledge of time that philosophy cannot?

This is one of the central questions in Mark Currie’s About Time, in which he underscores the claim that “fiction picks up where philosophy leaves off,” suggesting that the novel can “know something about time which is beyond the reach of philosophy” (107). In his chapter on “Fictional Knowledge” he investigates how this is possible, and puts great stress on the implicit, unspoken knowledge that fiction provides, as opposed to the declarative reasoning of philosophy. “The emphasis on the unspoken is important here because it characterizes a non-philosophical mode of knowledge, in which claims are implicit” (110): the value of what fiction knows about time lies not so much in the essence, but in the form of that knowledge. Fiction’s claims about time may or may not align with existing philosophical claims, but the way in which it expresses those claims are profoundly different, and may therefore offer a different—if not a deeper—insight into time than philosophy.
Currie distinguishes “fictional knowledge” about time from philosophy by using Joseph Hillis Miller’s discussion on speech act theory, and his concepts of ‘constative’ as opposed to ‘performative’ knowledge (Currie 90): philosophy makes explicit, *constative* claims about time, while fiction *performs* its knowledge, which is implicitly present through that performance. Miller himself puts it simply in *Speech Acts in Literature*: a ‘constative’ statement is “a statement to be judged by its truth or falsity,” while a ‘performative’ utterance is “a speech act in which the saying or writing of the words in some way or other does what the words say” (Miller 2). Miller’s basic juxtaposition echoes what Currie writes about philosophy and literature, though Currie’s application does not perfectly coincide with Miller’s original definition: the performative aspect of fiction lies not in words that “do what they say.” Rather, the performative for Currie lies in solely ‘doing’ without ‘saying’, the ‘saying’ is strictly limited to constative knowledge. As such, whatever temporal knowledge fiction ‘performs’ is always implicit: Currie states in his introduction that “all novels should be viewed as tales about time” (4), regardless of whether time is mentioned explicitly in the novel, simply because fiction as a medium cannot function outside of a temporal framework. While philosophy seems to be largely confined to ‘constative’ statements, however, fiction is sufficiently formally unconstrained to make occasional forays into philosophical realms, and make constative claims about time as well, aside from performative ones.

Regardless of Currie’s claim that all fiction is essentially about time, however, conventional criticism does make a distinction between “novels about time,” and novels that only use time in its default function. What makes a novel a “novel about time” lies both in its performative and its constative knowledge: a novel can formally experiment with time (performative), or explicitly muse about the nature of time (constative), or both. In case the novel presents constative knowledge about time, it need not deviate formally from a philosophical treatise: it can be a logically, conventionally structured argument, and so would not differ from philosophy. If a novel shares no constative knowledge about time, it is only conventionally called a “novel about time” if its “temporal logic is
unconventional” in its performative aspect (Currie 4). If a novel explicitly muses about time and noticeably experiments with time, it can be called a “novel about time” both in the performative and the constative aspect. This is the case for many of Ali Smith’s novels, as will be discussed in the next chapter. The stress will be placed on the performative knowledge, which is structural, but is continuously backed up by constative claims also, usually in the shape of her characters’ thoughts or dialogue.

2.2 A methodology for internal time analysis

While the constative knowledge of time in fiction is usually easily recognizable, its performative knowledge—especially when scrutinizing internal time—requires an analytical framework to make fiction’s implicit knowledge about time explicit. In order to analyze the complexities of internal time perception, and the ‘distortions’ that accompany them, this section will go back to one of Smith’s antecedents and influences, Virginia Woolf. In *Virginia Woolf: The Inward Voyage*, Harvena Richter introduces some handles to analyze the temporal peculiarities of Woolf’s fiction. Because Richter’s research is focused on the inward voyage, moreover, it is definitely suitable to apply to a writing style so suffused with internal focalization as Ali Smith’s. Woolf, Richter argues, “[u]sing principles of perception and mind function … seeks to approximate the ways in which man sees, feels, thinks, and experiences time and change” (vii); a description that can easily be applied to Smith’s fiction as well. Particularly with reference to the handling of time, it is clear that Woolf is an important influence for Smith. While a detailed comparison between both will not be attempted here, the subsequent chapters will clarify why Richter’s framework is a suitable one to analyze time in Smith’s novels.

In the third chapter of her book, Richter describes Woolf’s method of approaching time in her prose in a way that harkens back to Bergson’s notion of duration: “Time for Virginia Woolf was not measured by the clock but experienced emotionally—hence her phrase ‘moment of being.’ …
Experienced emotionally/mentally, [the moment of being] is seen to be composed … of a multiplicity of states of consciousness, a succession of awarenesses which take place not in five minutes … but in the all-inclusive now” (38). Richter’s description of Woolf’s ‘moment of being’ echoes Bergson’s stress on both a succession and accumulation of mental states. Rather than following spatial time, Woolf’s prose centers around the ‘moment of being,’ which can span either five minutes or fifty years. For Woolf, the ‘moment’ was a central unit within her prose around which everything revolved, from the characters to their emotions, their thoughts and so on. The ‘moment of being’ does have different manifestations, however, and even in the present moment there are still many ways in which to experience time.

In the tenth chapter of her treatise, Richter introduces three ‘modes of time’ which she uses to analyze Woolf’s fiction. According to Richter, Woolf “used these modes to confirm her sense of the effect of time’s quality of transience, change, and transformation upon the individual” (150; italics mine). These are three ways in which Woolf investigated the influence of time on her characters—and vice versa. Richter defines these three ways with three terms: the kinetic mode of time, the time-dimension mode, and the mnemonic mode. Richter justifies her terms through an astute close reading of different scenes in Woolf’s Orlando; in the following paragraphs, these different terms will briefly be touched upon, and short examples from modernist fiction will also be provided to concretize the theory. In the next chapter, these terms will then be applied to Ali Smith’s novels.

The kinetic mode, Richter explains, “is concerned with this sense of time’s movement, the emotional speed at which it passes. … Carrying out acceleration and deceleration by the quantities of thoughts and emotions which swell the moment, or by the speed at which the paragraph itself moves, she conveys the emotional response of the character to the situation” (150). The kinetic mode of time, in other words, is primarily concerned with time’s quality of transience, its accelerations and decelerations and other “distortions” of spatial time when experienced in the
consciousness of a character. Time accelerates, for example, when the character experiences anxiety, excitement, or disorientation, and this is reflected in the writing style, usually by means of both a quick succession and a heaping up of thoughts and/or actions. An example of this can be found in the ‘Nausicaa’ chapter of Joyce’s *Ulysses*, when Leopold Bloom has a sexual fantasy that is not explicitly described, but his sexual excitement is suggested through an acceleration in his stream of consciousness:

O sweety all your little girl white up I saw dirty brace-girdle made me do love sticky we two naughty Grace darling she him half past the bed met him pike hoses frillies for Raoul to perfume your wife black hair heave under embon señorita young eyes Mulvey plump years dreams return tail end Agendath swoony lovey showed me her next year in drawers return next in her next her next. (Joyce 498)

In this excerpt, Joyce uses the kinetic mode to simulate the sexual excitement that Bloom experiences while observing Gerty MacDowell; the acceleration here is achieved in the lack of punctuation, the quick succession of images, and the distorted syntax. Towards the end, the repetition of “her next” drives the sentence to a rhetorical climax, the way Bloom is (presumably) driven to a physical climax. What follows immediately after is an example of deceleration, when Joyce starts out a new paragraph with: “A bat flew. Here. There. Here. Far in the grey a bell chimed” (499). Here, the reader gets jolted back into the present moment and the present scene, the way Bloom comes to his senses after the climax, and takes in his surroundings again. This reading is also in line with the technic that Joyce himself had chosen for the episode, “*tumescence-detumescence*, a quiet opening, a pyrotechnics explosion, a dying fall, silence” (Gilbert 290). While Joyce determined his own technic *a priori*, though, this passage can easily be understood in Richter’s terms as well, as an example of the *kinetic* mode.

Richter’s second mode, the *time-dimension* mode, is centered around the “spatial properties” of the present moment—not to be confused with Bergson’s spatial time. “Here the terms of contraction and expansion can be used in their more literal sense,” Richter argues: “The moment is
contracted to the present—a ‘flat’ instant of time because the past does not create a sense of
distance or proportion … Or it is expanded beyond the momentary aspect of duration to probe far
into personal or racial memory” (158). Here, Richter’s description is reminiscent of Bergson’s
snowball metaphor: the moment can either reflect the mere present moment, but can also expand to
include past moments of consciousness. Richter details her description: ‘contraction’ to the present
moment can be used to “bring the reader back to sudden conscious awareness,” while ‘expansion’
can be used to “suggest elements of the unconscious, the residual traces of instinct and memory
which cluster at the edge of awareness” (158-159). An example of both contraction and expansion
can be found in Woolf’s Orlando, when Orlando looks back on her life. “It was an odd sort of
weather nowadays,” Orlando thinks as she is looking out the window: “The sky itself, she could not
help thinking, had changed. It was no longer so thick, so watery, so prismatic now that King
Edward … had succeeded Queen Victoria” (Woolf 185). Orlando stays within the present moment
as she reminisces, and rather than jumping back to a different point in time altogether, the present
moment expands to include the past moment to which she is comparing the present; the effect of
time’s change is clearly experienced here. A short time later is an example of contraction:

There was something definite and distinct about the age, which reminded her of the eighteenth century,
except that there was a distraction, a desperation—as she was thinking this, the immensely long tunnel
in which she seemed to have been travelling for hundreds of years widened … And so for some
seconds the light went on becoming brighter and brighter, and she saw everything more and more
clearly and the clock ticked louder until there was a terrific explosion right in her ear. Orlando leapt as
if she had been violently struck on the head. Ten times she was struck. In fact it was ten o’clock in the
morning. It was the eleventh of October. It was 1928. It was the present moment (186).

At the beginning of the quote, Orlando is still musing about the eighteenth century, but after the
dash, Orlando is suddenly brought back into the present moment, which Woolf takes care to
explicitly state. In this excerpt, then, Woolf uses the time-dimension mode to simulate the changes
of time, and how the character experiences those changes.
Richter’s third mode, the mnemonic mode, “is concerned with memory, its mechanism of stimulus and response, and its quality of constant accretion and change—a repetition and variation of our sense of the past which suggests the passage or transience of time” (162-163). An example of this can be found in one of the first paragraphs of Woolf’s Mrs Dalloway, when she breathes in the new day and is immediately assaulted by memories:

What a lark! What a plunge! For so it had always seemed to her when, with a little squeak of the hinges, which she could hear now, she had burst open the French windows and plunged at Bourton into the open air. How fresh, how calm, stiller than this of course … chill and sharp and yet (for a girl of eighteen as she then was) solemn, feeling as she did, standing there at the open window, that something awful was about to happen … standing and looking until Peter Walsh said, ‘Musing among the vegetables?’—was that it?—‘I prefer men to cauliflowers’—was that it? (Woolf 3)

In this excerpt Clarissa responds to the thought that “[t]he doors would be taken off their hinges” today by thinking of the “little squeak of the hinges” that she hears again as she is thinking of them; the auditive stimulus elicits other memories of her as an eighteen-year-old girl, feeling “that something awful was about to happen.” Getting lost in the memory, she remembers talking to Peter Walsh, and Clarissa wonders twice whether her memory of her conversation with him is correct. This, then, is an example of the mnemonic mode, where the present moment both elicits and changes the character’s memories, and the reader gets a sense of time’s influence on the character: “the sense of internal change and motion which we feel as living, or growing older” (Richter 163). The most important effect of the mnemonic mode is experiencing the effect of time’s transformation upon the individual.

While Richter does not make it explicit, her analysis shows that the main difference between the time-dimension mode and the mnemonic mode is their focus. In both modes there is a sense of an exchange between the past and the present moment, all contained within a single consciousness. The time-dimension mode mainly investigates how time influences the character, while in the mnemonic mode the opposite is true: here, the focus is on how the character changes its experience
of time, through memory. The main difference between the two is the focus and the effect that the ‘moment of being’ has on the character. Taken together, then, the kinetic, time-dimension, and mnemonic modes form an applicable methodological framework to analyze internal time-perception in prose fiction.

3. Stream of consciousness as a style

3.1 What is stream of consciousness?

Bergson’s theories about internal time profoundly influenced modernist writers, particularly those who experimented with stream of consciousness. Though influence was not always direct, there was definitely an instance of Zeitgeist at work during those decades. There is, for instance, no proof that Virginia Woolf herself had ever read anything by Bergson, but nevertheless “many scholars have noted a Bergsonian strain in her work” (Gillies 107). For Woolf, this influence translated into her personal philosophy on the ‘moment of being’; for other modernist writers, it manifested itself in the profoundly new technique of fictional representation that was coined “Stream of Consciousness” after an essay so titled by William James. There, he writes that “in each of us … some kind of consciousness is always going on. There is a stream, a succession of states, or waves, or fields … of knowledge, of feeling, of desire, of deliberation, etc., that constantly pass and repass, and that constitute our inner life” (James 43). It was the representation of this inner life that, for so many modernist writers, increasingly became the focus of their work.

One of the ways in which modernist writers reacted to the increased epistemological uncertainty of the age, was to replace the more traditional focus of literature, which was external, social, moral, and didactic, with a focus that was less solid and more fluid, but did not perpetuate the illusion of certainty provided by traditional views on life that had, by that time, become
devaluated. Instead of focusing on the external, material world and hard truths, poets and novelists shifted their attention to an inner world: “Here writers could either become part of the expression, or withhold their presence in an attempt to present life as they saw it, not as they lived it” (Gillies 40). In order to do this, they needed to experiment with new ways of expression, and they “questioned the nature of the form they used—language itself … [B]y refusing to accept that it held any absolute meaning in itself, by questioning its traditional uses … modernists shifted the emphasis away from ‘content’ to ‘form.’ Formal aspects became content” (Gillies 40). Stream of consciousness, then, became one of the ways in which modernist writers effected this exchange between content and form.

