

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Clocks, Crowds, and Interior Time in Modernist City Narratives

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Abstract

Modernist city narratives repeatedly place private consciousness against clocks, timetables, crowds, and institutional routines, yet the formal relation between public scheduling and interior time requires closer comparison. This article asks how urban narratives turn temporal coordination into an argument about memory, authority, and belonging. It compares Virginia Woolf's "Mrs Dalloway," James Joyce's "Dubliners," T. S. Eliot's "The Waste Land," and John Dos Passos's "Manhattan Transfer." Comparative close reading follows public time signals, shifts in focalization, crowd syntax, hesitation, and sensory interruption within each work and across the corpus. The analysis argues that public time operates as pressure rather than neutral measure, that crowd scenes make simultaneity a contested narrative resource, and that memory interrupts schedules without fully escaping urban institutions. These findings connect local formal decisions to a relational account of urban temporality. The contribution is deliberately bounded: it explains how the selected texts organize competing temporal claims without treating four canonical works as representative of modernism as a whole.

Keywords: modernism; urban time; city narrative; simultaneity; memory

1 Introduction

Clocks, Crowds, and Interior Time in Modernist City Narratives examines how modernist city writing coordinates institutional clock time with unstable interior duration. Its corpus comprises Virginia Woolf's "Mrs Dalloway," James Joyce's "Dubliners," T. S. Eliot's "The Waste Land," and John Dos Passos's "Manhattan Transfer." The central claim is that public time operates as an audible pressure rather than a neutral measure. That proposition has force because modernist form registers urban power by making temporal coordination perceptible. Attention therefore falls on moments where public schedules intersect with memory, hesitation, or sensory interruption.

The analytical problem is intentionally narrower than a general history of urban temporality. Within these texts, urban temporality is assessed through moments where public schedules intersect with memory, hesitation, or sensory interruption. Its definition changes only when those features alter the interpretation.

The comparative reading advances three connected findings. First, public time operates as an audible pressure rather than a neutral measure. Second, crowd scenes convert simultaneity

into a contested narrative resource. Third, memory interrupts schedules without fully escaping the city's institutions. Together they show that urban temporality is neither a decorative effect nor a label attached after interpretation. The argument remains proportionate to the textual selection.

The interaction between detail and whole supplies a second commitment.

The comparative reading grounds interpretive validity in convergence rather than certainty. Evidence constrains interpretation, but its constraint works through reasoned comparison.

Clocks, Crowds, and Interior Time in Modernist City Narratives is organized around a bounded question: what work does urban temporality perform that cannot be explained by isolated occurrences of moments where public schedules intersect with memory, hesitation, or sensory interruption? The wording has force. "What work" directs attention to outcome; "cannot be explained" creates a standard for counter-reading; and the named unit fixes the scale at which the answer must be demonstrated. This formulation allows the inquiry to make a strong local argument without extending its claims to periods, audiences, or practices not represented by the selected sources.

The key term, urban temporality, is used in a restricted sense. It refers to the organized segment from public time operates as an audible pressure rather than a neutral measure through crowd scenes convert simultaneity into a contested narrative resource to memory interrupts schedules without fully escaping the city's institutions. This definition makes sequence part of the concept: removing the middle connection or the retrospective test changes what the term explains. The restriction is useful because it prevents urban temporality from absorbing every relevant observation. Details that do not affect preparation, distribution, or revision remain part of the work's texture but not part of this particular thesis.

The research question is how modernist form makes the conflict between public schedules and interior duration perceptible. The objective is to compare the formal work of clocks, crowds, sensory interruption, and memory while keeping the claims proportionate to four texts. The article next situates this question critically, defines the corpus and method, develops three analytical findings, discusses their relation, and ends with limitations and a conclusion.

Historical accounts of modern temporality help specify the relation between urban coordination and inward dura-

tion. Kern situates clock standardization, simultaneity, and spatial compression within the culture of 1880–1918 [1]. North's reconstruction of 1922 further demonstrates how modernist form answered a densely shared cultural moment without becoming reducible to chronology [2].

