TIME! TIME! TIME!

by

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this thesis is threefold. First, to draw attention to the prose of Conrad Aiken, which has gone virtually unnoticed by critics. Second, to examine Aiken's extensive use of time in fiction (including the fictional autobiography, *Ushant*) and third, to consider Aiken's views on the subject against a broader background of opinion on time.
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Time, gentlemen, time.

HURRY UP PLEASE IT'S TIME.

Time and time again.

A time to live and a time to die,

A time to TAKE TIME OUT.

But even time must have a stop.

What, then, is time? Let me quote an authority on the subject:

What then is time? If no one asks me, I know; if I wish to explain it to one who asketh, I know not: yet I say boldly that if nothing passes away, time past were not; and if nothing were coming, a time to come were not; and if nothing were, time present were not. Those two times then, past and to come, how are they seeing the past now is not, and that to come is not yet? But the present, should it always be present, and never pass into time past, verily it should not be time, but eternity.

If time present (if it is not time) only cometh into existence, because it passeth into time past, how can we say that either this is, whose cause of being is, that it shall not be; so, namely, that we cannot truly say that time is, but because it is tending not to be?

If your mind followed time into the intricate puzzle of Augustine's logic, it is now faced with the problem of getting out. Here is a
door: philosophy is about words. On the other hand, words are about things and this, hopefully, is literature.

Time, along with Love and Death, is one of the great preoccupations of Western literature. As it has defied philosophers and eluded scientists, so it has confounded critics, enslaved writers and haunted poets to an early death. Yet some have held infinity in the palm of a hand....

No writer is more time-obsessed than Conrad Aiken. Time appears as a major concern at every level of Aiken's fiction.
II

Fishing for time
with a wishing line
and throwing it back
in the sea...

Donovan

At the most basic level in Aiken's prose there is a constant recurrence of the minutiae of time—-clocks, watches, hourglasses and chimes are studded throughout. In the novels, notes are struck and intervals marked by timepieces. In Blue Voyage the passage of "present" time on a sea voyage is marked precisely by clocks, bugles and ship's bells. But the bells ring on more than one time level. As Aiken says in Ushant, the bells were "strung like beads endlessly backward in time".¹ Their sound becomes associated with the free movement of the characters' minds in a four-dimensional flux, where all places and times are accessible.

In Great Circle, the central figure, Cather, on his way home to be proven a cuckold, stalls for time, stops in at the Harvard Club bar and becomes entranced by the room with no clock. "Time, in this room, was not recognized, was excluded...".² Cather's dread of the future, which time must inevitably bring him, becomes delight
in the time-less bar of his exclusive club. When he finally must leave, it is "almost halfpast nine, a hundred years later". Cather has "taken time out" to postpone his unpleasant future as long as possible. And when he arrives home, on the hour, he finds that "treason chimed with the chiming clock", as though the clock not only announced the unhappy discovery, but was in some way responsible for bringing it about.

In *King Coffin*, as Jasper Ammen moves inexorably toward suicide, he notes that "all night the world had seemed full of clocks"; his head echoes a cacophony of ticking clocks and chiming bells. He watches Jones, his intended murder victim, and discovers that "his life went by the clock", as though he were wound up each morning. This is one of the points of identity between the two men, an identity which becomes so strong that Ammen realizes he must kill himself in order to destroy the stranger. Similarly, in *Blue Voyage*, both Demarest and Smith are likened to cuckoo clocks; this comparison is one of the devices which suggest that they are each other's alter egos from a different time span.

But the appearance of a clock is never a happy one, for it raises those problems of time which have long haunted mankind and which are very real problems for Aiken and his characters.

What the moon says is moon, and all compact,
What the act says is act, and only act;
What the clock says, with algebra's cold face,
is times and time, spaces and space.

Confronted by the clock face, the characters are trapped, mesmerized by the mechanical, inevitable progress of time. Thus,
the distraught Cather "lives with one eye on the clock". It is a voice from another, deeper level which urges acceptance:

> Permit yourself to be sifted by time, slowly, ---be passive---wait. Learn to rot gently, like the earth: it is only a natural rot that is creative.⁵

Ripeness is all.

