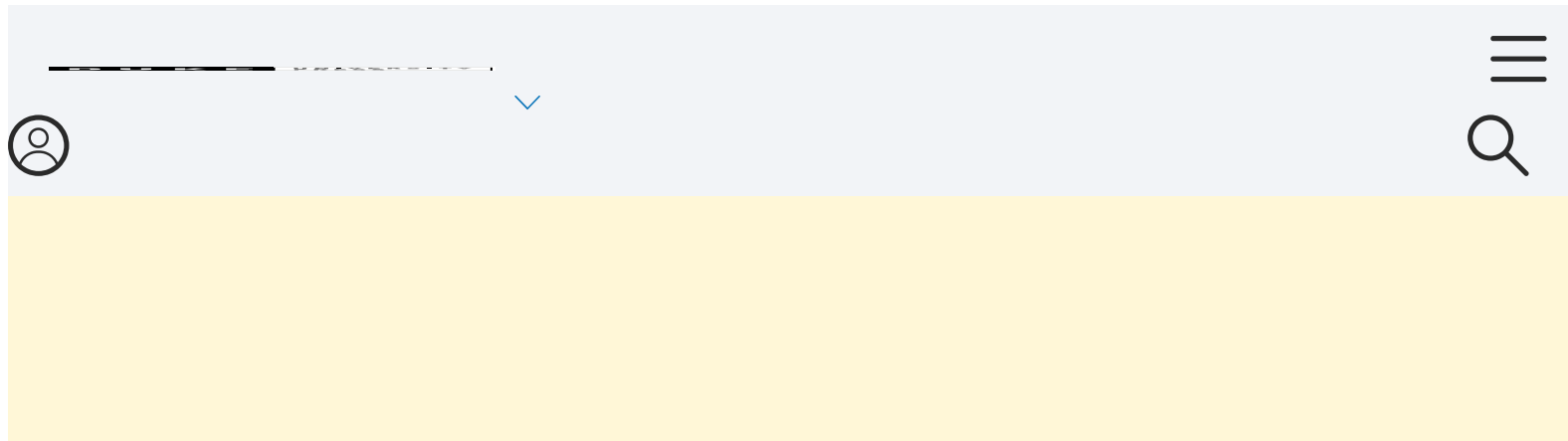


# Time Passes: Virginia Woolf, Post-Impressionism, and Cambridge Time.

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# Time Passes: Virginia Woolf, Post-Impressionism, and Cambridge Time

Fall 2003

[Ann Banfield](#)

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Virginia Woolf's experiments begin with Impressionism. But knowing

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Roger Fry's criticism of Impressionism as analyzing commonsense appearances but destroying design, she adopted Fry's dualist aesthetic. Paul Cézanne's "Post-Impressionism" constructed a geometry in Impressionism's sensible world, combining "vision" and "design." Literature's counterpart to the geometry of spatial relations were the temporal relations of Cambridge time philosophy. Contrary to a common assumption, Woolf adopted not Henri Bergson's philosophy but G. E. Moore and Bertrand Russell's realism. Time passes not as *durée* but as a series of still moments. Temporal relations connect moments as spatial ones unify Impressionism's atomized color, with the mathematical theory of continuity playing a crucial role. Woolf's literary impressionism developed through short story experiments, each a moment, an Impressionist canvas. Katherine Mansfield was the decisive influence yet exemplified Impressionism's limits. "The mere expression of things adequately and sensitively, is not enough," Woolf quotes Mansfield. As the painter transformed vision into design, Woolf turned story into novel via continuity of moments through "the interlude." According to this hypothesis, "The Window" and "The Lighthouse" in *To the Lighthouse* are short stories uncannily reminiscent of Mansfield's "Prelude" and "At the Bay." The interlude "Time Passes" transforms story into novel by relating past to future in a time-series, creating a post-impressionist "modern fiction."

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