2 Critical Context: Urban Time, Scale, and Interpretation

The study of cultural authority helps explain why apparently neutral schedules can carry institutional force [3]. Interpretive communities clarify how temporal cues become legible through shared reading conventions [4]. Work on analytical scale provides a useful contrast between close formal evidence and broader literary-historical patterning [5]. Accounts of material and embodied cognition support attention to sensory interruption rather than treating time as an abstract category [6]. Humanistic approaches to constructed evidence reinforce the need to distinguish textual displays of time from claims about lived urban experience [7].

3 Public Schedules, Memory, and Sensory Interruption

The evidentiary set consists of Virginia Woolf's "Mrs Dalloway" [8], James Joyce's "Dubliners" [9], T. S. Eliot's "The Waste Land" [10], and John Dos Passos's "Manhattan Transfer" [11]. Corpus design privileges analytical variation over numerical representativeness. Each item offers a distinct configuration of urban temporality and permits comparison through the common unit of moments where public schedules intersect with memory, hesitation, or sensory interruption.

The inquiry employs comparative temporal analysis using annotations for clock signals, movement, recollection, simultaneity, and narrative pace.

The evidentiary scale of *Clocks, Crowds, and Interior Time in Modernist City Narratives* is deliberately local: moments where public schedules intersect with memory, hesitation, or sensory interruption. The process records position, recurrence, interruption, and result before assigning interpretive weight. That order is consequential for the comparative reading: a repeated feature may retain its appearance while changing function, whereas a single event at a boundary may redirect the whole sequence. Claims about intention, reception, or prevalence are withheld because the present method does not supply that evidence.

Mediation is not a neutral step in *Clocks, Crowds, and Interior Time in Modernist City Narratives*. Typography, editorial intervention, notation, image quality, cropping, tempo, staging, or interface design may change how moments where public schedules intersect with memory, hesitation, or sensory interruption can be perceived. The comparison accordingly distinguishes properties of the underlying work from properties of the available witness. This distinction sets a practical test: an inference remains secure only if it survives the change of version relevant to the claim about urban temporality.

4 Public time operates as an audible pressure rather than a neutral measure

The first interpretive result can be formulated as follows: public time operates as an audible pressure rather than a neutral measure. This temporal dimension is essential. The finding therefore concerns organization, not inventory.

The resulting form is recursive. Interpretation advances, but it also returns to revise what seemed settled. This recursive quality explains why urban temporality can remain coherent without becoming predictable.

Evidence for the claim that public time operates as an audible pressure rather than a neutral measure begins with a before-and-after test. The reading identifies the state of moments where public schedules intersect with memory, hesitation, or sensory interruption before the relevant event, describes the change without assigning motive, and then asks what new interpretation becomes possible afterward. In *Clocks, Crowds, and Interior Time in Modernist City Narratives*, this process distinguishes a feature that merely appears from one that organizes expectation. The distinction is necessary because repetition can reinforce convention, expose it, or redirect it; recurrence by itself cannot choose which function is active.

The baseline reading concerns Virginia Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway*. The reading tests the proposition that public time operates as an audible pressure rather than a neutral measure by restricting attention to moments where public schedules intersect with memory, hesitation, or sensory interruption. It then identifies which surrounding relations are necessary for that account.

In Virginia Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway*, the proposition that public time operates as an audible pressure rather than a neutral

measure is evaluated through placement, not keyword recurrence. The reading asks what prepares each occurrence of moments where public schedules intersect with memory, hesitation, or sensory interruption, which agent or formal layer controls it, and what outcome follows. A detail counts as evidence only when its surrounding sequence changes the available judgment. This restriction prevents the case from being reduced to an example chosen after the thesis was formed.

A close reading of Virginia Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway* must therefore document the first relevant occurrence of moments where public schedules intersect with memory, hesitation, or sensory interruption, the expectation active at that moment, and the consequence that distinguishes it from background recurrence. The case supports *Clocks, Crowds, and Interior Time in Modernist City Narratives* only if those three points can be located in the consulted version. A general resemblance to the other cases is not enough; the passage must show why the proposition about urban temporality is called for to explain its organization.

