

Three Women. A Kiss. A Life. On the Queer Writing of Time in Organization¹

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In this paper, a queer approach to feminine writing is related to the development of new female subject positions through conceiving of other understandings of time. To conceptualize this relationship, the novel *The Hours* by Michael Cunningham is analysed and interpreted as a queer story of how women — writing, reading and enacting a novel — acquire an opening to a life that breaks with the heteronormative conception of time. This one-day novel that interweaves the lives of three women in a multiple assemblage offers the ‘formula’ of the triptych, which can be considered a primary form of life as multiplicity. Interconnecting the writings of Virginia Woolf, Michael Cunningham, and Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, the cartographic analysis zooms in on three aspects of time by addressing respectively the motifs of the party, the kiss and the day: time as pause, time as exquisite moment and time as affect. By re-establishing the relationship between writing, time and the becoming-woman of life, the paper aims to indicate that queer writing can help to re-imagine new possibilities for (work) life.

Keywords: time, feminine writing, Virginia Woolf, multiplicity, haecceity, triptych, queer theory, kiss, cartography

‘They’re all here, aren’t they? The ghosts.
The ghosts are assembling for the party!’
—Julia in *The Hours* (Hare, 2003, p. 84)

I think I might have a first sentence for this paper’. Such an opening sentence would echo the way Virginia Woolf ends a quarrel with her husband in the movie *The Hours* — ‘Leonard, I believe I may have a first sentence’ (Hare, 2003, p. 8) — so she can squeeze out of household matters and other expectations, and get time to write the concept of time anew. It is this redefinition of time in a becoming perspective and the way it intersects with inventing styles of writing and living that I believe offers an ‘opening’ in the form of an affirmative politics (Braidotti, 2013), which combines a hopeful analysis (Highmore, 2009; Braidotti, 2013) with a passionate politics (hooks, 2000)² to counter the feeling of deadlock and of ‘losing momentum’ (hooks, 2000) in which feminist writing — especially gendered studies of organization and management (Phillips *et al.*, 2014) — is often said to find itself. In this paper, I follow the possibilities, which the opening created by a post-feminist politics³ of time gives, to delve into the idea that ‘[w]omen qua women [...] have a unique relationship to time outside conventional, male-centered forms’ (Felski, 2000, p. 3) and, consequently, to re-establish the relationship between writing, time and the becoming-woman of life. Thus, I am interested in ways to connect feminine writing with queer(ing) life,⁴ and thus in the question of how to break through heteronormative concepts of time and how to provide ‘other’ concepts and practices that can infiltrate and interrupt (Phillips *et al.*, 2014) our understandings of organization which differently regulate relationships between family, work, identity and daily life.

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In the interplay between the performance of gender and the experimental writings of feminine writing and related genres, this paper tries to experiment⁵ with, or at least disengage from, the usual frame/form/style of writing which follows the masculine form of linearity and abstraction, and of coming quickly to the point — what can be called the genre of molar text and royal science (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987). As I write, genders and genres are already at work. Queering the performance and performativity of writing cannot be seen as limited to the literary world; it is equally, if not more, relevant in our academic texts and speeches. Therefore, in this text I unfold a style of assembling, of connecting quotes and texts that might disturb the usual expectations around logics of argumentation and linearity, and which might arouse another intensity of thinking. Or maybe not. Reviewers of papers tend to ask authors to pack the start of papers with references to upcoming core contributions. The three reviews I received formed a nice triptych: each of them asked me to do things ‘up front’, to provide some ‘clarity of purpose’ and briefly justify how I write. While these are valid and valuable points, they also try to get this writing back on the ‘straightforward’ track of the genre of linearity. And from there to heteronormativity and ‘malestream’ writing. Thus I had to refuse those suggestions, even if this way of writing might not work for some readers.

Mostly, writing will be enacted through the style figure of triptych (Deleuze, 2003), which through its ways of connection and juxtaposition can be considered a primordial form of writing multiplicity (Steyaert, 2012). The text is thus ‘structured’ through multiple triptychs, a format mostly known from painting, consisting of a panel with three sections. Triptychs have been used as altar paintings or in stained glass windows since the Middle Ages; they gained central importance in the Byzantine Era and Early Renaissance (in paintings by, for instance, Hans Memling and Hieronymus Bosch) and the Baroque (Peter Paul Rubens), and were revived during the twentieth century in the work of the Irish-born painter Francis Bacon. Though a few people within Organization Studies have attempted to practise triptychal structures, including Heather Höpfl (2005), Pierre Guillet de Monthoux (2002) and René ten Bos (2011), it remains a minor form, one that breaks with the mainstream forms of representation (Steyaert, 2012). Triptychs, I argue, disrupt binary thinking and should not be approached from left to right (or vice versa); rather they require a back-and-forth, a looking with repetitive side glances, a non-linear, cyclical reading that engages with the sensation of movement, intensity and rhythm (rather than representation). I assume that the three parts of the triptych, which revolve around the party, the kiss, and the (every)day, can help me make a cartographic analysis (Beyes and Steyaert, 2012; Lohmann and Steyaert, 2006) that evokes and gives colour to the various affects, intensities and rhythms of *The Hours*.

Therefore, this text is ‘structured’ along a dazzling range of interconnected triptychs; reading it is (hopefully) like wandering through a hall of mirrors. A first triptych presents the etymological relationships between gender, genre and generativity to argue that no writing on gender can be genre-less. Through this meeting of gender, genre and generativity, I propose the idea that when writing takes on a taste of joy we can imagine a queering of life. In a second triptych, I develop the conceptual prerogatives by situating and connecting the writings of Virginia Woolf, Michael Cunningham, and Gilles Deleuze/Félix Guattari,⁶ and their post-feminist reception (Buchanan and Colebrook, 2000), as they all centre on Mrs. Dalloway. Thus I offer a bold juxtaposition of and interconnection between post-feminist, queer and Deleuzian (re)sources. The analysis consists of a triplet of triptychs: taking the triptych of Cunningham’s novel — Mrs. Brown, Mrs. Woolf and Mrs. Dalloway — as a basis, which becomes multiplied through the versions of Woolf’s and Cunningham’s novel and Stephen Daldry’s film (and David Hare’s screenplay), the analysis zooms in on three aspects of time as I explore three motifs: the party, the kiss and the day. Thus I sketch a triptych on time and the pause of a party; one on time and the exquisite moment that a kiss can provide; and one on the (every)day and its affects. The contribution of this analysis is to fabulate or invent female life not as limited to (the body of) one woman’s story but as an assemblage of interwoven lives which alters the conception of time, and with time, brings an affirmative conception of life and its affects. I then develop this re-writing of time by considering ways to conceptualize time in organization, after which the writing fades out.