The choice of modernist writers for a heavily focalized kind of prose that objectively registered the disjointed thoughts of one or more characters, would come to characterize their generation. While reasonably well-known, however, there are many misunderstandings about what stream of consciousness is exactly. As Robert Humphrey explains in *Stream of Consciousness in the Modern Novel*, the term itself is actually vague and imprecise: “We never know whether it is being used to describe the bird of technique or the beast of genre—and we are startled to find the creature designated is most often a monstrous combination of the two” (Humphrey 1). In his study, Humphrey continues to break down the conventional uses of the term, and how it is both used to denote a specific writing technique, as well as a genre, i.e. the “stream of consciousness novel.” The two are closely connected, since the stream of consciousness novel regularly uses the stream of consciousness technique, and reversely “the novels that are said to use the stream-of-consciousness technique to a considerable degree prove, upon analysis, to be novels which have as their essential subject matter the consciousness of one or more characters” (Humphrey 2). The upcoming paragraphs will be mainly concerned with stream of consciousness as a technique, since the technique is the basic linguistic form that is used to build any novel that might go by the same name.
3.2 Stream of consciousness: narratological techniques

Stream of consciousness, as a term that was initially introduced by a psychologist, encompasses various levels of consciousness, only a limited number of which can be captured in language—and, as such, can be distinguished in any linguistic product. Humphrey immediately distinguishes between the “speech level” and the “prespeech level” of consciousness. The speech level involves the language that is used every day for communicative purposes, either in actual speech, or in writing. The prespeech level, however, is not focused on communicating successfully, and so this level is not “censored, rationally controlled, or logically ordered” (3). It is this prespeech level that is the relevant one when discussing stream of consciousness, as Humphrey confirms when he attempts a definition of stream of consciousness fiction: it is “a type of fiction in which the basic emphasis is placed on exploration of the prespeech levels of consciousness for the purpose, primarily, of revealing the psychic being of the characters” (4). While the goal is clear-cut, however, the ways in which to capture these prespeech levels of language on paper are various, and they differ for each author. To detail the different methods with which to achieve a stream of consciousness, Humphrey introduces four basic narratological techniques that are used by different writers to capture their characters’ internal lives. The distinction is useful because these different techniques create different types of stream of consciousness that may be used to capture the idiosyncrasies of a particular character, while also meeting the needs of the situation. Humphrey identifies these four as direct interior monologue, indirect interior monologue, omniscient description, and soliloquy. Apart from these, Humphrey also discusses some special techniques that a few writers have (whether or not successfully) experimented with. One of these will be briefly outlined below, as it is applicable to Ali Smith’s prose.

The first technique that Humphrey discusses is a technique that is often erroneously used as a synonym for stream of consciousness: interior monologue. Humphrey defines it as “the technique used in fiction for representing the psychic content and processes of character, partly or entirely
unuttered, just as these processes exist at various levels of conscious control before they are formulated for deliberate speech” (24). Furthermore, Humphrey distinguishes between two kinds of interior monologue: the direct and the indirect kind. The major difference between the two lies mainly in narratorial interference: direct interior monologue has “negligible author interference” and there is “no auditor assumed” (Humphrey 25).¹ There is no guidance from the narrator, no “he said” or “he thought” in between the thoughts, and the monologue is presented as if the character were not speaking to anyone. As an example of direct interior monologue, Humphrey mentions one of modernism’s most famous monologues, the one playing out in the consciousness of Molly Bloom, in the ‘Penelope’ chapter of Joyce’s *Ulysses*.

A second type of interior monologue is indirect interior monologue, which Humphrey defines as “that type of interior monologue in which an omniscient author presents unspoken material as if it were directly from the consciousness of a character and, with commentary and description, guides the reader through it” (29). The main difference between direct and indirect interior monologue is both technical and circumstantial: a third or second person pronoun is used instead of a first person pronoun; there is more narratorial interference in the shape of description or commentary; the monologue has greater coherence due to narratorial selection of thoughts, rather than an uninterrupted flow of them. In spite of narratorial interference, though, indirect interior monologue still retains its quality as interior monologue because it holds on to the “idiom and … the peculiarities of the character’s psychic processes” (29). Though the narrator is present to guide the reader through the monologue, the monologue presented is still peculiar to the inner mind of the character.

Humphrey proceeds to the next two categories of stream of consciousness techniques by drawing a line between what was innovative to the modernist movement, and what were more

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¹ Humphrey does not distinguish between the terms ‘narrator’ and ‘author.’ In his description, however, they appear to mostly coincide. Therefore, the term ‘narrator’ will be used in the rest of this thesis; the ‘author’ in Humphrey’s quotes can be understood as such.
‘conventional’ modes used in stream of consciousness fiction. Both direct and indirect interior monologue were innovations of the twentieth century; the other two modes were not, but were nevertheless used to effect a stream of consciousness. The first of these, omniscient description, is such a commonplace in prose fiction, that it seems remarkable that it was, in fact, used by modernist writers to achieve such a novel effect as stream of consciousness. Omniscient description, Humphrey writes, can be defined as “the novelistic technique used for representing the psychic content and processes of a character in which an omniscient author describes that psyche through conventional methods of narration and description” (33-34). The stream of consciousness novel that uses this omniscient description, in other words, does not necessarily do anything innovative in terms of technique; the omniscient description is merely focused on the character’s consciousness, not on the external world. It is a difference in content, not in form.

The benefit of using omniscient description, rather than interior monologue, is that it allows for greater flexibility in the style of telling. In an interior monologue, the narrator is limited to registering the thoughts of the character. A more classical omniscient description allows the narrator to directly record emotions and physical sensations that would, in an interior monologue, have to be translated into the character’s thought process. The limitation of (direct) interior monologue is that everything that needs to be communicated to the reader has to be thought, which means that external action, an emotion, or a sensation, are more difficult to represent, because these are often simply observed or felt, rather than thought about in words. Secondly, in case the character is moving through space or performing an action during the stream of consciousness, omniscient description can introduce elements from the outside world that have an effect on the character’s thoughts, while the elements as such would not have to be described linguistically by the character. In Mrs Dalloway, Woolf uses omniscient description occasionally: “Strange, [Clarissa] thought, pausing on the landing, and assembling that diamond shape, that single person, strange how a mistress knows the very moment, the very temper of her house! Faint sounds rose in spirals up the
well of the stairs; the swish of a mop; tapping; knocking; a loudness when the front door opened” (41). In this excerpt, Clarissa’s immediate thoughts about “the mistress of the house” knowing the “temper” of that house can only be explained when knowing about where she is—pausing on the landing—and her sensations as she stands there. The stimulus response pattern typical in Richter’s mnemonic mode can, in this sense, also be applied to stream of consciousness. When the stimulus is external, rather than internal—thoughts prompting new thoughts—omniscient description can easily introduce that new element by describing it, rather than having to have the character think it. The “faint sounds” that Clarissa hears, the “swish of a mop”, the “tapping” and the “knocking” are not things that Clarissa literally thinks, but simply hears, and then comments on in her thoughts. Because providing the character’s (internal) response without the (external) stimulus would be confusing for the reader, omniscient description is actually more efficient here than direct interior monologue. In some cases, then, omniscient description can actually result in greater naturalness in representing the character’s thought process, because not everything that needs to be communicated to the reader has to be expressed linguistically.

Greater flexibility is also a benefit of the last technique that Humphrey introduces as a more ‘conventional’ method of achieving stream of consciousness: the dramatic soliloquy. Humphrey identifies this technique as “the technique of representing the psychic content and processes of a character directly from character to reader without the presence of an author, but with an audience tacitly assumed” (36). It is different from both the interior monologue and the omniscient description in that there is no narratorial interference, but there is an audience assumed. This means that, while the character is speaking without being interrupted by commentary from a narrator, the soliloquy is usually a lot more coherent, because unlike interior monologue, its primary function is to communicate. The soliloquy, in other words, no longer functions on the “prespeech” level of language; as a dramatic device, the soliloquy works only on a speech level, with thoughts being fully formed and filters applied. The benefit of the soliloquy is its directness, as well as its ease to
communicate to the reader, but its downside is that it is also less candid, and “more limited in the depth of consciousness that it can represent than is interior monologue” (36). One other benefit that Humphrey does not mention is that dramatic soliloquy can be reveal different things about a character than direct interior monologue, in that it shows how the character reacts to outside auditors. While a direct interior monologue only reveals the character’s private thoughts, the dramatic soliloquy reveals something about the character’s public persona. One instance of this can be found in Djuna Barnes’ *Nightwood*, where one of the characters, Dr. Matthew O’Connor, spins out an elaborate dramatic soliloquy in one chapter to his sole listener, Nora Flood. Dr. O’Connor is described in *Nightwood* as an eloquent character with a tendency to soliloquize: “his style as a speaker is improvisational and elaborate,” Erica Bellman writes in her dissertation on *Nightwood*: “he seems to serve as a sort of oracular medium through which a mixture of wisdom and nonsense flows” (20). When Nora goes to visit Dr. O’Connor at his apartment in the middle of the night, she discovers both his squalid living quarters and his penchant for nocturnal crossdressing. While there is much to say about O’Connor’s soliloquy, it is in part a way for him “to cover the evidence of his hidden self, and pathetically [struggle] to greet his unanticipated visitor with the artificial decorum he exhibits to the public” (Bellman 23). Dr. O’Connor’s soliloquy in ‘Watchman, what of this night?’ is not stylistically different from his other soliloquies in *Nightwood*, but in this particular chapter the reader can juxtapose his public persona to his private self, and finds that Dr. O’Connor’s soliloquies, while addressed to an audience and so allegedly less ‘spontaneous’, in fact say a lot about his character that a direct interior monologue would not. In practice, soliloquy can be used successfully in combination with interior monologue, in which case there is a higher level of candidness from the character.

Apart from these four main techniques, Humphrey also identifies a couple of other, “special” techniques that are mainly considered separate from the others because of their “uniqueness and their relative lack of service so far as the whole genre is concerned” (38). One of
these techniques will be discussed here, as it can be applied to Ali Smith’s fiction. This “special” technique is the poetic technique. That is, the use of “verse form to present psychic content” (40). Humphrey considers this technique ineffective as a way to represent psychic processes, because “the psyche is characterized by being logically unordered; whereas verse suggests a specific form of logical ordering; and second, psychic processes are further characterized by their unstable focusing powers; whereas verse, when it approaches the states of lyrical poetry … tends to center on one subject” (40-41). While the example Humphrey provides certainly seems to prove his judgment, verse form in its widest sense cannot be ruled out as a technique to represent mental processes. One example of this can be taken from one of Smith’s novels that will not be explored in the subsequent chapters, *The Accidental*. Michael Smart, the father figure in the Smart family, is an English professor who reacts to the intrusion of the stranger Amber into his daily routine in his own peculiar way: one day, he finds that “something strange had happened to everything … Everything rhymed now. Yes, ab following ab, and then the way cd followed cd, ef, gg … Because he taught this sort of thing all day he tuned straight to it, like a radio frequency: Michael’s world had become a sonnet sequence(y)” (Smith 159). On the following pages, Smith uses a variety of rhythmic and sonic devices to reveal Michael’s emotional disorientation. While a (direct) interior monologue is used to reflect any kind of thought process—relaxation or agitation, coherence or incoherence—exactly the foreignness of the formal poetic constraints make Michael’s emotional disruption much more acute, while his choice for the sonnet form rhymes with his professional identity. It needs to be added that even though rhyme and meter are used, Smith does not use only the sonnet form, and lapses into free verse regularly throughout Michael’s evolution, so she does not always adhere to the strict formal constraints of a set meter. While Humphrey considers the poetic method ineffective because of its formal constraints—which impedes spontaneity—modern free verse is not so ordered and logical as Humphrey makes it out to be, nor necessarily focused on a single subject, and Ali Smith uses it effectively as an experimental way to represent inner consciousness.
3.3 Stream of consciousness: rhetorical techniques

Apart from the basic narratological techniques, there are other devices that authors use to create the illusion of fully entering a character’s mind. Humphrey describes the main ‘problem’ of the stream of consciousness writer as a problem of having to both authentically replicate the incoherences within a private consciousness, and to effectively communicate something to the reader in the process—two goals that often oppose each other: “the nature of consciousness involves a private sense of values, private associations, and private relationships peculiar to that consciousness; therefore it is enigmatic to an outside consciousness” (Humphrey 63-64). Because explicit elucidation of all these memories, images, and implicated meanings would require narratorial interference, this poses a dilemma for the writer. Stream of consciousness is not simply a matter of choosing a particular narratological technique, in other words: there remain still several complexities in how to accurately represent a private consciousness apart from the basic method. As a response to this, Humphrey identifies several devices, the first being more semantic, the second being more mechanical: both will be regarded as ‘rhetorical’ here, since ultimately they both serve on a textual level to create the stream of consciousness. Humphrey’s own structure will not be fully replicated, because some of his devices do not apply to Ali Smith. First and foremost, stream of consciousness writers simulate the “suspension of mental content according to the laws of psychological association,” or free association (Humphrey 64). A second concern is the more technical linguistic devices, such as standard rhetorical figures and punctuation.

A first device used to replicate an authentic private consciousness is its ‘suspended coherence.’ “What seems incoherent in the privacy of consciousness,” Humphrey writes, “is actually only egocentric” (66). Associations made by a private consciousness may seem incoherent to the reader who gets no explanation as to why there might be a connection between memory A and image B. As such, ‘suspended coherence’ through free association, combined with explicitation
later on, achieves the goal of both maintaining the illusion of a private consciousness, and communicating meanings to the reader. Part of this ‘suspended coherence’ is an excessive use of imagery and metaphor, all of which serve to suggest “extreme levels of meaning” (Humphrey 64). These images and metaphors are usually also private, and their (various) meaning(s) are often revealed throughout the text, while still maintaining the illusion of spontaneity and the privacy of these particular images. More than merely trying to replicate thought processes linguistically, writers have to go beyond what words can express to a private mind, and try to find a form of expression that can communicate meaning where the human consciousness stops thinking through language.

A device that is definitely linguistic, on the other hand, is the excessive use of rhetorical figures. This may sound surprising, since rhetorical figures are commonly used to shape and polish a text, rather than give it an air of incoherence. Humphrey notes, however, that while “practically any passage of writing, in any genre, contains rhetorical figures in abundance, for they are natural and commonplace,” it is the “piling up of them, the overall use of incrementum that is unique and that … serves to heighten the effect of the privacy of the materials” (72-73). Since the writer of a stream of consciousness seeks in particular to suggest the chaos of internal thought, there is a focus on rhetorical figures that “indicate discontinuity” (Humphrey 73), such as ellipsis, anaphora, or anacoluthon—i.e. “[e]nding a sentence with a different grammatical structure from that with which it began,” which counts as a device to “demonstrate emotion,” and is more “an affair of conversation rather than written utterance” (Lanham 10). In her discussion of common stream of consciousness techniques, Liisa Dahl further notes that “the figure of aposiopesis by giving the article but omitting the noun [is used] to illustrate the staccato-like progression of associations through the speaker’s mind” (168). This figure is particularly prominent in Smith’s stream of consciousness, and will be featured prominently in the third chapter. Furthermore, “[t]he cutting of words into ‘stumps’ is used to present a pre-speech level of consciousness,” while “[t]he
combination of several words into a long series, or the repetition of one word, marks the prolonged
duration of a predominant idea in the mind” (Dahl 165). While it seems counter-intuitive, in other
words, standard rhetorical figures—with a preference for particular ones—are used regularly in a
stream of consciousness to replicate certain elements in a character’s mental process.