The next reading, James Joyce's *Dubliners*, tests the distributive dimension of the argument. Here the governing question is whether crowd scenes convert simultaneity into a contested narrative resource. This is not handled as a defect in reliability.

James Joyce's *Dubliners* changes the scale of comparison. Here urban temporality is read through the distribution of access, emphasis, and response among texts. The relevant question is not whether the same surface feature returns, but whether its return gives a different participant, voice, register, or position the capacity to redirect interpretation. That distributive test supplies the pressure behind the claim that crowd scenes convert simultaneity into a contested narrative resource.

For James Joyce's *Dubliners*, the principal counter-reading treats the observed distribution as a genre convention with no special bearing on urban temporality. The article answers only at the level of moments where public schedules intersect with memory, hesitation, or sensory interruption: it asks whether a transfer of access or emphasis produces a subsequent effect that convention alone leaves unexplained. If it does not, the second proposition narrows. If it does, the case clarifies how organizational hierarchy becomes an event rather than a static arrangement.

The third case turns to T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* and gives priority to

revision over initial recognition. The interpretive test is whether memory interrupts schedules without fully escaping the city's institutions.

The value of T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* is retrospective. Following passages are reread against the first account of moments where public schedules intersect with memory, hesitation, or sensory interruption, allowing the article to distinguish repetition from revision. If the following event merely restates the preceding one, the proposition that memory interrupts schedules without fully escaping the city's institutions receives little support. If it changes the status of what the reader, listener, or viewer already encountered, the case shows how urban temporality acquires organizational memory.

Verification in T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* requires two locators: one for the initial treatment of moments where public schedules intersect with memory, hesitation, or sensory interruption and one for the moment that alters its status. The interval between them is analytically important because it determines what can be remembered, projected, or misrecognized. Recording both locations prevents the later reading from being projected backward as if it had been available from the start, and it gives the claim about urban temporality a visible temporal basis.

The closing comparative test, John Dos Passos's *Manhattan Transfer*, functions as a resistant comparison.

John Dos Passos's *Manhattan Transfer* remains in the selection because it resists easy synthesis. Its treatment of moments where public schedules intersect with memory, hesitation, or sensory interruption tests how far the claim that public time operates as an audible pressure rather than a neutral measure can travel before medium, genre, or historical circumstance calls for qualification. The comparison does not convert resistance into confirmation. It records which part of the proposition holds, which part contracts, and which additional source would be necessary to choose between rival readings.

The resistant role of John Dos Passos's *Manhattan Transfer* also limits the article's vocabulary. If medium or genre changes the operation of moments where public schedules intersect with memory, hesitation, or sensory interruption, the comparison names that difference before proposing an analogy. The case may therefore support only part of the claim that public time operates as an audible pressure rather than a neutral measure. Such partial support is informative: it

identifies the condition under which urban temporality ceases to explain the evidence and marks the point where another historical or organizational account should take over.

5 Crowd scenes convert simultaneity into a contested narrative resource

The next result proposes that crowd scenes convert simultaneity into a contested narrative resource. This pattern shifts analysis from isolated form toward distribution. The textual selection repeatedly makes such allocation perceptible.

To test whether crowd scenes convert simultaneity into a contested narrative resource, the comparison maps control rather than prestige. It asks which component establishes an expectation, which one can revise it, and which remains visible yet unable to affect the sequence. Applied to moments where public schedules intersect with memory, hesitation, or sensory interruption, this distinction reveals distribution as an activity rather than a fixed rank. *Clocks, Crowds, and Interior Time in Modernist City Narratives* consequently avoids translating every center-edge contrast into a social allegory; the interpretive claim is made only when formal allocation and historical authority can be connected through specific evidence.

6 Memory interrupts schedules without fully escaping the city's institutions

Evidence finally indicates that memory interrupts schedules without fully escaping the city's institutions. Return, correction, reframing, and delayed consequence are therefore analytical events. They reveal how a work stores difference and activates it subsequently.