Gender/genre/generativity: On (queer) writing

Connect gender with genre on the one side and generativity on the other side: Gender in the middle of a triptych. In setting up such a threefold relationship between gender, genre and generativity, feminine writing takes on a queer intensity, as a feminist scripture cannot remain disconnected from queer approaches (Colebrook, 2009; Marinucci, 2010). Writing on gender, any writing cannot be genre-less. And, if writing takes difference fully into account, a queering of life becomes imaginable and something different and new can emerge: 'the conditions of the queer and the conditions of the new are the same: to counter-actualize the present, to repeat the intensities and encounters that have composed us, but not as they are *for us*' (Colebrook, 2009, p. 20). In French, the word genre expresses the immediate link between writing and sexuality, between genre and gender: genre is one translation of the word gender, referring to whether a noun is categorized as feminine, masculine or neutral. Indicating a gender is one way of providing a class, of categorizing, of pointing at the word's kind, its genus. These orderings are never absolute; some languages include up to 20 genders. However, genre — one of the few English words taken from French that is still pronounced in the French way — can also be used to refer to a kind of literary or artistic work, a style of expressing oneself in writing, in music or any other artistic form. Thus I hold that writing on gender cannot be genre-less. Nor can the writing of genres be without considering gender. The chiasm of sexuality and literature, the crossing over of gender/genre forms a virtuality from which many new genres of gender and genders of genre can be generated.

And, indeed, as we cross to the other side of the gender triptych, we also discover that *generate* is etymologically derived from genus. Genus, gender is by itself inventive, pure geniality. Aha! Now, lest you think I have guessed wrong or just been carried away, let me explain: geniality is derived not from genus but from genius, meaning a spirit of festivity. If invention is what we want writing to do, we might have to combine a crossing-over with a spirit of enjoyment. And does the crossing-over of genus and genius not bring us to the possibilities of queerness? Is queering not basically transforming the orders of gendering through/with/in a spirit of festivity? Writing: inventing life, a life is queering it. On and up to the party, then.

Woolf/Cunningham/Deleuze: On (queering) a life

The reinvention of genre to re-think gender is what Virginia Woolf brings to life for us in several of her works, especially *Mrs. Dalloway*. Even if *To the Lighthouse* is often cited as her finest novel (Schiff, 2004), *Mrs. Dalloway* is considered generative and inventive as a novel that takes place over the course of one day. Her inventive engagement with the genre of the one-day novel is closely related to giving insight into the ordinary hours and prosaic time of living, 'conveying the experience of being alive' (Schiff, 2004, p. 379). Furthermore, the genre of the one-day novel connects the experience of one day with that of one's whole life. The gendered structure of life is not one that leads to a kind of resolution, or a climax, but one that redefines the time of one's life through its pauses, its exquisite moments and the ordinary hours of a day. Cunningham (2000, p. xx) who wrote an introduction to Woolf's *The Voyage Out*, underlines this precisely:

She was revolutionary in her shunning of the outwardly dramatic [...], and her insistence on the inwardly dramatic — her implied conviction that what's important in a life, what remains at its end, is less likely to be its supposed climaxes than its unexpected moments of awareness, often arising out of unremarkable experience, so deeply personal they can rarely be explained.

Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* is 'about what it feels to be alive — to be a self passing through the moments and hours of a day' (Schiff, 2004, p. 364). As Cunningham (2000, p. xx) comments, 'Woolf was then and remains today unparalleled in her ability to convey the sensations and complexities of the experience known as being alive. Any number of writers manage the big moments beautifully; few do as much

with what it feels like to live through an ordinary hour on a usual day'. Cunningham picks up this thread spun by Woolf and focuses on how this entails a different understanding of time; in fact he chooses as his title *The Hours*, which was the working title for *Mrs. Dalloway*. This choice nicely reflects Woolf's enthusiasm for these ideas, as she wrote in her diary in 1923: 'I have no time to describe my plan. I should say a good deal about The Hours, & my discovery; how I dig out beautiful caves behind my characters; I think that gives exactly what I want; humanity, humour, depth. The idea is that the cave shall connect, & each comes to daylight at the present moment' (Woolf, 1980, p. 263). Thus Woolf is not interested in the being of her characters, but in their becoming through interconnections. Woolf's modernist writing remains very genuine for understanding the fluidity and multiplicity of life becoming, a concept that Cunningham continues, imitates, paraphrases, and partially transforms by 'extending and improvising on Woolf's exploration of the fragmentation, complexity, and multiple nature of the self' (Schiff, 2004, p. 371).

To thicken Woolf's ideas on becoming and Cunningham's improvisation which makes this becoming a collective force, it is useful to consider how Deleuze and Guattari pick up exactly this idea as they invoke Woolf's style 'as exemplary of a new mode of becoming' to develop one of the 'most audacious and contentious claims regarding the notion of becoming and its relationship to women' (Colebrook, 2000a, p. 1). They are interested in Woolf's writing less because she is a woman writing and more because her style helps us to change our understanding and practice of writing itself: '[w]hen Deleuze and Guattari applaud the style of Woolf, they do so not because she is a woman writer but because she *writes woman*' (Colebrook, 2000a, p. 2; italics in original). It might be a good tactic for the women's movement to have a so-called molar politics — grounded in a type of order that moves towards an increasingly equilibrated, homogeneous and normalized state (Bonta and Protevi, 2004, p. 116); instead, Woolf mobilizes her style to move towards a molecular sensibility which is tied to a micropolitics of perception and affect and which brings us 'a world of unconscious micropcepts, unconscious affects, rarefied divisions' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p. 220), operating differently from civic and political arenas (Conley, 2005). In the upcoming analysis, I will consider the kiss as one such event, one that deterritorializes, as a queer moment that gives us access to the affective cartographies of living life through becoming woman.