A final technique that Humphrey identifies is the particular use of what he calls ‘mechanical
devices,’ i.e. typography and punctuation. “They are often signals for important changes in
direction, pace, time, or even in character focus; occasionally they are the only indications of such
changes” (Humphrey 57). In terms of typography, the most common form is the use of italics, as
can be found in Faulkner’s works. In terms of punctuation, the two most commonly used marks are
the parenthesis and the em dash. The former is conventionally used in stream of consciousness to
bracket either afterthoughts or thoughts of subordinate importance; the latter is a useful tool to cut
off or interrupt thought processes before they are completed—a typical feature of internal thought
processes. While both have common usages, however, they are still context-dependent, and their
concrete application will be discussed in more depth in the subsequent chapters.
Chapter 2: Time in Ali Smith’s fiction

A merely superficial glance at Ali Smith’s oeuvre reveals that time is a central concern in her fiction. Following Currie’s discourse of what a novel knows about time, whatever temporal knowledge Smith is sharing in her novels is embroidered both into the novel’s form as well as its content. The next sections will explore both Smith’s explicit and implicit statements about time. The chapters’ macro-structure is based on the performative aspect, though constative claims will be discussed as well—sometimes backing up the text’s performative knowledge, sometimes contradicting it, and generally complicating it. In a first section, Smith’s use of structure and symbolism will be investigated as ways in which Smith thematizes time; a second section will utilize Harvena Richters’ terminology to investigate the minutiae of internal time perception. The division between both consists mainly how Smith thematizes time both externally, outside of her characters’ consciousnesses, and internally, as an aspect of how her characters experience time. This is done mainly because, while internal perception is the main focus of this thesis, Smith thematizes time not only through the eyes of her characters, and these external aspects reveal much about Smith’s internal temporal manipulation as well.

1. On the outside: time as a theme

Two ways in which Smith explicitly thematizes time in her novels are both the structure and the symbolism she uses. First, Smith’s use of structural choices will be investigated, both across an entire novel and within a single chapter. Secondly, Smith also introduces temporal symbolism in her novels, more specifically in two ways that closely interact: linguistic and physical symbols. The last two will be discussed in a single section, considering the close interplay between Smith’s physical world and the linguistic realities that she presents. Both structure and symbolism reveal Smith’s vision on time, something that will be discussed fully throughout the next chapter.
1.1 Structure

In all three novels here discussed, it is the structure of the story that immediately stands out. Hotel World, for instance, readily reveals its temporal concerns in the titles that it appoints to its six different sections: “past,” “present historic,” “future conditional,” “perfect,” “future in the past,” and “present.” As Mark Currie states in “Ali Smith and the Philosophy of Grammar,” Smith’s use of these chapter titles “gives this analytical foreknowledge an atmosphere of temporal self-analysis”: the reader is already given hints about the nature of the story ahead, as if it were already completed “before it has taken place” (Currie 56). When looking at its macro-structure, one could say that Smith makes a move from the past tenses—“past” and “present historic”—to future tenses—“future conditional” and “future in the past”—to end in the present moment. In its micro-structure, the chapters themselves also reveal structures that reveal Smith’s preoccupation with time.

One of the most striking examples of how structure makes a statement about time is the “future conditional” chapter in Hotel World, voiced by Lise. In this chapter, Lise is lying in bed, trying to fill in a form on the details of what appears to be a burn-out—though her situation matches no official diagnosis. While trying to respond to the questions, Lise’s mind wanders. One implied jump goes back to Lise’s time at the Global Hotel, on what appears to be an ordinary night. Once the situation is set up, what follows is a minute description of Lise’s actions in simple, active, declarative sentences: “[Lise] looks down at her Name Badge, LISE backwards upside down. She undoes the pin on the back of it, unhooks it from the uniform and throws it at the waste bin up at the other end of the Reception. It misses. It falls down the back. She snorts” (Smith 101). All these sentences are externally focalized, simple descriptions of Lise’s actions. No commentary or internal thoughts are presented. All of Lise’s movements are described, no matter how mundane. Unlike the previous passage in Lise’s chapter, where there is plenty of internal focalization (with the regular time jumps that entails), this moment is uniformly anchored in the present. Time slows down and is
extremely focused, the way Lise is focused on her actions. This scene only takes up a little over two pages, and takes place between 6:51 and 6:56 p.m.—a mere five minutes. In this whole paragraph, the reader does not get any insight into Lise’s thoughts; this only happens in the second paragraph.

Particularly intriguing about this second paragraph—and pertinent to the question about structure—is that it repeats fragments of the sentences used in the previous scene and attaches them to what appears to be commentary. Sometimes these are Lise’s thoughts, sometimes they are extra information about Lise, and sometimes the omniscient narrator steps in to offer (often time-related) knowledge. The sentence fragments repeated are printed in bold italics, followed by a colon, thereby announcing the extra information that is connected to that sentence fragment. Also intriguing is that the sentence fragments taken from the previous scene are quoted verbatim, and in reverse chronology. Instead of combining thought and action right away—as Smith usually does—she splits them up, thereby drawing attention to the process. By not simply adding the extra pieces of information, but sorting through them systematically as they are connected to the actions in the previous scene, Smith slows time down even more, and goes deeper into the moment. In the commentary, time jumps are regularly made (either inside Lise’s head or by the omniscient narrator), but because these time jumps are explicitly connected to a present moment, it feels less like a jump to the past or the future, but a deeper embedding into the present. Because the sentence fragments are repeated in reverse chronology, moreover, the passage does not so much feel like it is replaying the previous scene, as might have been the case if they had been structured chronologically. It is the structure, in other words, that draws attention to what *Hotel World* knows about time.

Smith starts with one of the last sentences used in the previous passage: “It’s already 6:56 p.m.”—the time where Lise’s little scene ends. The commentary provided is simple: “Time is notoriously deceptive” (103). The constative time-related statement here supports what the performative structure of the passage has already indicated. Time is deceptive, and unlike in many
of her stream of consciousness passages, Smith is not about to let the reader forget. While different temporal layers are almost ubiquitously present in most of Smith’s stream of consciousness—by virtue of it being stream of consciousness—those time jumps feel organic because they are internally motivated by the character’s stimulus response pattern. In this case, the reader is made consciously aware of the fact that these different temporal layers exist, and they are not internally motivated, because this passage is, on the highest level, not internally focalized: it is the omniscient narrator that makes a selection of what information she decides to share. The time jumps made in this chapter are the result of a conscious selection, not of a character’s thought process. By drawing attention to the process, in other words, Smith attempts a deconstruction of the temporal structures that are normal for her narrative style.

The next fragment in the sequence is “Five hours to go,” which shifts from an internally focalized thought process, to an externally focalized description of Lise’s routine, to a pronouncement of an omniscient narrator indicating a change in Lise’s routine that Lise, at that point, would be unable to know: “Tonight, however, Lise won’t leave the hotel building until 4 a.m.” (104). These omniscient interventions appear quite often throughout the passage, indicating that most of it is externally focalized; even Lise’s thoughts are frequently represented through direct discourse, indicating narratorial intervention. “The speakers, flooding Reception” becomes the fourth sentence fragment, followed immediately by more commentary from the narrator, who jumps forward in time:

More literally, in roughly an hour and twenty minutes from now the bath left running in Room 12 … will finally overflow and flood not Reception but the bathroom, the room carpet and also part of the hall carpet outside the door of the room. The ensuing mess, found next day, will result in the sacking of Joyce Davies, chambermaid (28).

The tap left running will also cause three separate complaints from other guests in the hotel between 8 p.m. and 9:30 p.m. concerning the lack of hot water, complaints which Lise on Reception will apologize for profusely. (Smith 105)
Both the detached mode of presentation and the proliferation of details indicate an omniscient narrator, who portrays events that will occur several hours away from the present moment. The narrator makes the distance of these future events explicitly clear, however: “in roughly an hour and twenty minutes from now” and “next day” indicate a strong attachment to the present moment. The next sentence fragment serves the same purpose: “It’s dead tonight” explicitly puts the reader back into the present. The next few sentence fragments lead up to general (timeless) information provided by the narrator. The next time jump happens a few pages later, after “She walks across the room with brisk purpose” (107): “In six month’s time, Lise will be incapable of walking across a room with brisk purpose. She will be almost incapable of walking across a room” (107). Here, the present moment is accentuated by contrasting it with a future moment—of which the reader is already aware at that point.

The elaboration of the first passage ends at its beginning: “Lise, behind Reception, is at work” (118), followed by an almost verbatim repetition of what happened in the first passage:

<table>
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<th>First passage</th>
<th>Second passage</th>
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<td>Lise, behind Reception, is at work. The clock on the computer reads 6:51 p.m., but at the very moment she glances at it the black 1 changes to a 2. 6:52 p.m. She is pleased to have seen it happen. It feels meant. (101)</td>
<td><strong>Lise, behind reception, is at work:</strong> There she is, Lise, behind Reception, at work. The lobby is empty. In a moment, she will glance at the clock on the computer and see the moment when the number changes on it, from a 1 to a 2. She will be pleased to see it happen. It will feel meant. (118-119)</td>
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Even though the second paragraph offers an almost exact repetition of what happens in the initial scene, it is exactly the use of the future tense that—paradoxically—keeps the reader in the present moment, thereby explicitly redefining the temporal setup of the original passage. Anything happening beyond the present state of affairs—Lise is at work and the lobby is empty—is not
defined as the present moment, and therefore indicated by a future tense. It is this final moment which takes the reader back to the beginning of the short five-minute scene: from this moment, the reader can go back to the initial scene and fill in the gaps, and include all the new information that has been added by the narrator. The reverse chronology of the sentence fragments sets the reader up for a kind of circularity that is not only experienced by the incapacitated Lise, lying in her bed several months later, but is also a hallmark of many of Smith’s novels.

One other example in which Smith suggests circularity in her book’s (macro)structure, is How To Be Both. The novel has two sections, both titled ‘One.’ One of them tells the story of a twenty-first century teenage girl called George—short for Georgia; the other the story of the fifteenth century painter Francesco Del Cossa. The ultimate rejection of a hierarchy or chronology in the novel lies in its mode of publication: “the novel exists in two editions, one with George’s story first, the other with Del Cossa’s. Each narrative contains references to the other, but they can be read separately, and in either order” (Clark). It is purely up to chance which section readers will get to read first, depending on which edition they pick up, making for two radically different reading experiences, and “once read, it’s impossible to know what it would be like to first encounter it in the alternate order” (Clark). Smith’s unorthodox publication choice rhymes with what the novel ‘knows’ about time. In a flashback discussion between George and her mother (who has passed away in the main storyline), the latter is arguing for a more open view of history than its conventional chronology. They are on holiday in Italy, having dinner facing a wall where, seventy years prior to their dinner, several people would have been lined up for execution.

And which comes first? her unbearable mother is saying. What we see or how we see it?
Yeah, but that thing happening. With the shooting. It was aeons ago, George says.
Only twenty years before me, and I am sitting here right now, her mother says.
Ancient history, George says.
That’s me, her mother says. And yet here I am. Still happening.
But it isn’t, George says. Because that was then. This is now. That’s what time is.
Do things just go away? her mother says. Do things that happened not exist, or stop existing, just because we can’t see them happening in front of us?

They do when they’re over, George says. (Smith 104)

The discussion continues, but the opposition between George and her mother is clear: while George considers history to be ‘over’, and carrying no connection to the present moment, her mother makes a case not only for causality, but simultaneity. “[N]othing’s not connected” (Smith 106), she says, a constative claim that is substantiated by the book’s performative structure. The passage itself is, tellingly, told in the present tense, even though it happens long before the ‘main’ storyline starts. As such, George’s discussion with her mother is told in what might be termed a “present historic,” a term that is particularly appropriate for this passage given its content: the discussion about what happened in the past is itself over, but the fact that George thinks back to it—in the present tense—proves her mother’s theory: the past is never truly ‘over’, and things do not “stop existing” simply because they are no longer visible. The term ‘presence’ here can be used both for Del Cossa’s manifestation, as well as in its strict temporal meaning: Del Cossa’s story is firmly set in the past, but she is nevertheless a ‘presence’ in George’s story, as much as George becomes a presence in Del Cossa’s brief return to the land of the living. Secondly, the term ‘presence’ is reminiscent of Bergson’s snow ball analogy: the present moment not only contains the strictly limited ‘present’, but carries inside it all the past moments leading up to that present. The present moment is an accumulation of past moments, not a bracketed moment in a sequence. Smith takes this philosophy even farther than Bergson himself, because she extends it to several consciousnesses—whereas Bergson limited his theory to a single consciousness—and so disregards all conventional limits of time and space. The fact that the book is structured the way it is, proves its own point: what happens ‘first’—“what we see or how we see it”—is irrelevant, because the book as a whole advocates simultaneity: “how we see it”—which section the reader gets to read first—and “what we see”—the book in its totality—coincide, because “how we see it” determines “what” we see. Smith’s
structure, and its deliberate surrender to chance, in other words, gives the reader a crucial insight into what *How To Be Both* knows about time and temporality.

At the end of George’s section, something peculiar happens that might be termed “future conditional.” This is one of the only moments of narratorial interference in the book, because the reader gets to step outside of George’s consciousness for a moment, and the narrator speaks up:

“This is the point in this story at which, according to its structure so far, a friend enters or a door opens or some kind of plot surfaces … this is the place in this book where a spirit of twist in the tale has tended, in the past, to provide a friendly nudge forward to whatever’s coming next” (Smith 182). At this point in the story, George is sitting in a gallery, looking at Del Cossa’s painting. Again, the narrator interferes: “What [George] doesn’t know yet is that in roughly half an hour or so … this will happen” (183). The statement “she doesn’t know yet” is a well-used narratorial method to create tension between the protagonist’s knowledge and the reader’s, but Smith does not use it to provide the reader with information that could never be known by George. Smith stays within George’s consciousness all the time, but only the time changes: for a few paragraphs, Smith continues George’s narrative in the future tense, only to come back to the present tense a little later:

“But none of the above has happened” (185), Smith writes: “Not yet, anyway. For now, in the present tense, George sits in the gallery and looks at one of the old paintings on the wall. It’s definitely something to do. For the foreseeable.” (186; italics mine). The ellipsis of the word ‘future’ at the end is telling, because it puts the emphasis on the adjective commonly collocated with ‘future’—a deliberate word choice, since it is George’s seeing Del Cossa’s work that ostensibly brings Del Cossa back to (incorporeal) life.