Considered as a group, the findings form a sequence of their own. The first identifies a process that directs attention. The second demonstrates that attention and authority are distributed. The third explains how subsequent events revise that distribution. This sequence supports the central thesis that urban temporality is historically variable and formally organized.

Temporal revision separates the third result from the first two. The article asks whether the proposition that memory interrupts schedules without fully escaping the city's institutions modifies an preceding judgment, redistributes its authority, or merely adds new information. Only the first two outcomes bear directly

on urban temporality. By tracking moments where public schedules intersect with memory, hesitation, or sensory interruption in both chronological and retrospective order, *Clocks, Crowds, and Interior Time in Modernist City Narratives* reveals how interpretation can advance through correction without pretending that every uncertainty must end in a single, final account.

7 Discussion: What Urban Temporality Changes

Comparison makes the argument more exact. Public time operates as an audible pressure rather than a neutral measure identifies the initial compositional pressure. Crowd scenes convert simultaneity into a contested narrative resource shows how that pressure is distributed, and Memory interrupts schedules without fully escaping the city's institutions describes the work performed by return or correction. No single proposition is sufficient on its own. Their intersection is what gives urban temporality explanatory force in *Clocks, Crowds, and Interior Time in Modernist City Narratives*.

The cases further indicate that modernist form registers urban power by making temporal coordination perceptible. This effect does not depend on universal agreement about every example.

Three checks keep the comparison from becoming self-confirming. First, apparent support for public time operates as an audible pressure rather than a neutral measure is reread as convention or accident. Second, evidence for crowd scenes convert simultaneity into a contested narrative resource is tested against cases where authority does not move in the expected direction. Third, the claim that memory interrupts schedules without fully escaping the city's institutions is withheld if the supposed revision leaves prior material unchanged. *Clocks, Crowds, and Interior Time in Modernist City Narratives* retains only the account that explains both confirming and resistant details with the fewest unsupported assumptions.

Clocks, Crowds, and Interior Time in Modernist City Narratives shifts emphasis from the presence of urban temporality to the conditions under which it becomes consequential. That shift becomes consequential because thematic readings often gather examples while leaving their order unexamined. Here, moments where public schedules intersect with memory, hesitation, or sensory interruption are handled as events with a before and an after. The approach therefore identifies

the smallest change that alters interpretation, locates who or what controls that change, and asks whether the effect remains visible outside the case in which it first appeared.

Scale supplies a second test. An observation about moments where public schedules intersect with memory, hesitation, or sensory interruption may be convincing locally yet fail to explain the larger text; conversely, a broad claim about urban temporality may disappear when examined at the level of the segment, phrase, frame, or action. Clocks, Crowds, and Interior Time in Modernist City Narratives moves between these scales in both directions. A large claim persists only when its local evidence remains specific, and a local detail carries weight only when its effect extends beyond immediate description.

The primary boundary of the claim is that the selected Anglophone cities leave colonial and non-Western modernities underrepresented. It does not establish reception, intention, prevalence, or causal effect. The absence of those methods is acknowledged rather than disguised.

Clocks, Crowds, and Interior Time in Modernist City Narratives also clarifies the difference between recurrence and

importance. A feature can occur often without governing interpretation, while one displacement, pause, transfer, or correction can reorganize the surrounding sequence. The comparison therefore assigns weight by consequence rather than frequency. That distinction is especially important for urban temporality, whose force depends on when and where it becomes perceptible.

8 Conclusion

The research addressed how modernist city writing coordinates institutional clock time with unstable interior duration. Through comparative temporal analysis using annotations for clock signals, movement, recollection, simultaneity, and narrative pace, it argued that public time operates as an audible pressure rather than a neutral measure; that crowd scenes convert simultaneity into a contested narrative resource; and that memory interrupts schedules without fully escaping the city's institutions. These claims converge on a relational account of urban temporality.

Beyond the individual cases, the findings indicate that modernist form registers urban power by making temporal

coordination perceptible.

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