Time appears in many forms in Aiken's work. When personified it is usually as Time the Destroyer. This is Chronos devouring his children; this is Vishnu, the creator and destroyer, taking the form of Time when he destroys; this is Time with a scythe, the Time of Brueghel and Bosch, the Time which held Thomas, green and dying. For Aiken it is "Time with a hundred hands, time with a thousand mouths!"⁶

Another familiar expression of time is in water imagery, perhaps commencing with the rather conceptual river into which Heraclitus said we cannot step twice. There are countless examples of this; let me give a sonorous one.

> That great mystery of Time, were there no other; the illimitable, silent, never-resting thing called Time, rolling, rushing on, swift, silent, like an all-embracing ocean tide...⁷

Because of its commonness, the use of water imagery to describe time is banal unless original and Aiken's early poetry is sometimes at low ebb, as when he describes to us "time but a feather upon the flowing---".⁸ On the other hand, here is time described in Aiken's later "prose":
water revolving swift spokes through water, current coiling through current, sleep and dream interchangeably immersed as they, the one visible and transparent in the other, the long timeless, translucent flow of memory under the glass of eternity

In fact, some of Aiken's most powerful imagery is based on the fluidity of time. In Great Circle, Cather comes back to consciousness:

To come upward from the dark world, through the mild shafts of light, as a swimmer in long and curved periphery from a dive; from the whirled and atomic or the swift and sparkling through the slower and more sleekly gloved; effortless, but with a drag at the heels of consciousness—to float upward, not perpendicularly, but at an angle, arms at sides, turning slightly on one's axis, like a Blake angel, through the long pale transverse of light—with the sounds, too, the bell-sounds, the widening rings of impalpable but deep meaning, as if someone far off with spheral mouth released its bubble, and closed, and then again opened to say, Time—

In contrast to this lyric treatment of liquid time is the passage from Demarest's surrealist dream in Blue Voyage, in which he sees, through the eyes of Goya, the world as a mass of disease, death and violence:

He heard the seconds in his clock crack like seeds, divulge and pour abysmal filth of nothingness between the pendulum and the floor: torrents of dead veins, rotted cells, Tonsils decayed, and fingernails: Dead hair, dead fur, dead claws, dead skin. Nostrils and lids; and cauls and veils; and eyes that still, in death, remained (Unlidded and un­lashed) Aware of the foul core and, fouler yet, The region worm that ravins There...
The subject of time moves Aiken the craftsman to shape powerful yet disparate images around it.

Aiken's imagery often suggests a visual collage or montage---but one which moves in time. Although literature and music are the traditional time arts, the twentieth century has produced a new time-art form, the motion picture and Aiken, never a screen writer, has a camera eye. Many prose passages read like scenarios because of the technical directions included. Montage, superimposition and flashbacks are commonly seen in both film and literature, but Aiken is an innovator, seeking new visual perspectives. Here is an example of time-lapse photography:

Yes, one saw the whole of Smith's career acted there on the swaying deck in sunlight, poised between sea and sky. It was amusing to run it off, like a movie film, at terrific speed, so that the whole life story unfolded itself like one of those flowers which the movie permits one to see in the act of blooming...

The life of Smith is encapsulated for Demarest, the narrator, who remains outside Smith's time-span.

The opposite effect is achieved as Jasper Ammen tries to get outside our time-span. As Ammen approaches the face of Time, time slows and the riot of sound around him builds to an insane crescendo.

It was time made intensely audible, time made visible, time solidified in a concrete series of individual shapes---a slow-motion of time, almost in fact a "still". As if, at a given moment, one could take a cross-section of the universe, or slow down life itself to the point at which it was only once removed from death...
Time, here equated with change of sound and shape, in fact with life itself, is slowed until it is almost a "stop-action". It is interesting to see the same idea carried one step further in a story by another time-conscious modern writer, J. L. Borges.

The rifles converged upon Hladik, but the men assigned to pull the triggers were immobile. The sergeant's arm eternalized an inconclusive gesture. Upon a courtyard flagstone a bee cast a stationary shadow. The wind had halted, as in a painted picture. Hladik began a shriek, a syllable, a twist of the hand. He realized he was paralyzed. Not a sound reached him from the stricken world.