By adding the future tense to George’s section, moreover, Smith welcomes the future into her novel as the one element in the conventional temporal tripartite that had not been included yet. Since George’s seeing is what triggers Del Cossa’s reemergence, it could be said that the future here—counterintuitively—serves as a bridge between the present and the past. This interpretation holds
in both editions: readers that are first introduced to George’s section, will experience the ‘future’ passage as a chronological progression between George’s and Del Cossa’s section. In case the reader is first introduced to Del Cossa’s section, the ‘future’ passage becomes what ties the end of George’s section (and the end of the book) to the beginning of Del Cossa’s section (and the beginning of the book). In the former case, the progression is more linear and logical than in the latter case, and so in the latter case, the ‘future’ passage could be interpreted as a clarification of what may have been unclear before. What the passage does very effectively, however, is to give the reader a clear sense of “being in the present moment” by explicitly juxtaposing it with the future—the way the “future conditional” chapter in Hotel World does for Lise. By claiming that the actions described have ‘not yet happened,’ a clear boundary is drawn between the present and the future moment. At the same time, this future moment that has ‘not yet happened’ has, in the space of the story, already happened according to the logic of the book. If ‘how we see it’ coincides with ‘what we see’, then this passage has, in a sense, already happened, even though it is so explicitly set in the future. In concord with the book’s bifold structure, then, this future passage, placed strategically at the end of George’s section, reinforces Smith’s philosophy of simultaneity.

1.2 Symbolism

Other than structure, Ali Smith’s novels also betray their preoccupation with time through symbolism, a device that Smith applies in two ways: she introduces physical symbols into her story world, but they often prompt linguistic meanings, and reversely Smith’s propensity for wordplay often gives new meanings to her characters’ physical realities. Both are used to make time a conscious presence within the novel. In There But For The, Smith frequently uses both wordplay and physical symbols to make a statement about what her novel ‘knows’ about time. Much like Hotel World, There But For The gives away some of its message by its chapter titles: “[t]he novel is
arranged in four sections, ‘there’, ‘but’, ‘for’ and ‘the’,” Lucy Daniel writes in a review in *The Telegraph*: “That ludic spirit extends to the fabric of the story: figures of speech and verbal tics, and wordplay that startles in the way that poetry does, attentive to the minute ways words fall against each other.” Amongst other things, the wordplay in *There But For The* reflects how the novel conceives of time.

Proof of a temporal preoccupation in *There But For The* can be found in the ‘There’ chapter, which is written in the past tense. It starts off with “There was once a man” (Smith 3)—a phrasing that immediately triggers the association with the fairytale. This prototypical fairytale beginning is repeated in the second sentence with “There was once a woman.” The same sentence also provides the information that the woman had “met this man thirty years before, had known him slightly for roughly two weeks in the middle of a summer when they were both seventeen,” offering a plethora of temporal information to orient the reader, all set in the past. The third sentence, however, pointedly starts with “Right now”—jolting the reader away from the fairytale discourse into the present moment. Nevertheless, grammatically speaking, Smith is still using the past tense: “Right now the woman, whose name was Anna, was standing outside the locked bedroom door behind which the man, whose name was Miles, theoretically was” (Smith 3). Later, when the present moment has passed the reader gets to see Anna’s past: Anna and Miles know each other because of a trip around Europe that they both won because of an essay competition, for which they needed to write about “Britain In The Year 2000, which is twenty years from now”—‘now’ referring to 1980, when they both take the trip (Smith 31). Anna starts her story with a slightly altered line from L.P. Hartley’s *The Go-Between*: where Hartley’s version says “The past is a foreign country,” Anna’s version says “The future’s a foreign country” (Smith 40). Telling, however, is that the section relating Anna’s present moment—when she goes to visit Miles after being out of touch for years—is written in the past tense, while the trip to Europe, which is related in flashback, is written in the present tense. The only thing indicating that this is the past, is that the passage is written entirely
between parentheses—somewhat ironically, because the trip is the central reason why Anna is where she is, in the present. The contrast between the chronology of Anna’s story and the grammatical tenses Smith uses is a conscious choice, and underlines her philosophy of the “non-linearity of time” (Germanà & Horton 2): the present is not so much a moment in time, but it is what remains most important, most predominantly present in the mind of the subject. Since the trip to Europe is the direct cause of Anna’s present involvement with Miles, it is the trip that is recounted in the present tense, while the actual present moment is told as if it were in the past. Both the intertextuality and the contradiction between grammar and chronology create linguistic triggers that make it clear that time will be a central concern in the novel.

One element in the ‘There’ section that is both physical—in the story—and linguistic is Anna’s prize-winning story, which describes the future as being much the same, the only difference being that all words are suddenly written upside down. In “Ali Smith and the Philosophy of Grammar,” Currie argues that this inversion of letters indicates a kind of ‘literalization’ of metaphor: “the alterity of the future, its difference from the present, is actually being rendered as a difference in letters, words and writing as marks on the page” (55). In a temporal sense, it could be said that much about Anna’s story is upside down: the present is related in the past tense, the past in the present tense, and the present forces Anna to think back to an experience in her past that she got to have because she wrote about the future. In her story, the future is a foreign country, even though the foreign countries that she got to visit are now in the past. Anna’s story can, in a temporal capacity, be seen as a mise-en-abyme, the fictional embedded story mirroring the frame story. Later on in Anna’s section, she even confirms this by coming up with her own metaphor:

These restless, thrashing new summers, the windy summers, the global-warming summers, were grey and sticky and flyblown, not like the summers she remembered from childhood, summers sweet and complete and enclosed, each held like a story already told, like a set of Chinese boxes holding all its predecessors all the way back to the first ever box, the first ever perfect summer, there inside it. (57)
The ‘Chinese boxes’ are an accurate metaphor for Anna’s section as a whole, since present, past, and future, are woven together with very little regard for chronology—though always returning to the present moment. In her mental Chinese boxes, Anna keeps that “first perfect summer” with Miles as the central box. Going back to what has been said before about *How To Be Both*, the present here is not so much a moment in time, but a moment that Anna continues to carry with her still, at the center of all the summers that she has ranked in order of emotional importance, not chronology. Indicated both by the grammatical tense and Anna’s own metaphor, the present is a state of mind, not a moment in time.

While Smith certainly seems to advocate non-linear time, Anna’s significance as a character becomes more clear when it is juxtaposed with Brooke Bayoude, a precocious girl who is allotted the final ‘The’ section of the novel. They meet for the first time in Anna’s section, where the symbolic connection between the two is immediately established. Anna shows up in the narrative because of a story about the future that she wrote about thirty years before the beginning of the narrated time; in the present day, Brooke fills a Moleskine with facts about history. While Anna seems to stand for a kind of future-in-the-past, Brooke seems to represent the history-in-the-future. In Anna’s section, Brooke even literally tells Anna this during a conversation about punning: “And is it like if someone at school says to you, listen you, you’re history?” (53), Brooke asks Anna. She explains herself: “Because, obviously, it is a different meaning from me actually being history, when I am not even famous and I am only nine years old and will not be ten till next April, and have therefore not yet had much time to do anything to make me historic” (53). On the surface, it would seem that Brooke is symbolically connected to history (i.e. the past), and Anna to the future, because these are, as writers, their respective topics of choice. In both of their sections, however, it becomes clear that most of Anna’s section is actually more focused on memory and the past, while Brooke, as the child, is symbolic for future possibilities. (The grammatical tense in Brooke’s section is the present tense—at least when she is experiencing the present moment.) The inversions and
paradoxes serve both to complicate and to strengthen Smith’s argument about time: Anna and Brooke both oppose and complement each other as characters, both literally and symbolically interlocking their time frames.

A final symbolic way in which Anna and Brooke are connected involves one of the novel’s most physical symbolic settings: the Prime Meridian at the Observatory in Greenwich. In her own section, Brooke plays a game with it, when she hops back and forth over the Meridian as if she is crossing a border:

There. She has done it. She has stepped across and hasn’t needed to show any proof of who she is! And again. She has stepped across again and no one has even noticed. She can do it again, and again, back and fore. … She jumps over the line from side to side … Then she puts a foot on either side, straddles the divided world. (Smith 308)

By comparing the Prime Meridian to the border between two countries, and hopping back and forth between them, Brooke enacts the lines quoted in Anna’s section, both in their original and Anna’s adaptation: when considering the Meridian as a literal boundary between time zones (i.e. the past and the future), both the past and the future can be considered as “a foreign country,” while the Meridian itself functions as a metaphor for the present. Finally, Anna and Brooke are connected through the linguistic play of their section titles: the word ‘The’ (Brooke) literally forms the first three letters of ‘There’ (Anna). Following the linguistic logic, it could be said that Anna’s story can predict what the future holds for Brooke, because Anna is already ‘There’. Brooke meets Miles Garth for the first time during a for her unforgettable summer, similar to how Anna meets Miles for the first time; for both, meeting Miles has greatly impacted them. While one cannot make exact predictions about Brooke’s hypothetical future based on this, of course, their respective characterizations as future-in-the-past (Anna) and history-in-the-future (Brooke) seems to hold. In both cases, a combination of linguistic and physical metaphors serve to strengthen Smith’s engagement to time as a theme in her fiction.
The Prime Meridian in Greenwich becomes an important physical symbol for time in *There But For The*, which—in the discussion above—finds its meaning mainly in the linguistic play engaged in by the characters that visit it. An example of a reverse procedure can be found in *Hotel World*, where not only time in general, but clock time in particular becomes a physical presence, and the physical symbol prompts linguistic metaphors. A first—and rather obvious—physical manifestation of time occurs in the very first chapter, narrated by the ghost of Sara Wilby, who dies after falling down the shaft of a dumbwaiter that she climbs into on a dare. At a certain point in her narrative, Sara, who, as a competitive swimmer, has been tied to clock time as long as she has been swimming, finds out that her watch is broken—“stuck at ten to two, though that wasn’t the right time” (Smith 17). Sara goes to the watch shop, where she falls in love with the girl working there. Even though she is in a watch shop, however, Sara soon discovers that none of the clocks and watches on display there actually display the ‘right time’, except for one: “[t]he only working watch in the shop that morning was on [the girl’s] arm, ticking into the warm underside of her wrist” (18). The fact that the seconds beating on the girl’s watch are beating into the underside of her wrist—right where her pulse should be tangible—suggests that Sara’s internal time perception has shifted from disembodied clock time (which she had know as a swimmer) to a time that ticks in time with a human heartbeat as she discovers her new feelings. As Lien De Paepe states in her dissertation on Ali Smith, it is not “coincidental that time becoming unintelligible coincides with Sara’s identity becoming unintelligible” (66). The dichotomy between Sara’s broken watch and the girl’s functioning watch, then, makes both of them physical manifestations of Sara’s emotional journey.

Sara does not immediately lose grip of clock time entirely, however—at least not when it comes to her observations of the girl who keeps the only functioning watch. While her own watch is broken, Sara’s observation of time is still startlingly precise while she follows the girl, whom she decides to start—quite literally—“watching”: “I did this for three weeks of working days, including Saturdays. Her day-off varied. Her lunch hour varied. It could be anywhere between half past
eleven and four o’clock. Every day of the third week she had her lunch-hour at half past twelve” (Smith 23). After she ‘falls’ for the girl, in other words, Sara’s precise observation of clock time is not so much wiped out, but focused solely on the girl working in the watch shop. Sara’s complete loss of conventional clock time only happens later, when Sara stops going to the shop, and takes up a job at the Global Hotel, where she meets her untimely end on her second day of work—punning on Sara’s lifelong relationship with seconds (also reflected in the brand of both Sara’s and the girl’s watch, ‘Sekonda’). After her death, there is no more mention of clock time; the only way to count where Sara is at any point are the number of loops she makes, as she is forced to return to her physical fall down the elevator shaft over and over again. Sara emotionally ‘falling’ for the girl at the watch shop, and her time perception becoming centered around the girl only, seems to anticipate her physical fall, when her time perception becomes non-numerical, and centered around the moment of that fall. As a ghost, Sara goes to visit the girl in the watch shop one more time:

She was staring at the front of her wrist where the moving hand on the face of her watch leapt and stopped, leapt and stopped, leapt and stopped. … She put her hand down on the counter again and watched her watch, the seconds, doing time. (Smith 29)

The expression “doing time” is deliberately ambiguous here, defined in the OED as criminals’ slang, meaning “[t]o spend time in prison for an offence,” and also “[t]o spend a period of time in a specified situation or position … esp. one regarded as obligatory but unpleasant.” In this case, it is Sara who is imprisoned in the time loop that she finds herself in. The sentence also indicates something about Smith’s philosophy on time: the precise expression she uses is that the girl “watched her watch, the seconds, doing time.” It is both Sara’s watch and the ‘seconds’ that are the prisoners of clock time here, whereas Sara is imprisoned in her own mind—and her own time perception—which, from the moment of her death, stops following clock time. Sara’s loss of clock time is gradual, in other words, not instantaneous: it narrows to the girl at first, then is lost altogether. Both Sara’s and the girl’s watch—and the watch shop as a place—act as the physical
symbols for what is happening to Sara internally. The physical symbols, in turn, prompt linguistic meanings, usually in the form of puns, since Sara “falls” in two different ways, she “watches” the girl who works in a watch shop, and she dies on the “second” day after she stops counting seconds. Both Anna’s and Brooke’s passages in There But For The, and Sara Wilby’s chapter in Hotel World, show how Smith’s physical and linguistic realities interact and bleed into each other, both generating new meanings that reveal what these novels know about time.

2. On the inside: modes of internal time

In the three books under discussion, Ali Smith uses techniques that are comparable to the ones discerned by Richter, as discussed in the first chapter. Even though Richter designed the different modes to analyze Virginia Woolf’s fiction, Smith has shown several times to be influenced by Woolf: “In addition to her thesis on Joyce, Stevens, and Williams, Smith has also recognized the influence of W.B. Yeats, Virginia Woolf and Katherine Mansfield in her work” (Germanà & Horton 5). While a full analysis of Woolf’s influence on Smith is not the aim of this chapter, it will discuss how Richter’s kinetic, time-dimension, and mnemonic mode of time are applicable to Smith’s fiction as well. Because this section will focus on internal time perception, moreover, some notes will also be made on the influence of stream of consciousness on time perception, in anticipation of a more thorough analysis of the phenomenon itself in the next chapter.

2.1 The Kinetic Mode

According to Richter, the kinetic mode “is concerned with this sense of time’s movement, the emotional speed at which it passes” (150); it is, in other words, primarily concerned with the pace of time as experienced within an individual consciousness. In Ali Smith’s novels, time both slows
down and speeds up thanks to several rhetorical techniques—some of which will also be discussed in the next chapter.