The connection of Woolf/Deleuze works because for both Woolf and Deleuze, 'woman is an infinitive, a process or event, a speaking position perhaps but not an identity' (Driscoll, 2000, p. 80). What the work of Michael Cunningham adds (and makes this triptych of 'and, and, and ...' in my view potentially impactful), is to iterate what can be called a form of queer writing. Not only is Cunningham's study a complex re-iteration of Woolf's novel *Mrs. Dalloway*, which he himself called an improvisation (Schiff, 2004); in addition he gives the novel a sequel, a rewrite through which we can imagine the history of women's emancipation as centred around the possibility of rewriting time, and in the end, reframing matters of life and death, happiness and suffering.

Cunningham's experimenting with and queering of time is connected to a (usual) focus on the concept of family which is thus not new for him but acquires a new dimension as he takes issue with Woolf's themes and writing style. *The Hours* is his first novel in which the unfolding lives of women are central, even if the role of mothers and mothering has been present (and fathers absent) most of the time in earlier novels. The triptych of novels which precede *The Hours* — *Golden States*, *A Home at the End of the World* and *Flesh and Blood* — 'all chart the trajectory of male protagonists from unhappy nuclear families to "alternative" family arrangements' (Young, 2003, p. 14). For Cunningham, family is an ambiguous concept in these novels, and I believe that in *The Hours* the concept of family evolves and gains affirmative possibilities through the different ways that time and history are conceived. The conception of becoming is related to the ways that traditional conceptions of family life are resisted and experimented with. While Cunningham connects his novel with Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* in ways that are quite explicit and unusual, Young (2003) notes that her influence is already present in his earlier work, which is equally informed by the themes of family, motherhood, and troubled sexuality, and the metaphors of domesticity and water.

To use Woodhouse's (1998) categorization of gay literature, Cunningham's work belongs to the post-Stonewall fiction literature; together with that of Leavitt and Hollinghurst, Woodhouse labels

it 'assimilative' in comparison to the 'transgressive' or 'queer' variety. In the assimilative version of gay fiction, the characters happen to be gay and seem to appeal to a broad audience; these novels could be seen as 'the sort of book you could give your smart straight friends' (Woodhouse, 1998, p. 182). In contrast, transgressive novels, for instance, those of Dennis Cooper, form more radical narratives, shocking and extreme; therefore, they require readers to engage with marginalized, estranged and queer forms of living. Assimilative fiction has been criticized for not being able to present difference; characters can only temporarily establish alternative families, 'leaving the gay protagonists isolated and often wretched' (Young, 2003, p. 16) and are therefore easily overruled by the heterosexual norm.

Even if it is obvious that one does not experience the same kind of estrangement and shock from reading Cunningham as reading Cooper, Woodhouse's classification⁷ can itself be criticized for not being queer at all, for somehow reinforcing stable and rigid categories of novels, authors and audiences as either gay or straight. Young suggests an alternative and less derogatory interpretation of the assimilative label; he takes into account the understanding of sexuality as fluid, destabilizing fixed identities of homo- or heterosexuality. This allows us to consider Young's next question — can we 'recognize Cunningham's novels as speaking to contemporary notions of sexuality as polymorphous' (Young, 2003, p. 19) — and his suggestion that 'Cunningham's novels demand a re-evaluation of the fiction termed assimilative' (p. 21). Cunningham himself sees *The Hours* as 'about three women of ambivalent sexuality' (Wroe, 1999) and suggests that 'strict demarcations between queer and straight are problematic and that sexual orientation is complex and fluid' (Schiff, 2004, p. 368).

The party: Pausing time

The first sentence of Woolf's novel reads, 'Mrs. Dalloway said she would buy the flowers herself' (Woolf, 1992, p. 3). In the movie, this sentence immediately becomes tripled: we see Virginia's pen scratch this sentence into a notebook, hear Mrs. Brown read the sentence as she lies in bed stretching out the morning a bit before getting up, and see Clarissa Vaughan, alias Mrs. Dalloway, shout this sentence to her girlfriend Sally Lester, likewise still sleeping after working a night shift and suddenly remembering what she forgot: 'What? What flowers? Oh shit! I forgot!' (Hare, 2003, p. 10). After the opening sequence of Virginia Woolf's death, we see Dan, Mrs. Brown's husband, come home with flowers which he had bought himself for his own birthday. We also see old flowers in the houses of Woolf and Dalloway that need to be refreshed. The flowers thus announce the festive character of the day-to-come; the parties create pauses that (help to) reconsider the relationship between living and dying. The flowers, the parties counter the perspective of dying and death that encircles life and living, and how we can learn to love it.

To connect the lives of the three women, Cunningham interweaves the narrative perspectives of Mrs. Dalloway, Mrs. Brown and Mrs. Woolf by focusing on a party as a festive *leitmotiv*. The parties-to-come form a red thread that assembles the various lives into the becoming of a life: in one day, we see a prize ceremony, a gathering that may make everyday into a party, and a birthday party:

Mrs. Dalloway: 'Tonight she will give her *party*. She will fill the rooms of her apartment with food and flowers, with people of wit and standing' (p. 13).⁸

Mrs. Woolf: 'She washes her face and does not look, certainly not this morning, not when the work is waiting for her and she is anxious to join it the way she might join a *party* that had already started downstairs (...) She, Virginia, could be a girl in a new dress, about to go down to a party, about to appear on the stairs, fresh and full of hope' (p. 31).

Mrs. Brown: 'She will make up for breakfast by baking Dan a perfect *birthday* cake; by ironing the good cloth; by setting a big bouquet of flowers (roses?) in the middle of the table, and surrounding it with gifts. That should compensate, shouldn't it?' (p. 38; my italics).

Mrs. Woolf does not attend a party; she imagines going down to join a party, yet she would prefer to attend one (in something like the same way she would like to live in the city rather than in the countryside), as we learn when she talks to her sister Vanessa Bell: 'Tonight. Oh, just some insufferable dinner not even you could envy'; to which Virginia replies: 'But I do' (Hare, 2003, p. 80). Having a party is something to be accounted for; a party is a way to contrast the anxieties that lurk into our everyday lives, as Mrs. Brown tries to comfort her son Richie: 'Don't worry, honey. Everything's fine. We're going to have a wonderful party. We've made Daddy such a nice cake' (p. 193). Later, Mrs. Brown admits that she is not able to meet the expectations of a party, as she tells her friend Kitty: 'Oh, it's about this woman who's incredibly — well, she's a hostess and she's incredibly confident and she's going to give a party. And, maybe because she's confident, everyone thinks she's fine ... but she isn't' (Hare, 2003, p. 47).