He thought: I'm in hell, I'm dead.
He thought: I've gone mad.
He thought: Time has come to a halt.

The moment is frozen. Hladik gets a year's reprieve in which to finish his novel, on the spot. Then the bee moves, the wind blows, and the rifles crack.14

As Jasper Ammen steps out of time into timelessness, the scene dissolves around him. Aiken uses both fade-in and fade-out to mark the change, as dissolves would be used in film. He also describes a scene which could now be done with a telephoto lens, not then invented at the time of writing. As Jasper Ammen's attention focuses increasingly on Jones, the background fades out---on a cosmic scale: "immediate things...became remote...They stood at an infinite distance; to cross time and space to them would be like crossing the Milky Way".15

As the background fades, the eye zooms in on the victim Jones, to show his life in microscopic detail: his house, his car and his "daily orbit".
But despite the advantages of his photographic eye, Aiken must work with the equipment of his own art form: words, words...

In Aiken's words,

That eternal problem of language, language extending consciousness and then consciousness extending language, in circular or spiral ascent.16

Or as a contemporary of Aiken's phrased it,

...Composition is time that is the reason that at present the time-sense is troubling that is the reason why at present the time-sense in the composition is the composition that is making what there is in composition.17

Aiken's prose constantly demonstrates a sense of timing. His conventional, academic prose is measured and balanced, stately. While not interesting of itself, this style serves as a backdrop for Aiken's innovations, which are often attempts to express an altered time-sense. For example, here is Cather being rushed home:

Hurry-hurry-hurry-everything was hurrying.
The train was hurrying. The landscape was hurrying. The wheels rushed blindly over the rails, over the joints, over the switches:
rat-te-tat-te-tattle-te-tat-te-tump-te-tattle-

Words give way to pure sound and rhythm as the writer strives to convey accelerated travel. The verbals and the repetition help convey movement and rhythm but the problems of tense and sentence form remain. Hemingway's repeated "and" might help, but the great
problem remains: how to convey motion using static words.

If language and thought extend themselves together, if language and idea are mutually dependent, then the problem goes deep within our culture to our perception of reality. One critic, Hajime Nakamura, suggests that stasis is the fundamental characteristic of Western language-perception-thought.

To connect two ideas, Western languages use such conjunctions as and or then; Sanskrit, in contrast, will express the same idea by adding the demonstrative pronoun sa to the subject of the sentence, as if "John runs and jumps" were to be expressed as "John running he jumping". The conjunction emphasizes the separateness of events; the demonstrative focuses on the subject, un-changing through time.¹⁹

Similarly, the Chinese ideogram contains in it the sense of action or process. As Fenollosa explains,

The eye sees noun and verb as one: things in motion, motion in things, and so the Chinese conception tends to represent them.²⁰

It is the isolating quality of our perception which emphasizes the separateness of object from action; and of action-object from the greater flux around it. We seem condemned to speak and think in static dualities.

For the novelist, the problem seems to resolve itself: he can use various time levels in the past, but he is limited to the past. Other cultures blur the time distinction which we make between past, present and future. Primitive man saw no such neat,
linear order of time but felt the past and future all around him.

In modern Hindustani,

...the adverb kal means both yesterday and tomorrow. Parson means the day after tomorrow as well as the day before yesterday,21

and so on, implying a sense of time in which events extend like concentric circles around a present "now".

But to return to the West:

Language then is a medium consisting of consecutive units constituting a forward-moving linear form of expression that is subject to the three characteristics of time---transience, sequence and irreversibility.22

Of course, in describing our language, Professor Mendilow describes our thought as well and I think this is the basis for Aiken's describing "language extending consciousness, consciousness extending language" as a "problem". We get caught on the traditional one-way track down the time-continuum.