One conspicuous example of time speeding up occurs in the ‘future in the past’ chapter in *Hotel World*, which is entirely internally focalized through the eyes of Clare Wilby, Sara’s sister who, throughout the chapter, is working through her grief in an unbroken, unpunctuated stream of consciousness. Since it is an unpunctuated stream of consciousness, the chapter contains a profusion of conjunctions to tie sentence fragments together, which Smith contracts by using an ampersand whenever Clare thinks ‘and’ in her interior monologue. The result is a very long polysyndeton, which regularly accelerates Clare’s mental time whenever they occur in quick succession. A particularly poignant example of this happens at the very end of the chapter, when Clare is addressing her dead sister:

& since in the end when **you went & you went** with legs & arms all **I know I know** upside down stuck in **I know** & then it was **all over all** of it the broken tops of all the waters over & done with still **listen** Sara **even though you couldn’t even though you couldn’t** move **couldn’t** do anything about it **listen** to me **you were fast you were really really fast** I know because I went there to see tonight I was there & **you were so fast** I still can’t believe how fast you were less than four seconds just under four three & a bit that’s all you took I know I counted for you (Smith 220-221)

The urgency in Clare’s interior monologue to somehow reach her dead sister is made clear in the regular repetitions—indicated in bold above—added to Clare’s obvious emotional turmoil. The repetitions, as well as the polysyndeton of the ampersand, speed the monologue up even more, as if Clare is stumbling over her own thoughts to make sure that they reach Sara: “you were fast you were really really fast” is a constative statement that is replicated in the passage’s performative aspect, since not only Sara was “really really fast,” but so are Clare’s thoughts, and so is the monologue itself. While there is no physical movement on Clare’s part in the passage, the kinetic
mode is used to convey Clare’s excitement and urgency in this passage by means of rhetorical techniques.

A more literal movement that is projected in the language itself can be found in Sara’s own monologue, which starts off with her typical “Woohoo-hoo” symbolizing her fall. The ‘literalization’ noted by Currie about There But For The occurs here too: “Sara’s fall is being literalized as letters that fall out of words” (59). Sara’s chapter starts out with this ‘literalization,’ immediately followed by an acceleration, which is then slowed down rhetorically—the way a fall would physically end. Only after this show of linguistic pyrotechnics, Smith goes into Sara’s actual story:

Woooooooo-
hooollll what a fall what a soar what a plummet what a dash into dark into light what a plunge what a glide thud crash what a drop what a rush what a sloop what a fright what a mad hushed skirl what a smash much mash-up broke and gashed what a heart in my mouth what an end.
What a life.
What a time.
What I felt. Then. Gone. (Smith 3)

The anaphora of “what a”—incidentally a reference to the Mrs Dalloway passage quoted in the first chapter that starts with “What a lark! What a plunge!”—creates a rushed rhythm that might be captured in verse feet as anapests, a trisyllabic foot of two unstressed syllables and a single stressed one. The proliferation of onomatopoeic words such as ‘dash’, ‘crash’, ‘rush’, and ‘smash’, make Sara’s fall audible in the text right from the beginning of her monologue. It is only when the first period has been reached that the pace slows down remarkably. The anaphora of “what a” is repeated once again, but this time there are no onomatopoeic words that follow, and each are separated by both a period and a new line. These last sentences in the above excerpt clearly echo the racing lines above, but because punctuation and space is added in between them, the pace is slowed down radically—a clear example of how punctuation and white space can influence the reading
experience. “What I felt. Then. Gone” in its rhythmical aspect echoes the stress pattern of “what a glide thud crash,” but the addition of punctuation makes that the reader experiences it as flowing much slower than how “what a glide thud crash” flowed in the middle of a rushed enumeration. Here the kinetic mode is consciously used to transition from a hurried, accelerated pace into a radical deceleration that is needed to flow organically into a more sedated, regular pace that is needed for a traditional story exposition.

2.2 The Time-dimension Mode

Richter’s second mode involves contraction and expansion: “The moment is contracted to the present—a “flat” instant of time because the past does not create a sense of distance or proportion … Or it is expanded beyond the momentary aspect of duration to probe far into personal or racial memory” (158). Because Smith uses so much internal focalization, characters regularly jump backwards and forwards in time. The difference between the time-dimension and the mnemonic mode, as will also be repeated in the next paragraph, is mainly focus.

*How To Be Both* offers a mix of the time dimension mode and the mnemonic mode, and are often misleading to differentiate. Particularly interesting for the time-dimension mode in *How To Be Both* is George’s section; while Del Cossa’s section is primarily set in the past, George’s story continues in the present, but at the same time the past looms over her in the shape of the death of her mother, whom she is mourning. Her section of the book is riddled with memories of her mother, and those memories continue to color her present experience. The time play starts right at the beginning of George’s chapter, which starts with a flashback: “Consider this moral conundrum for a moment, George’s mother says to George who’s sitting in the front passenger seat. Not says. *Said.* George’s mother is dead” (Smith 3). The play with the tenses shows a metafictional awareness of what is in the present and the past; the omniscient narrator is, right from the beginning, building an exposition of a scene not only in spatial terms, but also in temporal terms: there is a minute
description not only of where the scene takes place, but where the scene takes place in time. While the chapter starts with the memory, however, this is not an example of the mnemonic mode: the focus of the chapter remains on the present moment, as the reader is yanked into the present right away, and even as the memory continues to spin out, the reader is always brought back to the present. This is an instance of expansion, in other words, featuring a very particular memory in George’s past.

There follows a brief continuation of the flashback scene, after which the reader is promptly pulled back into the present by the narrator: “This conversation is happening last May, when George’s mother is still alive, obviously. She’s been dead since September. Now it’s January, to be more precise it’s just past midnight on New Year’s Eve, which means it has just become the year after the year in which George’s mother died” (Smith 4). The narrator provides the memory’s relative position to the present moment of remembering: the new year has just started, and it is the first year that George will have to spend entirely without her mother—a fact that George is acutely aware of. What follows is a description of George, right after midnight, looking up the lyrics to a song, which provides a metafictional statement in itself: “Let’s twist again, twisting time is here,” the lyrics say. “Or, as all the sites say, twistin’ time” (Smith 5). ‘Twistin’ time’ is exactly what happens, triggered by the twisting of conventional grammar: “At least they’ve used an apostrophe, the George from before her mother died says. I do not give a fuck about whether some site on the internet attends to grammatical correctness, the George from after says” (5). Here, the ‘before’ and ‘after’ are still split up neatly into past and present, featuring both the George who cared about grammar and the George who cares no longer. Once the narrator has finished the exposition of the present-day scene, however, and goes back to the memory with which she opened the chapter, the narrator takes great care to indicate simultaneity: “Okay, I’m imagining, George in the passenger seat last May in Italy says at exactly the same time as George at home in England the following January stares at the meaninglessness of the words of an old song” (Smith 5-6; italics mine). The
past and present are consciously conflated here, as an event in the past that happens again in the present, at the same time when the present is also happening. Present-day George is not waiting for the past moment to play out: the memory does not take possession of her, but rather influences her in a more subtle and unconscious way. George’s present-day conflict with simultaneity is partly explained by the memory:

> Past or present? George says. Male or female? It can’t be both. It must be one or the other. Who says? Why must it? her mother says. (Smith 8)

The juxtaposition between George’s position and her mother’s position is reasserted at several points during George’s section but—as has been pointed out already—ultimately it is George’s mother’s conviction about the past and present coexisting that rings true for George herself: both the George in the memory and the George in the present share the same wariness of her mother’s philosophizing. After the memory ends, the reader is pulled back to a uniform present, where George, much like the past George, contemplates the impossibility of simultaneity: “Because if things really did happen simultaneously it’d be like reading a book but one in which all the lines of the text have been overprinted, like each page is actually two pages but with one superimposed on the other to make it unreadable. Because it’s New Year not May, and it’s England not Italy” (10). There is once again a metafictional (constative) statement here, this time about storytelling: the medium requires sequentiality to be intelligible, and simultaneity would make it unintelligible. This statement indicates George’s state of mind, and justifies the playing out of the memory: George is remembering her conversation with her mother about simultaneity because she is mourning her mother, and much like past George, she denies that simultaneity, because the present, mourning George, is still living through the bitter realization that her mother is truly gone. George being a much more down-to-earth character than her mother, she does not deal well with the imaginative possibilities of thinking her mother still alive, while she feels her absence so acutely. This is an
instance of expansion within the time-dimension mode, because the present moment expands into the personal past of the protagonist. Expansion, as Richter explains, “suggest elements of the unconscious, the residual traces of instinct and memory which cluster at the edge of awareness” (158-159): in this case, this particular memory of George’s mother plays out in George’s head as a result of her grieving, which is, to some extent, an unconscious process.

2.3 The Mnemonic Mode

A third mode identified by Richter is the mnemonic mode, which is concerned with memory, and how that memory changes over the years, influenced by the flow of time. An interesting example of the mnemonic mode in Ali Smith can be found in the ‘For’ chapter of There But For The, where the central character is May Young, who is—ironically—an old woman staying in a nursing home, looking back on her life. Much like Smith starts with a memory only to contrast it with the present moment in How To Be Both, the ‘For’ section starts with a woman who sounds very sure of herself, given her years: “But she was no fool, she knew exactly how old she was. She knew it was January. She knew it was Thursday. She knew very well who the prime minister was, thank you very much. She knew plenty, no thanks to them” (Smith 201). While the next few paragraphs are meant to ground the reader into the present moment with May, she experiences a moment of dissociation exactly in that present moment, regarding her hand: “But oh dear Jesus Mary Joseph, was that thing there really hers, that old woman’s rough raw wrist there, coming out of the end of the sleeve of a nightie May didn’t know?” (202) While she knows enough to understand that the hand is hers, and that she is definitely wearing the nightie (which belongs to the nursing home), her perception of the present moment is troubled by what she remembers about herself, as a woman whose hands did not look old, wearing clothes that May would have picked out herself. In the present moment here, the reader gets to experience a glimpse of May coming to terms with her age and her situation.
Once she arrives at this conclusion, May retreats back into her head, after which the mnemonic mode becomes apparent:

The head has its confines. The head’s got those all right, confines, and the heart. The heart has its reasons. That was a book, the what was it, name of it, the name of the book, the book that lay around the house for years, one of Eleanor’s, it was Eleanor with her airs even when she was a child, liked all that royal and history stuff. It had a picture of the old duchess, the American, on it, the divorcée, some cheap thing. Not the duchess, the book. Though the duchess come to think of it had been a bit of a cheap thing too it was widely thought, and she married the king and he abdicated. They liked the Germans. They were right old German lovers, them two. Not that May had anything against Germans. On the contrary, she had met some when they came to the house on the exchanges with the school and so on when the girls and Patrick were young, and they had been very nice the Germans in reality. (Smith 203)

The passage is a clear example of how stream of consciousness interacts with time perception through free association. May starts her thought process with an abstract thought, “The head has its confines,” which leads to another abstract thought, “The heart has its reasons.” The novel referred to is the memoir of Wallis Simpson, the wife of Prince Edward, who abdicated the English throne in 1936 to marry the two-time divorcée. Chronologically, then, the first aphorism leads to the second, which prompts May to remember the book. Logically, however, it seems more likely that May remembered the aphorism because she remembered the book title, which has a particular personal memory attached to it, of her daughter Eleanor. The stream of consciousness reveals how May’s memory is slipping, however: while she has just remembered the right title of the book (The Heart Has Its Reasons), she immediately after questions “what was it, name of it, the name of the book”—while it is possible that she still remembers the phrase itself, she fails to connect the aphorism to the book title, thereby showing that she has little insight in her own process of free association. What follows is a reminiscence about her personal memory of it—it was read by her daughter Eleanor—after which she visualizes the book, and remembers it held a picture: “It had a picture of the old duchess, the American, on it, the divorcée, some cheap thing. Not the duchess, the book.” Her thought process that initially focused on the physical appearance of the book, however, jumps to the
history recounted \textit{in} the book, hinging on the words “cheap thing.” Here Smith makes a shift within the mnemonic mode from a personal memory to general history. Immediately after this, however, May shifts right back, when going deeper into the book’s content: “They were right old German lovers, them two. Not that May had anything against Germans.” She then launches into a memory of how she met ‘some Germans’ when they came over to their house on an exchange “when the girls and Patrick were young.” In this short paragraph, Smith jumps from abstract thoughts to a barely-there memory of a book, to a personal memory, to public memory, and then back to a personal memory—all involving several time jumps. Eleanor’s obsession with ‘royal stuff’ has no direct connection to the Germans coming to visit their home, but they are mere sentences apart within the paragraph. What makes this paragraph an example of the mnemonic mode is the stimulus-response pattern through which the different memories are prompted, which in turn influences how they are told: Eleanor’s obsession with ‘royal stuff’ is not a particular memory, but is prompted by a particular book; the memory of ‘the Germans’ coming over to visit their home must have left many impressions, but given the thought process that prompted it, all May concludes from this memory is that “they had been very nice the Germans in reality.”

Another example of the mnemonic mode in May’s chapter is when she regards the girl who is reading to her in the nursing home in the present moment; the girl reminds her of—and so serves as a visual stimulus for—her own grandchild, Jennifer, who died young. May’s grief about her death prompts a memory that is quoted entirely between parentheses. In the memory, May comforts a distraught Jennifer who is reading a book about spontaneous combustion: “Jennifer, there is no way in a million you’re going to burst into flames, May says. … Jennifer looks desolate. She climbs off May’s knee and goes to stand by the sink. In the future, she says, I will keep my worries in the confines of my own head” (Smith 218). Here, then, is revealed where the first aphorism came from that prompted the previously quoted passage—an example of how ‘suspended coherence’ on a micro-level is resolved on a macro-level. May remembers this because Jennifer had a habit of
saying “things strangely” (219). At the moment when the aphorism first appears, May does not
directly think of Jennifer, indicating that the memory of it has become somewhat detached from
Jennifer in her head. The fact that May uses the phrase at all, however, seems to be thanks to her
grandchild. The mnemonic mode in this case reveals the complex pattern of associations that have
to potential to prompt various particular and non-particular memories; what particular memory a
particular image or phrase or occurrence prompts, tells readers something about the character’s state
of mind, while at the same time making them aware of the complexities of memory processes, what
prompts them, and how they change over time.
Chapter 3: Stream of Consciousness

In the previous chapter the thematization of time—both external and internal—was a central concern. This chapter will zoom in on the minutiae of Smith’s stream of consciousness that she uses to give the reader an insight into her characters’ minds. While Smith has a signature style, different stories call for different approaches, which explains the many different forms of stream of consciousness that appear in Smith’s novels. While Humphrey’s concepts will be used to analyze Smith’s stream of consciousness, this chapter will be structured in a way that enables a comparative approach, rather than a simple enumeration. The structure will be based on Humphrey’s narratological techniques. Humphrey describes these techniques according to how closely they represent a character’s internal thoughts, and reflects that a faithful representation depends mainly on two elements: audience and narrator. These two elements will be central in this chapter: the first section will discuss the influence of ‘audience’, comparing one technique where audience is supposedly absent—the direct interior monologue—and another where audience is conspicuously present—the dramatic monologue. The two will be compared, and Humphrey’s classification of both will be evaluated and nuanced according to how closely they both adhere to the character’s inner consciousness. A second section will investigate the influence of the narrator by comparing Smith’s application of two of Humphrey’s other techniques, both of which use a narrator, but in different degrees: indirect interior monologue and omniscient description. Finally, one of Humphrey’s ‘special’ techniques will also be discussed in Smith’s use of poetic devices to achieve a stream of consciousness.