Similarly, Richard is ambivalent about going to the party in honour of his life work, as parties do not set you free from going through the hours of your life:

Richard Brown: I don't think I can make it to the party, Clarissa.

Clarissa Vaughan: You don't have to go to the party, you don't have to go to the ceremony, you don't have to do anything you don't want to do. You can do as you like.

Richard Brown: But I still have to face the hours, don't I? I mean, the hours after the party, and the hours after that ... (Hare, 2003, p. 102).⁹

Indeed, Richard, deadly ill, confronts Clarissa, as he tells her, 'Oh, Mrs. Dalloway ... Always giving parties to cover the silence' (Hare, 2003, p. 26). This becomes mirrored when Virginia tells her husband, 'You do not find peace by avoiding life, Leonard' (Hare, 2003, p. 96).

Parties are pauses, silences which connect the time of life with the ungraspable coming of death. Parties are crowded with ghosts. In Cunningham's novel (and the movie) the party comes after a prelude that narrates the way Virginia Woolf writes a heartbreaking letter to her husband Leonard Woolf, and then fills her pockets with stones, taking her own life by stepping into a river and being swallowed by the stream of water. Taking the consequences of queerness into consideration, there is no party that is mere merrymaking; rather the motif of party is connected with dying and death. As each of the three women (tries to) wake up and start a day dedicated (as) to a party, there will be an echo of the prelude as we will be confronted with death and three suicides (or attempts) in the hours to come. Mrs. Brown will consider a suicide (by taking pills) and will dream of being swallowed by the water in a variation of how Virginia Woolf must have been taken by the flow, Mrs. Dalloway will see how her friend Richard jumps through the window and Mrs. Woolf will contemplate who is to die in the novel she is writing.

At the end of the day, the official party will be cancelled, yet an unexpected guest will arrive as (we learn that) Mrs. Brown is the mother of Richard, and what might look like a funeral commemoration becomes a small gathering of two women connected by the death of their son/friend. But above all, there is an acknowledgement that life goes on, and, as it goes on, it can be celebrated:

Here, then, is the party, still laid; here are the flowers, still fresh; everything ready for the guests, who have turned out to be only four. Forgive us, Richard. It is, in fact, a party, after all. It is a party for the not-yet-dead; for the relatively undamaged; for those who for mysterious reasons have the fortune to be alive (p. 226).

The party motif, and its relationship to time as transitional between matters of life and death, thus offers a first entry into the cartography of that one day, one with contrasting colours of life versus death, party versus suicide, flowers and cake versus tears and decay. The prelude/party/pause gives a taste of how the fabulation of female life, which is not limited to (the body of) one woman's story and interweaves between three narratives, brings an affirmative conception of life as affect. This conception does not turn a blind eye to death and dying but rather steals time back from it: life as stolen time. On the contrary, life is affirmed through death and dying as both Mrs. Woolf and Clarissa Vaughan point out:

Someone has to die in order that the rest of us should value life more. It's contrast. (Virginia Woolf)
 That's what we do. That's what people do. They stay alive for each other. (Clarissa Vaughan) (Hare, 2003, p. 30).

The kiss: An exquisite moment

Now to the second triptych: a triptych of kisses. The next step in the cartographic analysis of *The Hours*, which describes the affects, the becomings of the three parallel and interwoven lives of three women, is to zoom in on the various kisses that relate to the various becomings; rather than point at the meaning of these kisses, I include them for their intensity and for what they make possible for the becoming of each of these women, more in terms of affect than in terms of identity, in terms of moment rather than plot. As each of the three stories contains a kiss between two women, it is clear that their affects differ, whether one relates those kisses to the more liberal Bloomingdale era of Virginia Woolf, the more conservative post-World War II period in Los Angeles, or the post-AIDS era in New York's Greenwich Village at the turn of the Millennium. Yet, it is their interconnected intensity that alters the possibilities of the becoming-woman of life.

The series of kisses that Cunningham introduces refer back to the legendary kiss in *Mrs. Dalloway*, a kiss between Mrs. Dalloway and Sally Seton whose meaning has been abundantly analysed, if not over-analysed, mostly in terms of lesbian sexuality or childhood friendship:

She and Sally fell a little behind. Then came the most exquisite moment of her whole life passing a stone urn with flowers in it. Sally stopped; picked a flower; kissed her on the lips. The whole world might have turned upside down! The others disappeared; there she was alone with Sally. And she felt that she had been given a present, wrapped up, and told just to keep it, not to look at it — a diamond, something infinitely precious, wrapped up, which, as they walked (up and down, up and down), she uncovered, or the radiance burnt through, the revelation, the religious feeling! (Woolf, 1992, pp. 38–9).

More than 30 years later, Mrs. Dalloway remembers the kiss as 'the most exquisite moment of her whole life'; this makes it important 'to investigate the moment of the kiss specifically as a moment, a moment that is counter to the normal flow of time in narrative' (Haffey, 2010, p. 138). Haffey says such an interpretation is also in line with the vocabulary of Woolf's novel which abundantly uses the words moment, moments and momentary, and which underlines how Clarissa Dalloway again and again 'plunged into the very heart of the moment' (Woolf, 1992, p. 40). Therefore, queer theorists have increasingly connected the kiss in relationship to different understandings of temporality. The kiss no longer forms a momentary interruption in the ways their lives follow 'an inevitable movement towards marriage and reproduction' (Haffey, 2010, p. 137), but offers a queer moment where multiple temporalities brush up against one another (Halberstam, 2005). The kiss questions the cultural narratives which usually reflect a sense of time that correlates with a heterosexual logic.

In Cunningham's version, the kiss becomes multiplied — he 'essentially mass-produces the kiss' (Schiff, 2004, p. 370), again a triptych of kisses. First the kiss between Mrs. Woolf and her sister Vanessa: 'She thinks, suddenly, of Vanessa's kiss. The kiss was innocent — innocent enough — but it was also full of something not unlike what Virginia wants from London, from life; it was full of a love complex and ravenous, ancient, neither this nor that' (pp. 209–10).