Aiken's experiments with time and motion produce prose flights which soar and glide beyond the lines. Here is Cather, passing out drunk:

...to sleep---to sleep now---and without a single dream---not even those lumps, those clots, those whirls---not even those sickly lights---that fringe of lanterns under the eyelid, that fringe of slatterns---nor the mounting of lattices---textures of bedspread under the hand---the threads, the thralls, the threshes---must the leaning of the chin lead us into the southwest inevitably---into the dull darkness of white-
ness with the room in the other light still on---
forgot it---or this edge under the cheek---this
cold edge of sheet---must we go downward there,
leaning downward, and all for a last long slow
deluding and terrible curve O God---is it there
we go with a last little spinal effort---23

The progression of rhyme through "light-lantern-slattern-lattice",
the seeming paradox of "darkness-whiteness," the juggling of "room in the
other light", and so on, all these work toward a breaking of conventional
thought patterns. The mind is turned inside out and emptied of its
conventional approaches and responses. The imagination makes new
connections, finds new places to play. The unorthodox rhyme of sound
and objects, of colours, textures and ideas suggest new correspondences,
new dimentions. The mind is opened to free movement, to a flowing
sense of here-and-there, now-and-then, a movement through time and
space which is not possible in logical, ordered, sequential prose.
Here language and thought are free to pursue each other in a boundless
sphere.
Aiken's four-dimensional void is hung with words and bells which chime through space and time.

---yes, the bells, whether of ship's chronometers or the remembered clocks of cities, or echoed from one part of a ship to another, struck by hand; bells that marked off, and then forgot, intervals of time, of life, of desire or memory, or death...¹

The bells ring at various distances in time and space, or rather, "time/space", as "far away" and "long ago" become the same thing. The bells also ring at different levels of meaning:

Those bells, which were intended, in the book, to run— but with altering voice—from one level of reality to another—at each level with a different meaning; whether church bell, striking the hour, of fire-bell, or ship's bell—those bells had run with him on many waters; were now ringing once again; rang forward and backward, in time, as if they...themselves were marking out the course of a life.²
In Ushant, Aiken returns again and again to the bells which, like marker-buoys, have tone and rhythm, a musical punctuation in a four-dimensional composition.

In Great Circle, Aiken's words are barred and phrased, with crescendo and diminuendo for inflection:

...and this and this and this and this and this WINGbeat and WINGbeat where whirled and well where whirled and well where whirled and well---

The stress on words such as "wing" is expanded for use in Aiken's musical paragraph as follows:

---one thing and then another one thing and then another...the cart rack the car track the long glong trail into the sunset...I will go down there swiftly I will run am running but the solitary ghost is still there this must be a bad one a ghost a ghost one of the white kind the cold kind the penetrating kind the thin and snowy kind 0 god shall I wake up in time will he enfold me chill me kill me SCREAM

---one thing slower and then another thing slower it is a bulge a block a bulkhead a buttress...and I am climbing among the sun-warmed rocks my hand is no warmer than these rocks is there a volcano under them will steam come out of the fissures will it all crumble and sink in it is crumbling and sinking crumbling and sinking and shaking my foot goes in my other foot I sink to my knees among warm disrupted rocks they are all falling apart and inward downward SCREAM

The crescendo of sound, image and idea breaks in a ---. Aiken's hot-and-cold-running SCREAMs punctuate the composition, ending the paragraph, curdling the blood, clearing the air.
Not surprisingly, the larger framework of *Great Circle* is deliberately modelled on musical structure. Aiken himself provides the key in the Author's Preface, explaining that *Great Circle* is in four parts, like a symphony, each section with a different key and movement of its own. In contrast, the later *Ushant* is much more free in form. The paragraphs are less structured to a preconceived form, the return to a theme is more casual, suggesting improvisation rather than formulation:

---beginning without beginning, water without a seam, or sleep without a dream...

---yes, beginning without beginning, wave out of wave, shape out of shapelessness, the remembered out of the forgotten; like stem out of thresh or stern out of thrash or island out of sunshot mist; the roundness looms out of nothing; and the sound, the bell, the horn, toils out of silence, wails into silence, lost, lost, lost, lost, and yet not lost at all, but turning over further through the rings within rings within rings and rings beyond rings of the one and only beginningless and endless dream---:

Aiken's music is dance music and all things participate to "how and forever dance the divine timeless dance together". This dance to the music of the spheres is at times "the devilish dance" but never the terrifying procession in which, in Yeats' vision,

All men are dancers and their tread
Goes to the barbarous clangour of a gong.