The rhetorical techniques discussed in the first chapter will also be discussed, be it not structurally; they will instead be included in the discussion on Smith’s narratological techniques. The comparative approach of this chapter has been chosen to indicate that the ‘effectiveness’ of Humphrey’s narratological techniques in creating a stream of consciousness cannot be judged by
themselves alone: what constitutes a successful stream of consciousness also depends on other rhetorical devices, and these can be used alongside each one of Humphrey’s narratological techniques. The illusion of being inside a character’s head, therefore, is not achieved primarily through the narratological techniques, but through how well they combine with the rhetorical devices. A closer look will reveal that every passage has its own unique combination of devices, contributing to different types of stream of consciousness, suited to fit Smith’s diverse cast of characters. To illustrate the ‘stream’ character in her stream of consciousness, it will be necessary to quote large excerpts from the text; these will be extensively discussed.

1. The matter of audience: direct interior monologue vs. dramatic soliloquy

The most direct way to represent a character’s consciousness according to Humphrey is direct interior monologue, where the reader gets to see only the character’s thoughts, with no guidance or interference from either a narrator or an audience. An interesting example of this in Smith’s novels is the already discussed first chapter in *Hotel World*, voiced by the recently deceased Sara Wilby. The chapter is voiced entirely in first person, with no audience perceivably present. A hallmark of Sara’s chapter is the returning “Woooo-hoooo” during her fall down the elevator shaft, which returns periodically, always split up in two parts, the “woooo-” marking the end of a paragraph, the “hoooo” the beginning of a new one. Several other of Humphrey’s markers of stream of consciousness are also present in Sara’s monologue. At the beginning of her chapter, she says that she would have liked someone to ‘time’ her fall—a request that her sister later unwittingly fulfills:

I would like very much to know how long it took, how long exactly, and I’d do it again in a minute given the chance, the gift of a chance, the chance of a living minute, sixty whole seconds, so many. I’d do it given only a fraction of that with my full weight behind me again if I could (and this time I’d throw myself willingly down it wooo-

hooooo and this time I’d count as I went, one elephant two eleph-ahh) if I could feel it again, how I hit it, the basement, from four floors up, from toe to head, dead. Dead leg. Dead arm. Dead hand. Dead
There is a proliferation of standard rhetorical figures in this short passage, as indicated by Humphrey. First of all, Sara uses a polyptoton when repeating the expression “given the chance” in “the gift of chance”: following Richard Lanham’s definition in his *Handlist of Rhetorical Figures*, a polyptoton is the “[r]epetition of words from the same root but with different endings” (117). The polyptoton could be interpreted here as a symptom of associative thinking on a basic linguistic level. A second example of a rhetorical figure is the repetition of the word ‘chance’, first in an epiphora, then in an anadiplosis:

- *given the chance — the gift of a chance*
- *the gift of a chance — the chance of a living minute*

An anadiplosis—the “[r]epetition of the last word of one line or clause to begin the next” (Lanham 10)—is often used to create a climax, which, given the three-time repetition of the word ‘chance’, certainly applies here: Sara is quite explicitly craving for this chance to have that one minute to relive one of the most traumatic events of her life, only so she could know how long it took her exactly. The repetition of ‘chance’, combined with the mutation of ‘gift’, rhetorically creates the kind of urgency that Sara expresses in this passage.

A second element typical for Sara’s stream of consciousness—the splitting of “wooo-hoooo” into two different paragraphs—almost feels like a verse ending, even though there is no content-related reason to split up the paragraph there; even within the sentence itself the wooo-hooooo does not indicate the start of something new, but is thematically—if not grammatically—a part of the sentence. In the above excerpt Smith also makes use of aposiopesis: “[s]topping suddenly in midcourse, leaving a statement unfinished” (Lanham 20). In Smith’s case, not only thoughts and sentences remain unfinished, but words are often cut off in the middle: in this case, the
aposiopesis can be extended to an emotionally motivated apocope, i.e. “omitting the last syllable or letter of a word” (Lanham 18). “One elephant two eleph-ahh” serves as a strong auditive representation of the fall itself, or how it might have sounded if Sara had indeed started counting the seconds during her fall. Cutting off the second ‘elephant’ in the middle of the word gives the stream of consciousness a sense of immediacy, as if the reader were really listening to Sara as she was in the middle of a fall. Smith uses the apocope another time, this time symbolically, in “the short goodb—”, literally cutting Sara’s goodbye short by means of another rhetorical device, this time an instance of punctuation. Unlike the “wooo-hoooo”, both apocopes serve as an indication of the end of a thought as it is developing in Sara’s head. Punctuation and structure also add to this effect; “eleph-ahh” ends with the closing of brackets, thereby cutting off a parenthetical thought, and “goodb—” effectively ends the paragraph. It is the combination of simple mechanics and figures of speech that creates the effect of immediacy, and strengthens the illusion that the reader is inside the head of a dead girl who seems to keep reliving her fall in between reminiscences about her life.

When considering the ‘effectiveness’ of this passage when it comes to its narratological technique, it appears at first as if this is a clearcut direct interior monologue; there is no interference from an external narrator, and Sara initially appears to function as a regular homodiegetic narrator. During her monologue, however, she starts dissociating between the Sara that she was in life, and her current incorporeal self. When she visits her own grave, she seemingly starts interrogating her own corpse:

The things she saw with had blackened. Her mouth was glued shut. Hello, she said through the glue. You again. What are you after?

How are you? I said. Sleep well?

(She heard me!) Fine till now, she said. Well? What? This had better be good.

…

I need to know something, I said. Can you remember how long it took us? Can you remember what happened before it? Please.

Silence. (But I knew she could hear me.) (Smith 15)
In the above excerpt, “she” becomes the person who reminds the incorporeal Sara of who she was in life, and what happened to her leading up to her fall. Taken together, Sara starts referring to her incorporeal consciousness (the narrator) and her body as ‘we/us’. From the moment Sara’s body takes the word, she becomes the intradiegetic narrator telling the incorporeal Sara about her life. Because Sara’s body does have an audience, however, what appeared to be direct interior monologue is temporarily exchanged for a soliloquy—occasionally a dialogue, when incorporeal Sara intercepts. This part in Sara’s chapter is told exactly as Humphrey describes the dramatic soliloquy: there is no narratorial interference—Sara’s body is the homodiegetic narrator in her own story—but the language is more coherent and less spontaneous. None of Humphrey’s rhetorical techniques are present in the language either. It is pure narrative discourse.

When Sara’s body ends her story, however, there is an immediate shift back to the less coherent language of Sara’s incorporeal consciousness: the return of the “wooo-hooo”—which was entirely absent during Sara’s body’s narrative—marks the return of the incorporeal Sara’s stream of consciousness. Even after the exchange between Sara’s consciousness and Sara’s body ends, however, the question of audience arises once again when Sara addresses ‘you’. Towards the end of the chapter, her apostrophes become more regular: “It has tired me out telling you her story, all you pavement-pressing see-hearing people passing so blandly back and fore in front of the door of the hotel” (Smith 26). This point in Sara’s narrative is, however, pretty coherent, and there appear fewer traces of direct interior monologue than at the beginning. She apostrophizes two more times, and more explicitly: “You could put ground in your mouth, couldn’t you? You, yes, you” (26); and once at the very end, when her speech is deteriorating entirely: “Time me, would you? You. Yes, you. It’s you I’m talking to” (31). Interesting in particular about this final passage is that her speech is falling apart, and that the discourse is showing a lot of characteristics of direct interior monologue before she addresses the reader:
As she is grappling for the word ‘world’, Sara uses several rhetorical figures that are characteristic of stream of consciousness. First of all, her confusion between ‘world’ and ‘word’ is an instance of acyrologia, the “[u]se of an inexact or illogical word (Lanham 2). “I will miss,” secondly, is repeated as an anaphora, while “I will miss the, the” forms a type of aposiopesis in addition to a simple repetition, creating the effect of someone experiencing a case of lethologica—the inability to find the right word. What immediately follows is an instance of synchrisis—“[c]onfused word order in a sentence” (Lanham 147)—in “Lost. I’ve, the word,” the scrambled word order emphasizing ‘Lost’ and setting up for an epiphora in the last sentence of the above excerpt. In the final sentences, Smith uses typology and white space to indicate a deliberate ellipsis, and then uses a simple wordplay between ‘word’ and ‘world’ to suggest the elided noun. Both the associative thinking, as well as the figures of speech that are meant to create the illusion of spontaneity are here, but Sara is definitely addressing an audience—as is made apparent in the last sentence she speaks. The matter of ‘audience’ is not so determining for the congruity of Sara’s language, in other words: first of all, the question remains who exactly Sara is addressing, and secondly, Sara’s own ability to speak at all influences the (in)coherence of her monologue. Towards the end especially, her incoherence is not so much caused by the absence of an audience, but by the fact that she is fading out herself, and her urgency to communicate is only intensified by the linguistic evidence that she will soon be unable to do so. The linguistic literalization of Sara’s physical state that has already been discussed in the previous chapter is explained in Stephen Levin’s paper on “Spectral Presences in Ali Smith’s Fictions”: “Wilby’s ghost remains lost in a purgatorial space between worlds, quite literally fading in and out of language” (43). In this case, the matter of audience does not so much seem to determine the coherence of Sara’s monologue, since it says more about her own state.
On the whole, it can be said that Smith seems to be using a combination of direct interior monologue and dramatic soliloquy in Sara’s chapter, often meandering between the two as the question of audience remains murky. Though Sara addresses her presumed audience occasionally, there are times when she seems to forget that she is addressing it, and her thoughts seem to evolve more into a direct interior monologue. At other times, when her use of apostrophe is more overt, she is rather direct, and makes more of an effort to be coherent—though not always successfully.

Smith’s use of Humphrey’s rhetorical techniques in combination with her narratological choice, indicates that both the direct interior monologue and the dramatic soliloquy need not be judged either more or less spontaneous when compared to each other: in Sara’s monologue, both offer the reader a significant insight into the character’s inner workings.

A second chapter in *Hotel World* that is somewhat misleading in its use of stream of consciousness is the ‘future in the past’ chapter, voiced by Sara’s sister Clare Wilby. The chapter is a clear tribute to Joyce’s ‘Penelope’ chapter in *Ulysses*: both the unpunctuated stream of consciousness and the paragraphs as the only structuring device in the entire section, perform a clear echo of Joyce’s famous experiment. Smith’s use of the ampersand instead of the regular ‘and’ immediately becomes a defining feature of the monologue. Every paragraph starts with ‘& since’, creating the illusion of the chapter being one long sentence without a main clause. The effect of there being no narratorial interference is that the reader gets an undiluted view of Clare Wilby’s thoughts as they develop. However, while at first it appears that Clare is not speaking to an audience at all, there are moments in the monologue when she shifts from talking about Sara (in the third person) to talking to Sara (in the second person). These are moments when she addresses her dead sister directly, and as such these moments could be considered not as instances of direct interior monologue, but dramatic soliloquy. The differences between the two are minute, however, because Smith maintains the same unpunctuated style, and because, since Clare is addressing an imagined audience in the shape of her dead sister, her utterances are less coherent than they would be if she
were addressing an unfamiliar (and real) audience. The shift between direct interior monologue and dramatic soliloquy are subtle at first, and Clare fairly quickly abandons her apostrophe. As the chapter progresses, however, the apostrophes become more frequent, and towards the end, Clare’s monologue is a pure address to her dead sister. Because of the hybrid situation in this monologue, therefore, Smith uses some of the rhetorical techniques that enhance the illusion of spontaneity.

The absence of punctuation is the most salient feature of the chapter, and gives the reader the sense of an uninterrupted flow of thought:

& since she was fast since she was so incredibly fast I bet she’d be pleased I’m sure she’d be pleased how fast I like to think she is light as air lighter than it now like those pictures they take of car headlights in cities where the cars are going too fast to leave anything of themselves but their lights as they go so fast past the camera it is like that with her I am sure (Smith 185)

In this sentence fragment she is talking about Sara, and how fast she was. Because punctuation is entirely absent, there is no immediate structural boundary between one thought and the next, and the reader can only follow the often haphazard connections—Humphrey’s ‘suspended coherence’—between different thoughts on a grammatical level. Smith also uses rhetorical figures such as repetition and gradation: “since she was fast” is immediately repeated, the repetition adding a strengthening modifier in “since she was so incredibly fast.” This procedure is repeated in the next two phrases: “I bet she’d be pleased” is repeated and augmented into “I’m sure she’d be pleased,” copying both the structure and the gradation of the previous phrase. The gradation is repeated one last time in the next phrase, when Clare starts a new (grammatical) sentence: “I like to think she is light as air,” she says, but then uses—almost as an afterthought—a stronger expression. Since Sara is dead, after all, she is “lighter than [air] now”. Theialism is an often used rhetorical figure, and only one of many in Smith’s stream of consciousness. What Humphrey identified as free association can also easily be found in the above excerpt, in Clare’s prompt metaphor for her
sister’s proclaimed speed of car headlights that go so fast that the cars are not visible on film—only their lights are.

While the above excerpt appears to provide a pure example of direct interior monologue, however, Clare shifts from talking about Sara to talking to Sara at several points in the chapter:

but that means if that’s true then it’s also true that because Sara was here because she walked along streets or pulled water towards her like when she used to swim her arms pulled it so she could propel herself through it then somehow she is still here too but that’s a lot of shit because she’s gone I mean she’s really really gone aren’t you & so if they ever knock down that building … like they did with that cinema in Merret St where you were going to see Happiness eventually I suppose they will do that change the building (Smith 200)

In this excerpt Smith uses all of the rhetorical techniques that she uses in the first excerpt, but very briefly she shifts from direct interior monologue to dramatic soliloquy, because Clare addresses her sister directly in a tag question. Interesting here is Smith’s use of spacing, which might serve as a replacement of regular punctuation: the question mark is clearly implied in “she’s really really gone aren’t you.” Notable also is the use of anacoluthon—the “ending [of] a sentence with a different grammatical structure from which it began” (Lanham 10)—since Clare’s (second) “if” never gets followed by a “then.” The incoherence is clear, but she is, at this point, addressing her sister. The fact that her audience is imaginary, however, becomes clear in the fact that Clare sometimes seems to forget that she is addressing Sara, and she starts talking about her again:

those are just stories you wouldn’t be like that you would be just yourself but what if she was herself like she is must be now under the ground her face all no no she would just be standing there (Smith 201)

In this excerpt, Clare shifts right in the middle of the sentence after “but what if she,” a break which is further strengthened by the white space between “her face all” and “no no”: the latter indicates that she is arguing with herself, and no longer addressing Sara. Aposiopesis is used here again too: a
breaking off of Clare’s thought as it is developing: “her face all” ends in a space, either because the thought is too icky to finish verbally, or as a lead-up to the following negation—or both.