Clarissa Vaughan is especially taken by a brief kiss when she visits Barbara in the flower shop; the kiss connects the present with experiences of the past; in the ephemeral moment of the kiss, she is brought back to sensations from when she was five or six, stretching the present through the connections of memories of branches, feelings of excitement, love and reverence that make her happy and hopeful today:

Her lips touch Barbara's skin and the moment is suddenly, unexpectedly perfect. She stands in the dim, deliciously cool little shop that is like a temple, solemn in its abundance, its bunches of dried

flowers hanging from the ceiling and its rack of ribbons trailing against the back wall. There was that branch tapping the windowpane and there was another, though she'd been older, five or six, in her own bedroom, this branch covered with red leaves, and she can remember thinking back reverently, even then, to that earlier branch, the one that had seemed to excite the music downstairs; she remembers loving the autumn branch for reminding her of the earlier branch, tapping against the window of a house to which she would never return, which she could not otherwise remember in any of its particulars. Now she is here, in the flower shop, where poppies drift white and apricot on long, hairy stems (pp. 24–5).

Finally, the kiss between Mrs. Brown and Kitty which interrupts their lives of impersonating women captured by household tasks and child-rearing:

They are each impersonating someone. They are weary and beleaguered; they have taken on such enormous work. Kitty lifts her face, and their lips touch. They both know what they are doing. They rest their mouths, each on the other. They touch their lips together, but do not quite kiss (p. 110).

In the movie, the kiss comes as Kitty tells of her problems with an upcoming operation and acknowledges that 'I don't think you can call yourself a woman until you're a mother' (Hare, 2003, p. 49); as she breaks out in tears, Laura embraces her, but afterwards Kitty quickly takes on her role as woman of the fifties, as if nothing has happened. Only her son, Richie, has observed this passage, and as he runs off, Laura sees her not-so-successful cake and dumps it in the bin. As we can read in the novel, there is a series, a triptych here: '[t]he child, the cake, the kiss, it got down somehow to these three elements' (p. 142). Connecting this intensive moment of the kiss with her life as mother and housewife, this experience will change completely the course of her life, a 'turning point' within the everyday (Samelius *et al.*, 2014). As she contemplates suicide later during the day, she makes a plan to leave her family after her second child is born. Instead of death, she chooses life: 'It would be wonderful to say you regretted it. It would be easy. But what does it mean? What does it mean to regret when you have no choice? It's what you can bear. There it is. No one is going to forgive me. It was death. I chose life' (Hare, 2003, p. 119).

Thus the kiss can be considered an exquisite moment (Haffey, 2010), not so much an interruption as an interplay with the unfolding of the hours and minutiae of our days and nights; molecular moments, tiny events that bring our lives into a different orbit altogether. In short, the kiss can be extended to the way life is connected to telling moments, as the following triptych illustrates:

Mrs. Dalloway talking to her daughter Julia:

I remember one morning getting up at dawn, there was such a sense of possibility. You know, that feeling? And I remember thinking to myself: So, this is the beginning of happiness. This is where it starts. And of course there will always be more. It never occurred to me it wasn't the beginning. It was happiness. It was the *moment*. Right then (Hare, 2003, p. 87).¹⁰

Or Mrs. Woolf, as she connects this to writing:

This is one of the most singular experiences, waking on what feels like a good day, preparing to work but not yet actually embarked. At this *moment*, there are infinite possibilities, whole hours ahead (p. 34).

For Mrs. Brown, the moment is not so exquisite, as even then it forms a sensation of flow, as (un)real as a ghost:

She might, at this *moment*, be nothing but a floating intelligence; not even a brain inside a skull, just a presence that perceives, as a ghost might. Yes, she thinks, this is probably how it must feel to be a ghost (p. 215).

This may be the most important translation Cunningham makes. Mrs. Brown may be only the reader of Woolf's novel, but she takes up the challenge; in the context of the 1950s that is a real provocation. Her decision to break out of the heteronormative logic of her life opens the possibilities

for the kind of queer life Clarissa Vaughan can live 40 years later. Although Clarissa lives in an open lesbian relationship where 'they are always so generous with kisses' (p. 89), she remembers, like in Mrs. Dalloway, her kiss with Richard Brown 30 years earlier, a kiss that brings to the moment such an intensity that the feeling of it will linger forever:

'You kissed me beside a pond'
 'Ten thousand years ago'
 'It's still happening'
 'In a sense, yes'
 'In reality. It's happening in that present. This is happening in this present' (p. 66).

And then a bit later, they realize how past and present are always connected; the kiss brings a time of a different quality:

'Here we are. Don't you think?'
 'Pardon me?'
 'We're middle-aged, and we're young lovers standing beside a pond. We're everything, all at once. Isn't it remarkable' (p. 67).

In the kiss, the present and the time of life are connected, a timeless present:

What lives undimmed in Clarissa's mind more than three decades later is a kiss at dusk on a patch of dead grass, and a walk around a pond as mosquitoes droned in the darkening air. There is still that singular perfect, and it's perfect in part because it seemed, at the time, so clearly to promise more. Now she knows: That was the moment right then. There had been no other (p. 98).

As Mrs. Dalloway saw her kiss (with Sally Seton) as the most exquisite moment of her life, Cunningham reminds us of that feeling when his Mrs. Woolf contemplates Clarissa's feelings:

Clarissa Dalloway will have loved a woman, yes; another woman, when she was young. She and the woman will have had a kiss, one kiss, like the singular enchanted kisses in fairy tales, and Clarissa will carry the memory of that kiss, the soaring hope of it, all her life. She will never find a love like that which the lone kiss seemed to offer (p. 210).

The day: The time of affect

We can now connect this analysis of the party and the kiss in general with the motif of ordinary days, their hours and the other kinds of affect they might bring. As we can follow the rhizomatic connections¹¹ between the three women, in this third part of the cartographic analysis I document how Cunningham succeeds in moving from the level of identities and now begins to paint the collective becoming female of life, a life. Consequently, his descriptions of each day for each of the women read like mappings of affects; they come with colours, intensities and rhythms that constitute the everyday minutiae of their lives, rather than specific meanings. Mrs. Woolf, Mrs. Brown and Mrs. Dalloway are not to be seen as characters in a classic understanding of that word; instead each forms assemblages: what Deleuze and Guattari (1987) call 'haecceities' and not 'subjectivities'; they also refer to them as intense feelings of transition (Kennedy, 2000). Women's lives are constituted through qualitative multiplicities as we sense them in the affective landscapes or cartographies of language and writing. Cunningham constitutes the three women by describing the quality and the sensations that are part and parcel of the minute-to-minute unfolding of one day 'out' of each of their lives. The opening passages of each of the characters are painted through nuances of colour, rhythm and aliveness as each of them wakes up and begins the day. Each passage gives us a different take on the experience of flow.