Aiken's dancers are allowed grace and their movements have natural
pattern at all times. In Ushant, for example, speaking of the separation from his second wife, he says:

---for their steps, their gaits, after that first magical moment when their every most random movement was that of the dance, had gradually ceased to be parallel---8

The solo replaces the pas de deux.

All things dance in Aiken's universe, within us and without.

The pattern is one of opposites merged into one, balancing, counterpoised, but one. And so the discovery of...

...the parallel between the waking life, the conscious life, and a deeper, darker force which lay below the surface "as if the conscious and the unconscious were engaged, had always been engaged, in a dance, the most intricate and surprising and contrapuntal of dances, and this dance, in which light and darkness were the partners... was one's life.9

Each of us a dance, each of us dancing, all of us dance, dance to the music of time.

At the most basic level, music is sound. In Aiken's cosmos, the sounds are produced by objects which move: bells, clocks, cars, trains, ships. Time is change, time is motion. Driving at night in the rain, Jasper Ammen hears

The faintly burred hum of the motor, the grazing clink of the key ring against the dash, the click-cluck of the clock, the delicate ticking of the watch on his wrist, the snicker of the wet tires on the slippery road...10

You can get high on music, and if it's body-music who knows what will
happen? In *Heart for the Gods of Mexico*, as the train pounds through the night, Noni hears it, then feels it,

The ever varying sound of the wheels, singing and throbbing beneath them, the weight now thrown to one side now to the other, sudden staccatos of rattles as they clattered over a crossing, and the hard resonant rails now seeming to groove musically upwards almost into one's body, then to withdraw again, until one felt effortless and ethereal, swung in a circle on the lightest of cords, out into space itself...

A fellow space traveller is Mr. Arcularis, a dignified middle-aged gentleman who finds himself whizzing through outer space, clutching his umbrella. The electronic music of the void surrounds him.

Mr. Arcularis, making the round trip by way of Betelgeuse and Polaris, sparkled with frost. He felt like a Christmas tree. Icicles on his fingers and icicles on his toes. He tinkled and spangled in the void, hallooed to the waste echoes, rounded the buoy on the edge of the Unknown, and tacked glitteringly homeward.

Parallelling this on another level of the same story is the slow and slowing throb of the engines and the heart of Mr. Arcularis as the ship moves painfully through the seas on its last voyage. The many travels of Mr. Arcularis merge into one—a single note in the cosmic symphony.
IV

You can't go home again

Thomas Wolfe

Travel, as well as contributing to the musical quality of the prose, is of great importance to Aiken's sense of time. As the bells ring backward and forward in time, so the cars, trains and ships weave patterns in four dimensions. In Heart for the Gods of Mexico, a woman and two men journey to ancient Mexico, the train wheels clatter and the passengers listen as the conductor calls the stations:

Schenectady, Utica, Syracuse, Rome—how magical the time change had been, with its bizarre marriage of present and past! ¹

Aiken is suggesting that "old" Mexico awaits them, much as Pound says that all ages are contemporaneous:

It is dawn at Jerusalem while midnight hovers above the Pillars of Hercules...It is B.C., let us say, in Morocco. The Middle Ages are in Russia. The future stirs already in the minds of the few.²

For the time traveller, any age is accessible in any place. This
"time machine" aspect of travel usually appears in utopian fiction and Aiken only suggests this possibility to further blur the neat time distinctions in the minds of his characters.

Everything had dissolved in time and sound, everything was dissolving and in solution....