Towards the end of the chapter, the shifts between “she” and “you” become more frequent, and the sections where Clare addresses her sister become longer, so that, at the end, she ends up addressing her sister solely:

I wouldn’t mind being just an ear just an eye just one single eyelash blown away like someone held me at the tip of their finger & made a wish on me blew me away light as a really really small piece of I don’t know uh leaf it would be a relief to be just that not this with all its feet & hands & mind going all the time Sara you are lucky oh God what am God no I don’t mean it Sara I didn’t mean anything by it I didn’t she had the most fucking amazing eyelashes they were so long longer than anybody else’s I will ever know & there they were just on the ends of your eyelids going down & up whenever you closed your eyes (214)

In this excerpt there is an echo of Sara’s own monologue, where her linguistic game leads to the phrase “Remember you mist leaf.” In Clare’s monologue, there is an echo of that game, in “a really really small piece of … leaf”. Not only the word ‘leaf’ is repeated here, but the homology is repeated in “it would be a relief.” An interesting switch from soliloquy to interior monologue is when Clare tells her sister “Sara you are lucky,” before realizing the implications of what she has said. Clare lets out an “oh God,” then the spacing indicates a moment of shock, after which she starts rambling, tripping over her own words to apologize to her absent sister. After the emphatic denial, moreover, Clare foregoes any more mental interaction with her sister entirely, and chooses to deal with her slip-up by slipping back into third person, thereby effectively avoiding the imagined sister that she just offended.

In this monologue there is also a case of a mixture between dramatic soliloquy and direct interior monologue, be it for a different reason. Unlike in Sara’s monologue, Clare’s moments of coherence or incoherence are not so much determined by her own physical state, but by the nature of her audience: the audience is familiar, therefore Clare would not need to censor herself the way
she would with an unknown listener, and the audience is imaginary, meaning that Clare sometimes forgets that she is, in fact, addressing someone, and slips back into direct interior monologue. Both of these factors make that Humphrey’s division between dramatic soliloquy and direct interior monologue is negated in both instances: in the first because of the speaker, in the second because of the audience. In this way, Smith combines two modes of stream of consciousness to show different sides to her characters: the most naked, unadulterated thought processes of an uncensored mind, and the mannerisms of someone consciously addressing an audience.

2. Narratorial interference: indirect interior monologue vs. omniscient narration

A second comparison that will be made in this chapter involves the factor of the narrator. Both are absent in dramatic soliloquy and direct interior monologue, but both are present in indirect interior monologue and omniscient narration. Even more than was the case with the former two categories, the following paragraphs will indicate that the difference between the latter two is more gradual than exact, and the interference of the narrator causes different results in both cases—though both are clearly motivated by the character in question.

A good example of indirect interior monologue in Ali Smith is the ‘But’ section in *There But For The*, narrated by Mark, who is plagued by the voice of his dead mother Faye as he takes a stroll through Greenwich Park. The stroll is interspersed by some of Mark’s memories, as well as his thought process as he goes along. Mark, a photographer working for a nature magazine, is close to sixty years old, and since his mother’s death forty-seven years ago, has been hearing her voice inside his head. In his chapter, Faye’s voice’s utterances are italicized—one of Humphrey’s rhetorical devices that distinguish between Mark’s own thoughts and those of his mother’s voice inside his head. Because of this feature, the italicized sentences in the ‘But’ chapter are always internally focalized; the non-italicized sentences can be either, depending on context. A glance at
the first few paragraphs sheds a light on the dynamic between internally and externally focalized passages, and why this chapter can be classified as ‘indirect interior monologue’:

Mark walked through the park. He had forgotten how charming it was here. *Would he be testing whether he’d be missed / would such inversion mean he’d not exist?* this was interesting, because usually she was much ruder and cruder than she was being this morning. Also, it was quite unusual for her to ask questions. Questions demanded an answer, didn’t they? They asked for a response. Unless they were rhetorical questions; true, she often used those … Mark went the long way, round and up through the woody place, to get to the Observatory, thinking it might be less steep. No, it was still notably pretty steep. He waited to get his breath back sitting on a bench opposite the place where one of the Astronomers Royal, or was it Astronomer Royals, had dug a well a very long way into the ground. According to the notice, the Astronomer Royal had sat down there under the surface, literally inside the hill, it looked like, watching the sky through a telescope. The well was fearfully deep. (Smith 85-86)

Approximately 122 of the 174 words in this passage are internally focalized; in percentages, this amounts to about 70%. While the focus of the narration is clearly Mark’s inner consciousness, the way in which Mark’s thoughts are conveyed are less direct than in a direct interior monologue. This is a third person narration, and there is more interference from the narrator in that some of Mark’s thoughts are relayed through indirect discourse. The first sentence of the excerpt is straightforward omniscient description, to give the reader a situation sketch of what is happening. The second sentence could be seen as omniscient description, but could also be construed as free indirect discourse: the omniscient narrator could be relating something to the reader that Mark himself has genuinely forgotten, but it could also be—and is more likely to be—something Mark is thinking to himself. Free indirect discourse is less direct, but it does immediately zoom in on Mark’s consciousness after a short introductory sentence. Next, the narrator zooms in even further with one of Faye’s intrusions. The direct quotation both does and does not offer direct insight into Mark’s thoughts: generally speaking, it offers the reader insight into Faye’s character—or rather, how Mark perceives his mother, even after her death. Even the peculiar rhymes are explained during the chapter: “Mark knew that probably the rhyming, which was new, was because this summer he’d
looked out some of his old books from back then, the books she’d given him. Possibly it was also because he’d bought online and had been playing on repeat the Ella Fitzgerald / George and Ira Gershwin collection. Faye had had the original LPs” (Smith 94). Even though Mark himself does not appear to have much control over the regular intrusions of his mother’s voice, he is rational enough to explain how his subconscious would construct his mother. Mark shows an interest in the voice’s behavior, which explains Mark’s direct response to his mother’s rhymes: the tag question added to “Questions demanded an answer” shows that this is Mark questioning himself; the “true” shows an admission to himself. These few sentences betray the stimulus-response pattern typical for stream of consciousness: one thought prompts another, though the stimuli are not always mental. Faye’s intrusions, in fact, could be seen as both external and internal, because while they are, in a sense, a response to Mark’s own thoughts, that response is at the same time experienced by Mark as coming from a voice external to his own thought process.

Five full sentences (starting from “this was interesting”) are all internally focalized, and the reader gets an insight into Mark’s mental style: analytical, and a little old-fashioned. The next sentence is externally focalized, though the narrator adds some indirect discourse in “thinking it might be less steep” (86). Here, the word choice for “thinking” betrays that Mark’s thoughts are probably wrong—but the focus stays on Mark’s internal movements, much more than his physical ones. This is proven again by the following sentence, which is again internally focalized: “No, it was still notably pretty steep” gives away internal focalization both in the negation—Mark contradicting himself—and his particular use of adverbs, which becomes typical for his mental style. The next sentence starts with omniscient description, but veers into internal focalization at “where one of the Astronomers Royal”; this phrase in itself could yet be externally focalized, but the clause that follows—“or was it the Astronomer Royals”—gives away that this part of the sentence was not a piece of omniscient narration, but an instance of Mark questioning himself again. This procedure is repeated in the next sentence. This time there is no description of Mark’s
actions, but it starts with a repetition of what is said on the notice. Once again, though, it veers off into Mark’s internal thought process halfway through: “the Astronomer Royal had sat down there under the surface” might yet be a paraphrase of something found on the notice, but “literally inside the hill, it looked like” (italics mine) is clearly one of Mark’s thoughts, as he is imagining what it might look like. The final sentence of the paragraph is also an instance of free indirect discourse: “The well was fearfully deep” shows evidence of Mark’s mental style—the word ‘fearfully’ reflecting both Mark’s propensity for adverbs as well as old-fashioned word choice.

In this excerpt, then, Smith uses indirect interior monologue to present Mark’s inner world, while keeping the reader grounded in Mark’s external environment. Because of Mark’s external movements, narratorial interference is necessary occasionally, because the different stimuli that prompt different mental responses from Mark are rarely described verbally by Mark during his thought process. For the sake of clarity, then, the non-verbal aspects that influence Mark’s (verbal) stream of consciousness are relayed by the omniscient narrator, though the focus of the chapter remains on Mark’s inner movements. Free indirect discourse is often used to record Mark’s thoughts in a way that is fairly direct, though the past tense and the third person narration create a sense of distance. The indirect interior monologue appears here as an intricate interplay between omniscient description and internal focalization to express Mark’s actions, feelings, and thoughts.

An instance of omniscient description according to Humphrey’s definition can be found in the ‘perfect’ chapter in Hotel World. With its past tense narration, its third person heterodiegetic narrator, it perfectly fits the bill for omniscient description, while Smith’s focus on internal thought processes maintains the stream of consciousness. Most of Penny’s thoughts are recounted indirectly, using direct discourse with dialogue tags instead of free indirect discourse. This is unusual for Smith, for whom free indirect discourse appears to be the norm. By adding these instances of narratorial interference so explicitly, Smith provides some performative knowledge about the character in question. The title of the chapter, ‘perfect’, is revealing in this sense: “[t]he perfectus of
classical grammar is a kind of viewpoint from which a situation is viewed, from the outside, as if whole and complete, as opposed to the many imperfective grammatical forms which view situations from within, as ongoing and incomplete sequences” (Currie 56). Both because of her character and because of her profession—a journalist—Penny thinks of the world as if the events taking place in the present had already happened (Currie 57):

Penny sat back on the bed. The bed creaked.
That too, Penny thought. The bed had creaked.
(She thought it just like that, as if telling somebody about it afterwards, even though she was still actually there in the room, thinking it.) (Smith 131)

While the confusion between present and past is interesting to consider when thinking of the time aspect of Penny’s chapter, the discrepancy between the present moment and how Penny conceives of it—a distinction that Smith clearly wants to make—results in the explicit presence of the narrator in the chapter: “Penny thought” is a phrase that regularly pops up, making the presence of the narrator known, while also conveying Penny’s thoughts, and drawing attention to how Penny sees her experiences. The first line is clearly externally focalized, the second internally; the fact that the thought “the bed had creaked” is repeated in Penny’s thoughts marks an explicit differentiation between what the narrator shares with the reader—an external omniscient description—and what Penny thinks—internal focalization. The parenthetical sentence is commentary provided by an omniscient narrator, and serves to make the reader aware of Penny’s inner time perception.

Another consequence of her perception of the present in the past is that Penny remains quite passive about what she does. There are several instances in which she says or does things that, by the phrasing, appear entirely unintentional: “Uch, Penny heard herself say, and tried to shake it out of her head, but she couldn’t stop the thought which expanded all by itself” (128); “She made herself listen instead” (130); “Superior, she heard herself type” (130); “Oh, that’s good, she heard herself say out loud” (130). In these phrases lies again the reflexive character of Penny’s actions:
she hears and makes herself do things as if she were the object of her actions, not the subject—as if she were looking at herself from a distance even as she is going through the motions. The result of this on Penny’s stream of consciousness is a double effect of stylization: the chapter itself has a lot more external focalization than Smith usually uses, and the obvious narratorial interference increases the coherence of the text. Secondly, because of Penny’s internal logic, even the excerpts that are internally focalized are highly coherent as well, because Penny shapes her thoughts even as she thinks them. In Penny’s chapter, in other words, there is a double awareness of a narrator: Penny, as it were, is narrating her own thoughts instead of just thinking them.

The consequence of this is that Penny’s chapter lacks the spontaneity characteristic of direct interior monologue, and while there are several passages that are internally focalized, they do not follow the incoherence and spontaneity as described by Humphrey: it misses the figures of speech and symbolism that Humphrey identifies as typical for stream of consciousness, even though it does engage, to some extent, in free association. While Penny’s chapter is lacking in much of what Humphrey identifies as being typical of stream of consciousness, however, it is exactly the stylized nature of the text that gives the reader insight into Penny’s mind and character. The chapter offers a sharp contrast to the next one—the chapter narrated by Clare Wilby—but both chapters manage equally to represent their characters’ internal processes.

There are a limited number of instances of free indirect discourse in Penny’s chapter, however, and some instances of the rhetorical figures typical of stream of consciousness. As Penny is concocting an entirely fictional adventure for herself to make her dull evening at the Global Hotel more interesting, she suddenly reconsiders and moves on from her fictional adventure to the review she has to write: “That was an adventure. That—. That was—. That could have been—.” (Smith 134). The use of aposiopesis here is in line with stream of consciousness, but also with Penny’s particular consciousness, because she never actually intends to finish this story: “It didn’t matter what it could have been; she was finished with that story because she had leaned over and dragged
the computer up on to the bed” (134), and starts working on her review. The only justification for the use of an aposiopesis here, following Penny’s logic of retrospection, is that she never intends to practice that retrospection here; she is finished with her fictional adventure, and does not even intend to finish her thought. Further internal focalization—without narratorial interference—can be found incidentally, for instance in the next paragraph: “But she’d lost the words she’d been typing. She hadn’t saved anything. They were completely gone. Damn. She would have to start again. Fucking damning buggering shagging fuck” (134). The first sentence is definitely external focalization; the next two sentences could be either external focalization or free indirect discourse. The profanity in this passage is undeniably internal focalization, however, this time without narratorial interference. This again can be explained by Penny’s internal logic: she is in between stories while the profanity goes through her head, because she failed to save her progress. Once she starts a new story, however, the narrator interferes immediately: “Superior, she thought. She opened a new file and typed it in. Superior, yes” (134). In the ‘perfect’ chapter in Hotel World, Smith makes use of omniscient description instead of interior monologue (direct or indirect) because the character portrayed is herself a narrator, and maximal narratorial interference is used in this case to bring her character to life, rather than hinder the characterization. While the text is still focused on Penny’s internal thought process—thereby still deserving the label ‘stream of consciousness’—this thought process is narrated in a much more coherent way than is normally the case in Smith’s fiction. In this case, then, Humphrey’s evaluation that omniscient description offers less of an insight into the character’s consciousness is untrue: as is almost always the case with Ali Smith, the form of her prose is carefully thought out, and the medium supports the message.
3. Special techniques: poetic devices

One of the special stream of consciousness techniques discussed by Humphrey is verse form. He himself considers this technique unsuccessful, but only considers verse in a very narrow sense, as having a set meter and binding form. Poetic devices in general, however, cannot be ruled out as a possible stream of consciousness technique, especially when considering free verse, which is not bound by a set form, nor necessarily focused on one subject. In chapter one, Ali Smith’s use of poetic devices has been briefly highlighted as being a feature of Michael Smart’s stream of consciousness in *The Accidental*. In *How To Be Both*, Ali Smith again uses poetic devices to present mental content, as well as some of Humphrey’s rhetorical techniques. As she did in *The Accidental*, Smith uses this particular technique to represent disorientation. She uses it very briefly in the ‘past’ chapter of *Hotel World*, but takes it to the next level in *How To Be Both*. What Sara Wilby and Francesco Del Cossa have in common is that they are both ghosts, both incorporeal, and at the beginning and the end of their respective chapters, they are successively introduced and led out of their story world by means of poetic devices.