First, Mrs. Dalloway's cartography (from pages 9 to 11) brings a sensation of flow and liquidity; among the words we read are 'the edge of pool, turquoise water, liquid nets of sun wavering, plunge,

chill, immersion, thrilling, full of living, new life, to prosper, prosperous, re-emerging, full of possibility, shock'. The affect that 'constitutes' Mrs. Dalloway can be summarized in the sentence 'What a thrill, what a shock, to be alive on a morning in June, almost scandalously privileged, with a simple errand to run'. Indeed for Mrs. Dalloway everything is 'so fine and scrubbed'. Yes, she waits to take the plunge, and experiences this moment-before, being 'at the threshold as she would at the edge of pool'; indeed, she is able to delay 'for a moment the plunge, the quick membrane of chill, the plain shock of immersion'. And even if everything seems extra-ordinary, there is this feeling of (accepting) being ordinary, yet being called Mrs. Dalloway (and nicknamed as one of the main characters in feminist literature) makes her feel artistic as well.

This affective passage, with its great sense of possibility where life and flow seem to immerse, and a feeling of presence that could be called duration (Hughes, 2013), can be summarized as 'She could do what she liked'. This sense of flow is in the foreground, yet there is no lack of context: the city of New York is described through words like 'racket and stern brown decrepitude', and 'bottomless decline'. These features of difficulty in life do not seem to harm the sense of aliveness: Mrs. Dalloway feels like a figure in a cartoon, one that re-emerges again and again, unscarred, ready for more.

For Mrs. Woolf, Cunningham creates a summative sense that 'She knows she can get up and write'. Indeed, her cartography (from pages 29 and 30) is much more ambivalent, between flow and danger; she dreams of 'a park impossible verdant ... green beyond green ... the seat of mystery' and refers in fluid terms to 'something alive and ancient, exulting'; she then 'floats through it, a feather of perception, unbodied, at the edge of a clear pool, muses into the water, liquid life'. This sense of fluid becoming is part of her dreaming; for Mrs. Woolf, being awake brings with it struggles to keep up with the expectations that she will manage the household, and overcome the anxieties of her illness. Placed against the nocturnal appearance of her house, however, her writing apparently keeps her hopeful on what seems like a good day, something that has 'to be treated carefully': 'This is one of the most singular experiences, waking on what feels like a good day, preparing to work but not yet embarked. At this moment, there are infinite possibilities, whole hours ahead' (p. 34). Indeed Virginia Woolf's time is one of being creative, as long as she has the energy to do so in those hours.

Mrs Brown's cartography (on pages 37 to 38) reads as one full of tensions, between the expectations of society and her own desire to read, 'to lose herself', to not give in to the time of 'the clock, this hideous thing'. In a remote distance, she hears 'some sort of pulsating machinery; a steady pounding like a gigantic mechanical heart', making her realize she has to get up. Still, Mrs. Brown also experiences a sense of fluid becoming, stemming from reading *Mrs. Dalloway*, which is why she gives in, again and again, and reads yet another page. When she reads of Mrs. Dalloway taking the plunge, she is

... taken by a wave of feeling, a sea-swell that rises from under her breast and buoys her, floats her gently, as if she were a sea creature thrown back from the sand where it had beached itself — as if she had been returned from a realm of crushing gravity to her true medium, the such and swell of saltwater, that weightless brilliance (p. 38).

Mrs. Brown, who was once the bookworm, the incessant reader Laura Zielski, feels overwhelmed by her new role as the wife of someone who 'was received as something more than an ordinary hero'. Mrs. Brown's affective world is one of 'dark sensation' and 'nowhere feeling', which she cannot avoid forever. She feels as if 'reading were the singular and obvious first task of the day, the only viable way to negotiate the transit from sleep to obligation'. In short, '[s]he knew it was going to be a difficult day'.

Of course it is possible to understand Laura Brown as mostly 'a victim of marriage, her life amounting to a hollow enactment of conjugal duty, obligations and maternity' (Young, 2003, p. 24), but that does not reckon with Cunningham's writing itself. We can see her attempt to bake the perfect cake in two ways. Her attempt at being the perfect homemaker suggests also the possibility of being an artist, as she is immersed in and transformed by reading *Mrs. Dalloway*: 'She is reading Virginia Woolf, all of Virginia Woolf, book by book [...] She, Laura, likes to imagine (it's one of her most closely held secrets) that she has a touch of brilliance herself, just a hint of it' (p. 42). So Mrs.

Dalloway is to be seen as the perfect hostess trying to stage a party. Or is there more to her? She is becoming in the middle of something, something Deleuze and Guattari (1987, p. 263) remarked on sharply:

Virginia Woolf's walk through the crowd, among the taxis. Taking a walk is a haecceity; never will Mrs. Dalloway say to herself, I am this, I am that, he is this, he is that. And she felt very young; at the same time unspeakably aged. She sliced like a knife through everything; at the same time was outside, looking on ... She always had the feeling that it was very, very dangerous to live even one day. Haecceity, fog, glare. A haecceity has neither beginning nor end, origin nor destination; it is always in the middle. It is not made of points, only of lines. It is a rhizome.

Deleuze's description comes back in Cunningham's *The Hours* where Clarissa leaves her apartment in New York to buy flowers and where we can follow her trajectory street by street.

These three mappings of colours, rhythms, intensities thus document how Cunningham's style establishes the rhizomatic connections of his 'personages', a collective becoming female of life, a life. These colourful mappings are also re-created in Daldry's film as he visually varies their colour intensities: '[t]he England of 1941 and 1923 is sepia tinted, the Los Angeles of 1951 is represented in bright colors, whereas twenty-first-century New York is depicted in plain, realistic hues' (Leavenworth, 2010, p. 504). Also the music score, based on the non-thematic nature of Philip Glass's minimalist textures, forms a capacity to blend the three narratives and suggest rhizomatic connections across time, space and subjects. As a sound bridge across the three realms, the music 'relates not to images, but to the amorphous flux (of emotions, creativity, identity) behind the images' (Hillman and Crisp, 2014, p. 306).