Only the train was true, with its prolonged quadruple cry into the night, its banshee wail across the darkened counties...³

'Aiken's use of the train in a time context is like that of Wolfe, who uses the train and the river as symbols of the constantly changing world. However, the relief which Wolfe's characters find in the speed of travel seems to come from a feeling that they are escaping time, and the opposite is true of Aiken's. For them, it is time made audible, time made tangible. But Aiken the critic is aware of attempts by both novelists to deal with the same subject and he compares them:

The prolonged soliloquy on the train-ride, with its forced attempt to evoke past and present simultaneously, was worse than anything in Thomas Wolfe---which was saying a great deal.⁴

Aiken has nothing but regret for Heart for the Gods, which he describes as a "fraud" and a "lamentable failure". It is not a great novel but I think Aiken is unduly harsh, particularly in judging the time-travel, which I think is an effective device. I suppose the truth is that he has done it better elsewhere.
Trains, and the pound of driving wheels, run through Aiken's novels as they run through the North American tradition, through Casey Jones to Kerouac, through Norris and Wolfe, through music and literature into the beat of modern folk-rock. And whistles haunt the night.

The vision of a train came sharply, too, before him—all trains that he had ever seen or known; the melancholy, slow ylang-ylang, ylang-ylang, of the little switch engine in the frost-bound trainyard; the profound cries of the freight trains climbing dark defiles of mountains at midnight; rows of phantom lights sweeping across a lonely station-front. And the transcontinental track, the curved parallel rails embracing the three-thousand-mile-long curve of the submissive and infinitely various earth.

This is the familiar steel-bound America, but the last lines are characteristically Aiken's. Cather's train doesn't just thunder through the night; it "achieves its terrific destiny", with Cather on it, "describing his swift little arc". The dimensions are epic. The geometry is cosmic.

The geography is the landscape of the soul. And the body.

In _Heart for the Gods_, as the train pounds over the submissive earth, Noni

Knew the train, she knew the night, in its half-sleep her whole body was aware of the violent magic of time and place which was affronting them...

Noni,
with her eyes closed... was living time, feeling it and taking it, this minute and the next and the next, this hour this transit, this speed... 6

Time made tangible.

Aiken belonged to a nation of travellers and a generation of exiles. In the Twenties and Thirties, when everybody had just been to Europe or was just about to go, or both, Aiken found himself "weaving his innocent design of journey across and across the Atlantic". In countless ships he was "forever pointing a hopeful bow in a new direction". One year, a crucial time in his life, the decisions made

had fixed the course of his life's voyage indelibly on the chart forever: Ushant and all that it stood for, the hope for and miraculous light that guarded the subtle and treacherous approaches to the most dangerous of coasts, the most rewarding of landfalls, the vision beyond the shoals and rocks, had now begun to form itself as the place and idea, the spiritual locus as well as the genius loci, towards which all his life he must inevitably move. 7

Ushant, Aiken's autobiographical narrative in the third person, takes its punning title from the Ile d'Ouessant, a lighthouse off the coast of France. It is an area of fogs and storms, of rocks, reefs and shoals, and it takes on great significance in Aiken's sea of life. It is a light on the far horizon, with "promise of landfall or menace of shipwreck" and Aiken's attention constantly returns to it in Ushant:
And hadn't his entire life been simply a locus bending itself again and again, after no matter how many interruptions and diversions, as of wars, or storms at sea, to this limit, this perhaps unattainable limit, this imperative and imperishable Ushant?8

For Aiken, the light, although not green, is Gatsby's: it is the "orgiastic future" which recedes before us, a future which, by definition, is not now. The events of that time and place to come can be seen only in passing or in retrospect—usually.

Ushant is the place of the spirits. According to Pythias of Marseilles, quoted by Aiken, the island was held by ancient belief to be the end of the world, the last resting place of the souls of the departed, "on their way whither?"9 Aiken tells us that he, too, has set his course for this place, a place removed from him in space-time but there, unknown.

The shape, which was to be the shape of oneself, and the shape of one's "view" from the little headland of oneself, was immanent, was already there: that map had already been drawn: inward, or outward; one would follow those contours and travel those roads, those seas, make landfall of those shores: they were there, waiting, below the horizon, those houses, those countries, to be lived in and loved: even to the perhaps unattainable—or approachable only a peril of shipwreck—Ushant.10

The future takes on a very physical reality in this characterization of time as place.

Ou sont les neiges d'antan?