The first thing that strikes the reader is the lack of paragraphs or flowing sentences at the beginning of Del Cossa’s section, as well as the use of various indentations, giving the reader the impression that the verses are meandering over the page in a way that is not at all solid or graspable as it would be in a traditional prose text. This, then, is the first—and most obvious—way that might describe the introduction of Del Cossa’s chapter as a “poetic” device to write stream of consciousness: to use the definition of Terry Eagleton, poetry distinguishes itself from prose in the strictest sense that “it is the author, rather than the printer or word processor, who decides where the lines should end” (25)—something that is definitely the case on the first pages of Del Cossa’s chapter. And even though there is no set verse form here, there are other poetic elements in this particular stream of consciousness: there is definitely a distinguishable rhythm, as well as sound
effects such as assonance, alliteration, and internal rhymes. When Del Cossa’s spirit is dragged back into the mortal world, these devices perfectly reflect Del Cossa’s mental disorientation:

Ho this is a mighty twisting thing fast as a fish being pulled by its mouth on a hook if a fish could be fished through a 6 foot thick wall made of bricks or an arrow if an arrow could fly in a leisurely curl like the coil of a snail or a star with a tail if the star was shot upwards past maggots and worms and the bones and the rockford as fast coming up as the fast coming down (Smith 189)

Starting with the most obvious poetic device, the verse endings are consciously chosen to amplify Del Cossa’s disorientation: the first line breaks off in an enjambment, just as the “as a” is announcing a simile. The simile follows in the next line. Humphrey’s rhetorical stream of consciousness techniques are used here in the particular imagery of the fish on a hook; Del Cossa’s occupation as a painter becomes apparent in the minute attention to visual detail. Similar enjambments that break off lines on an article—announcing a noun—happen several more times in this passage, in “through a,” “or an,” and “or a.” An interesting enjambment occurs between “the star was shot” and “upwards past maggots”: “the star was shot” could be interpreted as a line ending, therefore the “upwards” on the following line is slightly jarring and disorienting, thus allowing the reader to experience linguistically what Del Cossa experiences physically.

Despite the lack of a set meter, there are several lines that, in terms of scansion, can be identified as dactylic tetrameters. This meter is not in any way indicated by the line endings, however; as such, the following analysis has taken some liberties for the sake of clarity:

/ ⍽ ⍽ / ⍽ ⍽ / ⍽ / ⍽ / ⍽ / ⍽
fish being pulled by its mouth on a hook if a
fish could be fished through a six foot thick wall made of bricks or an arrow if an arrow could fly in a leisurely curl like the coil of a snail or a star with a tail if the star was shot upwards past maggots and worms and the bones and the rockford as fast coming up as the fast coming down

The meter is not perfectly regular, as is evident in the paeon—"a metrical unit consisting of 1 long and 3 short syllables" (Preminger 180)—used for "arrow if an," which has one additional syllable. All in all, however, the meter is fairly regular, and it serves to accentuate the movement Del Cossa seems to be making—"falling upward at the rate of 40 horses"—as well as to partly counteract the utter chaos that is taking place in Del Cossa’s mind.

Apart from the meter, there are more musical effects used by Smith, such as assonance, alliteration, and internal rhyme. Musicality in stream of consciousness is a well-used technique, most notably by James Joyce: Liisa Dahl writes about his prose that “[a] rhythmic repetition of the motifs creates a coherence and unity in seemingly disconnected chaos” (168); the same could be said of Del Cossa’s interior monologue. Moreover, “[m]elody, now, is also the metaphor par excellence by which Bergson elucidates his concept of duration” (Posman 108). Both in theory and in practice, then, musicality and melodiousness are considered as contributing to the illusion of stream of consciousness, rather than detracting from it. Smith lavishly uses musical devices in Del Cossa’s initial monologue to guide the reader through the latter’s disorienting experience of being drawn back to the land of the living.

Taken from the example above, there is at first a literal rhyme in the repetition of ‘fish’, as well as ‘fished’ (a polyptoton). Secondly, there is plenty of assonance in these lines between ‘fish’, ‘its’, ‘if’, ‘fish’, ‘fished’, ‘six’, ‘thick’, ‘bricks’, ‘if’, and ‘in’; the same can be said of ‘pulled’, ‘hook’, ‘could’, ‘foot’, and ‘could’—these two appear to be the most common vowels in the first
three lines. An instance of consonantal rhyme can be found in “curl like the coil” (both falling on the ictus). An instance of internal rhyme can be found between ‘snail’ and ‘tail’. Apart from that, there is a repetition of words typical of stream of consciousness, such as ‘fish’, ‘star’, and ‘fast’. The last line is particularly apt for stream of consciousness, because it shows both a parallelism and a contrast: the ‘fast’ is repeated, falling on the first and third stress of the line, interspersed with the contrasting ‘up’ and ‘down’, respectively falling on the second and fourth stress. The symmetry of the line illustrates the contrastive nature of thought processes, constantly weighing one thought against another, while not losing the spontaneity and incoherence of mental processes.

What both poetry and stream of consciousness have in common is the use of symbolism, which is a very salient feature of Del Cossa’s section in general, but also notably present in her ‘poetic’ passages: free association mingles symbolism which, in this case, seems to be specifically associated with Del Cossa’s visual awareness as an artist:

same old sky? earth? again
home again home again
jiggety down through the up
like a seed off a tree with a wing
cause when the
roots on their way to the surface
break the surface they turn into stems
and the stems push up over themselves into stalks
and up at the ends of the stalks
there are flowers that open for
all the world like
eyes:
(Smith 190-191)

The metaphor of a “seed off a tree with a wing” serves to illustrate Del Cossa’s voyage as a disembodied spirit who is literally drawn back to earth from under the surface: “down through the up.” The botanical symbolism reinforces the image of two eyes on a stalk that returns later on in the story, when George and Helena paint that very image—originally taken from a Del Cossa painting.
—on a wall as Del Cossa is watching over George’s shoulder. In this stream of consciousness, however, it is Del Cossa’s own eyes that, by virtue of the imagery, open like flowers after her spirit is drawn back up from under the earth. The symbol of the eyes on the end of a stalk is a result here of the free association, and immediately provides one of the central symbols in the novel.

The symbolism prevails throughout Del Cossa’s section, and is brought back at the end, when the full-body paragraphs trail back into a poetic lurch, and Del Cossa is drawn back into the earth:

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deep as the sky and goes as deep into the
earth (the flower folds its petals down
the head droops on the stem)
through layered clay on stone
...
how
the root in the dark makes its
way under the ground
before there’s
any sign of the tree
the seed still unbroken
the star still unburnt
the curve of the eye bone
of the not yet born
(Smith 371-372)
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The metaphor is extended here by other symbolism towards the end, the “seed still unbroken” accompanied by “the star still unburnt,” as well as “the curve of the eye bone of the not yet born.” The parenthesis in this excerpt serves not as a description of physical movement—even though it is described in metaphorical terms—since Del Cossa is here, much like the parenthetical flower, metaphorically folding down her petals and drooping her head. Even though the image of the flower seems to indicate decay, however, the rest of Del Cossa’s imagery seems to suggest not a death, but rather a rebirth in reverse. The fact that the indent retreats further back to the left margin of the page could almost serve as linguistic symbolism for Del Cossa’s return to earth. The validity of this
interpretation can only be backed up by the end of Del Cossa’s section: the ‘both’ in the last lines of “to be / made and / unmade / both” ends somewhere near the middle of the page. While the imagery of the unbroken seed and the unburnt star symbolizes Del Cossa’s descent, in other words, the book’s message on “how to be both” leaves a literal margin for Del Cossa to be both ‘made and unmade’. In fact, since Del Cossa’s section can be both read as a sequel and a precursor to George’s section, the book could in theory be seen as its own never-ending story. With regard to George’s section, additionally, Del Cossa’s (metaphorical) descent into earth becomes so much more meaningful, particularly because George, at the beginning of her section, is mourning her mother, who has also gone ‘into the earth’, but is continuously coming back to life throughout George’s section, as much as Del Cossa is.

In Del Cossa’s ‘poetic’ stream of consciousness, in other words, both the poetic devices rejected by Humphrey and the rhetorical devices defined by Humphrey collaborate to give the reader insight into Del Cossa’s mental disorientation. Both in terms of mechanics and content, the poetic technique utilized by Smith appears to be extremely effective in simulating both Del Cossa’s ascent back into consciousness and her descent back into earth.
Conclusion

There are two elements in prose fiction that have always been considered essential to the genre: the ability to see into the thoughts of someone (or something) other than the self, and the necessity for the reader to follow that human being through time. While both have always been an essential part of the medium, both have been brought to the next level in the 20th century modernist movement. Following the philosophy of Henri Bergson, novelists developed new techniques that pushed the envelope on getting exclusive access to the character’s inner workings almost nonstop. This, then, also became the main theme of these works, resulting in what was later called the stream of consciousness genre. Even though both temporal fluidity and stream of consciousness were immensely popular during modernism, both lost their most of their popularity, and the far-reaching experimentation of the modernists in terms of time and internal thought representation does not occur very often anymore in contemporary literature. Ali Smith is one of the exceptions to this rule, as she, with her background as a modernist scholar, has repeatedly tried her hand at both temporal experimentation and stream of consciousness. This thesis has investigated the different ways in which Smith uses both temporal experimentation and stream of consciousness in both old and new ways, thereby not only rejuvenating the modernist experiment, but also enriching it. In order to do this, this paper has performed a close reading on three of Smith’s novels, investigating both how she thematizes time internally and externally, as well as how she uses stream of consciousness to offer the reader an exclusive insight into her characters’ minds.

The first chapter offered a methodological framework for both the analysis of internal time, as well as stream of consciousness. It started out by introducing Bergson’s philosophy on duration that was so influential for the modernist movement; from there out, the paper followed two avenues of inquiry, the first pertaining to the representation of internal time, the second pertaining to stream of consciousness. With regard to temporal analysis, first the distinction was made between
constative and performative knowledge. Secondly, to analyze the performative aspect, Harvena Richter’s terminology was introduced. With regard to stream of consciousness, Robert Humphrey’s study was used to highlight the narrative and rhetorical techniques respectively.

Using the terminology introduced in the first chapter, the second chapter performed a close reading on different excerpts in Smith’s *Hotel World*, *There But For The*, and *How To Be Both*. The distinction was made between how Smith thematizes time both outside and inside of her characters’ consciousnesses. The external thematization of time has been investigated through Smith’s use of structure and symbols, thus focusing on the performative aspect, but including several excerpts in which Smith reveals her own philosophy on time through constative statements made by her characters. Secondly, the thematization of time as a mechanism working inside of her characters’ consciousnesses was analyzed using Richter’s terminology.

The third chapter, finally, used Humphrey’s analysis to investigate how Smith uses different techniques to simulate a stream of consciousness. First, the role of audience was investigated by juxtaposing two of Humphrey’s techniques: direct interior monologue and dramatic soliloquy. A second juxtaposition was made by contrasting two of Humphrey’s other techniques: indirect interior monologue and omniscient description, thereby investigating the importance of narratorial interference. Finally, one of Humphrey’s special techniques was discussed—the poetic technique—and arguments were offered as to why this technique is more effective for Smith than Humphrey suggests in his analysis.

By investigating these two aspects in Ali Smith’s fiction, this thesis attempted to create a nuanced view on Smith’s philosophy of time, and how she reveals her characters to the reader. The close readings in chapters two and three have shown that Smith approaches many aspects in her fiction not as a matter of ‘either/or’, but a matter of ‘both/and’: Smith consciously chooses not to choose between one time frame or another, between one gender and another, between one character and another, but almost always chooses both in an attempt to illustrate the multiplicity and
complexity of the reality she is portraying. This is a theme in all of her novels, but is explored in various ways, by means of various forms and contents.

While this thesis offered a cursory insight into the many techniques that Smith applies in her fiction, as well as the resulting significations, there is still much that can be investigated in terms of temporal experiment, as well as stream of consciousness. As far as Ali Smith is concerned, she has so far mostly been investigated as a postmodern writer, but there is very little research on how modernist influences directly feed into Smith’s own experiment. Secondly, while Smith’s themes have been discussed extensively—mainly her representation of gender and sexuality—the basic formal techniques that set Smith’s prose apart from many other contemporary prose writers have yet to be investigated. Considering how much attention Smith pays to form herself, this is strange: “I do think that everything written is about the holding of structure, the force of form,” she says in a 2012 interview (Beer 143). Moreover, even though formalism seems to have lost most of its appeal as a research practice in contemporary criticism, it is not fully discredited either: in a 2004 paper on “Formalism and its Malcontents,” Jim Hansen claims that “[f]ormalism is evidently making a comeback in North American literary criticism” (666), and denies that the analysis of “the artwork’s immanent or internal architecture” need be either apolitical or ahistorical—for which formalism has been most criticized. When applying this to stream of consciousness, which has been written off by many as, first, a purely stylistic exercise, and second, a relict of modernism, one could say that both temporal experimentation and stream of consciousness make a clear statement—as an investigation into Smith’s poetics reveals. The present day interest in stream of consciousness as a technique is not only held by Smith, either, but also by contemporary writers like Ian McEwan (Saturday), José Saramago (Blindness), Michael Cunningham (The Hours) and others; the contemporary innovations made by these writers to the stream of consciousness technique deserve deeper investigation. These contemporary writers prove that stream of consciousness continues to flow on in contemporary
fiction, and much like Ali Smith, they manage to turn Forster’s “interminable tapeworm” into a challenge and a chance that leaves still many opportunities for future experiment.
Bibliography