Writing the organization of time

Cunningham's novel is about the power of feminine writing and its queering possibilities to re-conceive how time affects our days, our families, our work lives. It gives us a glimpse of what the writing of Virginia Woolf can do, as we see how it is read 30 years later or enacted 70 years later. *Mrs. Dalloway* (or at least its reading) saves Mrs. Brown: it holds her back from both suicide and heteronormative life. *Mrs. Dalloway* defines Clarissa Vaughan in one of her most important moments of life, and continues to define her as long as she remains her alter ego until Richard dies: '[a]nd here she is, herself, Clarissa, not Mrs. Dalloway anymore; there is no one now to call her that. Here she is with another hour before her' (p. 226). In this line of literary generativity, they are connected in a process of re-creation, continuing each other's thoughts and feelings and producing 'three generations of ripples in the water' (Hughes, 2004, p. 355).

A triptych of time: time and the pause of a party, time and the exquisite moment of a kiss, time and the affects of an ordinary (Satur)day in June; a 'feminization of time' (Zelinka, 2009). This is this essay's reply to the quest(ion) of how to conceive of and write the study of gender and difference in (critical) management and organization studies, a re-turn to the potential of queer(ing) forms of writing in their attempt to dismantle the tyranny of the heteronormative plot (Friedman, 1989) and to install another conception of time, affect, writing (a life). The move I undertook responds to the call by Czarniawska (2006) and others to undertake gender studies of fiction as 'empirical material', and the encouragement of Pullen (2006) to underline corporeal multiplicity in the writing of organizational research. I see many (future) connections between this cartographic analysis and the (queer) writing of Organization Studies, but let me briefly point out how this cartographic analysis alters the way we have been writing the organization of time and its related affects.

First, the cartographic analysis builds upon an interest in Organization Studies to interrelate organization, gender and multiplicity (Linstead and Pullen, 2006; Styhre and Eriksson-Zetterquist, 2008). Thus the above cartographies are 'empirically' enacting the move from identity to imperceptibility. Linstead and Pullen (2006, p. 1307) cleverly propose this concept: 'the rhizome as

cartographic mapping rather than paradigmatic model-building'. Following their proposal, the above cartographic analysis provides an illustrative suggestion of such practices of multiplicity in gender research.

In this post-feminist/Deleuzian/queer perspective, becoming someone is about becoming impersonal, anonymous. The term that Deleuze and Guattari (1987, p. 261) use for this becoming is *haecçité*, which translates as 'haecceity' or 'this-ness'. *Haecçité* is a form of individuation that is different from being a person, a subject, a thing; it occurs through the alternation of movement and rest instead of through subjectivity, the continual process of demarcating, becoming visible, being named: 'You have the individuality of a day, a season, a year, a life (...) — a climate, a wind, a fog, a swarm, a pack (...). Or at least you can have it, you can reach it' (1987, p. 262). In opposition to the idea of having a heterosexual identity — as indicated by the names Mrs. Brown, Mrs. Woolf and Mrs. Dalloway (Leavenworth, 2010) — all becomings are molecular for Deleuze and Guattari. Becoming-woman is thus not a question of becoming a clearly demarcated molar entity (not *that* woman), but of disappearing into the molecular collectivity (woman among women). The molar woman is too much the recognizable woman with her forms and organs. Becoming-woman is not a matter of imitating that image (endlessly reproduced in language and image, in daily encounters and in the media) or transforming oneself into it. Women must naturally also conduct a molar politics, with an eye to winning back their own organism, their own history, their own subjectivity — it is the sound of 'we as women' that causes men to appear as a subject. But a further step is possible, otherwise one runs the risk of drying up, stopping the flow of the stream one is immersed in; this is a molecular politics. Virginia Woolf was aware of this when she was asked about writing 'as a woman', an idea to which she reacted indignantly: rather, 'writing should produce a becoming-woman as atoms of womanhood capable of crossing and impregnating an entire social field, and of contaminating men, of sweeping them up in that becoming' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p. 276).

Second, this cartographic analysis contrasts with and complements the bulk of research that interrelates organization, gender and time. Many studies (Gatrell, 2013; Jacobs and Gerson, 2004; Sabelis *et al.*, 2008) focus on the relationship between private time, family life and paid labour. For instance, in one insightful study, O'Hagan (2014) analysed working mothers' narratives about time from an intersectional perspective in order to explore the way time is ordered and managed and its effects with regard to gendered inequalities for women at the intersection of maternity with paid work, even if no other conceptions of time itself are considered. A lot of this research is molar, a necessary part of a gender politics, but it could also be related to a molecular politics, one that considers new conceptions of time (and its affects). In this regard, Ahmed (2010) suggests that *The Hours* can bring about different understandings of affects like happiness. She believes that Laura Brown leaves behind a 'molar' understanding of happiness (and the role she needs to play as a mother) for another kind of happiness that could be called her own. Therefore, Ahmed (2010, p. 77) asks, '[C]ouldn't we understand the creativity of feminism, its potentiality for generating new horizons, as giving us alternative ideas of happiness?'

Given this thinking, seeking a perspective that queers time (Halberstam, 2005) might be an important, if uncanny, proposal to engender the study of time, gender and organization, and those who are looking for new directions in gender, diversity and organization (Phillips *et al.*, 2014). Also the route on time and affect I have proposed could and should be easily opened up for explorations that connect Woolf with Deleuze via Bergson (Hughes, 2013). This has already been pointed out by Grosz (2000, p. 230):

What Bergson, through Deleuze, shows is that life and duration, and this history and politics, are never either a matter of unfolding an already worked out blueprint, [...] but through division, bifurcation dissociation — by difference, through sudden and unpredictable change, which overtakes us with its surprise.

Whatever route on time one takes, it would imply a writing of theory that 'is no longer that distanced point of observation on the real, but the real's way of folding back upon itself through a multiplicity

of becoming' (Colebrook, 2000b, p. 91), which brings us to the relationship between becoming and writing.

Third, this analysis of the novel *The Hours*, juxtaposed between *Mrs. Dalloway* and the film *The Hours*, which has enabled a series of images to illustrate conceptualizations of life becoming-woman as haecceity, is intrinsically interwoven with the aesthetic qualities of writing (and filming). Here, both novels and films have been understood as equally yet differently valuable to conceive of life as becoming: 'Living and writing, art and life, are opposed only from the point of view of a major literature' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1986, p. 41). To relate literature/cinema to becoming, we had to turn to minor literature and minor cinema that 'diagnoses the affects and intensities that create us' (Colebrook, 2002, p. 114). By connecting Woolf and Deleuze with Cunningham, I have shown how Woolf's feminine writing finds a response in Cunningham's affective assemblages of three women, enacting why, for Deleuze, Woolf is interesting as 'her assemblages of subject positions ... escape Oedipal frames' (Driscoll, 2000, p. 65). Mrs. Woolf does this mostly in her writing; Mrs. Brown makes a singular choice and leaves her husband and children behind; and Mrs. Dalloway, living in a lesbian relationship, embraces the hours that are reminiscent of the moment that she experienced as perfect. Writing (gender) difference is something that cannot be easily divided into the writings of women and men. The relationship between the novels of Woolf and Cunningham and Daltry's film is not just intertextual, it is inter-stylistic. A queer approach to writing is less interested in the closed analysis of one (woman's) text; it also addresses how they differently refuse and resist phallo(go)centrism. It is this multiplied force that the triptych can provide, so inventively illustrated in Cunningham's writing as the three stories ripple out in wider and wider circles, attending to 'the oceanic interconnectedness between people, the life of one human spirit animating that of another, the permeable boundaries between life and death, and the burst bounds of time' (Hughes, 2004, p. 353).

Fading out

Do we need (to know) a last sentence, in the way we saw Virginia waiting for the first sentence? Though I have contemplated many last sentences, I do not think I have one for this article, in the same way that Pullen (2006, p. 294–5), having pursued 'a new relation to language; one which might be called feminine', admits that 'ironically, at the very place where I must offer a conclusion, all I can set out is another tentative beginning; with no guarantee of what this small beginning will struggle to become'. Ultimately, it is in a moment like this one — between preparing my exit and performing the passage of my presence (as long as my fingers keep moving on the keyboard) — 'that we can see a queer kind of temporality at work, a temporality that does not press on towards closure or conclusion' (Haffey, 2010, p. 138). These moments are 'as potent and dangerous as literature itself' (Cunningham, 1999, p. 97). In these queer moments — a party, a kiss, the hours of this ordinary Saturday in front of me (where I am reminded to go buy flowers for the dinner party tonight) — time shapes life differently. Here — 'this moment of June' (p. 4) — I blow a kiss, not knowing or wanting to know where the winds will take it.¹²

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Notes

1. I dedicate this text to the memory of Heather Höpfl, who presented at the Critical Management Studies Conference in Naples in 2011 one of the three papers (a triptych!) which constituted the track entitled 'Writing and (gender) difference' and anticipated this special issue. Her voice during that session and, more generally, in Organization Studies — full of inspiration, anger, wit, critique and grace — will be missed. Note that Heather completed her PhD in 1982 at Lancaster University, with a dissertation she called 'The subjective experience of time', more than a bit significant for this essay.
2. Like bell hooks (2000), I believe feminism is for everybody. So is feminine writing as it is performed by both women and men (Phillips *et al.*, 2014), and that allows me to hope I can give it a queer twist. An affirmative politics which combines critique with creativity is one that pursues 'collective projects aimed at the affirmation of hope, rooted in the ordinary micro-practices of everyday life' (Braidotti, 2013, p. 192).
3. A post-feminist or poststructuralist feminism emerges from the meeting between feminism and Deleuzism (Colebrook, 2000a) and consists of 'a move towards a post-semiotic, post-linguistic exploration of desire [...] towards an experimental "pragmatics of becoming", where subjectivity is subsumed through "becoming" ' (Kennedy, 2000, pp. 5–6). A post-feminist reading of Deleuze and Guattari (Braidotti, 2002; Kennedy, 2000) is thus one where 'the relation of Deleuzian thought and feminist thought may be "mapped" or interwoven in a kind of productive disjunction' (Flieger, 2000, p. 62).
4. A queer approach to feminine writing is enabled when we emphasize the intimate connection between queer and feminist theory (Marinucci, 2010). In *Feminism is Queer*, Marinucci (2010) brings both a queer orientation to feminist theory and a feminist orientation to queer theory.
5. Feminine writing cannot be practised without experimentation (Cixous, 1984), which forms the basis for breaking open rigid (phallogentric) systems and creating multiplicities (Steyaert, 2012).
6. This set-up is not self-evident, even if the only possibility for me is to connect Woolf's feminism, Deleuze and Guattari's becoming and Cunningham's concept of time. There are, of course, plenty of transversal connections that connect Woolf's feminism (Marcus, 2010) with Deleuze (and Guattari): Woolf's becoming-Deleuze; Deleuze's becoming-Woolf (Ryan and Mattison, 2013) and others that connect Woolf and Cunningham (Haffey, 2010; Zelinka, 2009): Woolf's becoming-Cunningham and Cunningham's becoming-Woolf. However, Deleuze interrelates feminist theory (Buchanan and Colebrook, 2000) and queer theory (Nigiani and Storr, 2009). Alternatively, one could have built up a triptych around Woolf/Bergson/Deleuze, as I point out in the discussion section.
7. Note that, besides the assimilative, transgressive and queer version of the post-Stonewall genre, the pre-Stonewall literature consists of the categories of closet, ghetto and proto-ghetto fiction.
8. All quotes below are from Cunningham (1999).
9. Compare to the slightly different fragment in the dialogue in *The Hours* (pp. 197–8).
10. Compare to Cunningham (1999) on page 98.
11. For Deleuze and Guattari, a rhizome or a rhizome network is the concept to strangle the roots of the tree (Massumi, 1992) and thus to 'un-root' thinking that is hierarchical, linear and dualistic and that refers back to a fixed core. Therefore, it can be said that rhizomatic thinking 'encourages each subject to empower him- or herself as a multiplicity and along multiple axes' (Braidotti, 2002, pp. 74–5).
12. But hopefully in the direction of Helen Snively who, for the last time — now that she is retiring — undertook the language editing of this article; for each text she edited in the last 7 years, she multiplied herself in order to let each text find its own intensity and rhythm. And of Alison Pullen, and the many women assembled in this name, as she has been keeping me going from the first time we exchanged our enthusiasm for the novel/film until the last editorial details of this text.

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