Villon
Well, where are those snows of yesteryear? And
Tell me, where all past yeares are
Or who cleft the divels foot.

Aiken's reply, in *Ushant*, is "far away and long ago". Similarly, when he wails, "how to get back, how to get back", he is ostensibly speaking of England but implied is a point in time as well. The time-place coordinates are characteristic of the twentieth century philosophies of science of Russell and Whitehead but date back to the philosophy of mechanism, which includes some of Galileo's theories. Bergson, trying to establish a philosophy of "becoming" takes personal issue with a philosophy which suggests that everything past, present and future is "being" somewhere.

Radical mechanism implies a metaphysic in which the totality of the real is postulated complete in eternity, and in which the apparent duration of things merely expresses the infirmity of a mind that cannot know everything at once.

Aiken agrees to some extent with Bergson, placing some restrictions on the movement of consciousness. In *Blue Voyage*, the narrator explains the limitations of time:

> Consciousness being finite, it can only in theory comprehend, and feel with, all things. Theoretically, nothing is unknown to us, and nothing can surprise us or alienate us. But if imagination can go everywhere, it can only go to one place at a time. It is therefore that we have surprises in store for each other—we reveal to each other those aspects of the infinite which we had momentarily forgotten.

Aiken explains that because of time, we can be in only one place "at a time" but he implies the time-place idea which Bergson cannot tolerate, and he plays with the two coordinates. For example, in the short story "The Disciple" the central character's time consciousness is altered,
changing the possibilities of place:

Seven o'clock? But to Dace the word seemed timeless; and he felt extraordinarily, with a bright translucence, that made him bodiless, that he was existing separately, at one and the same time, in Salt Lake City, Buenos Aires, Florence—and where else?\(^{14}\)

Alternately, if you stay in the same place, your chances may be better of altering the other coordinate.

Hadn't he, ever since, every time he set sail for England, actually been setting sail for that carpeted floor on which the copy of *Tom Brown's School Days* still lay open at the luminous fragment of verse? Hadn't time stood still, ever since, at that echo of a moment, that phrase of incantation?\(^{15}\)

Perhaps you can go home again.

The time-place coordinates are important in *Ushant* because Aiken's "landscape of the soul" is a representation in three dimensions of a four-dimensional world. Behind, just over the horizon, is the past—ahead, the future. The spirits of *Ushant* are on their way west—in fact "ouessant" means "westerling", and the future becomes associated with the West in a very North American way. Aiken returned again and again to the Old Country to realize finally that the house in England really—after all—looked westward, like *Ushant* itself: And had been looking westward all the while. As the Bassett had truly said, the westward vision could be all the more persuasively and poignantly westward from that vantage-point in the past...\(^{16}\)

This is an important insight for Aiken into his own cultural heritage.

In *Ushant* he often returns to what he calls the "Blackstone theme". The first settler in the Boston area, a young minister named William Blackstone, fled his past, the Old World, and sought his soul in the wilderness. He found it necessary to keep moving to escape the civilization which he both fled and carried. "Westerling" has been a common theme in American
life and literature, and Aiken, discovering it, takes it to his bosom, linking it to Ushant and the future just over the horizon. He is aware of the role played by his own patterns of movement in a larger design and sees his influence continuing beyond him:

...it could, from there (the past), be indeed Blackstone's own vision; just as it could still for that matter, look even further westward, and into the Pacific, from Hambo's barranca...17

Hambo is the name Aiken uses in Ushant for Malcolm Lowry and Heart for the Gods is based on a visit by Aiken to his friend in Mexico. Aiken sees himself as a "link in the unfolding chain" between Blackstone, "the prototypical Hambo" and a younger generation of explorers, extending the vision to the Pacific.

"Go west, young man, go west" said Horace Greeley and romantic young men did and do. But Greeley was in San Francisco when he said this and when I look west I see the East.

From the extension of the westering movement through the geography of time, I wish to draw two conclusions. First, that our future continues to lie to the west. Second, that, given enough time, everything comes full circle.
Nature is an infinite sphere, whose center is everywhere and whose circumference is nowhere.

Pascal

When the Renaissance explorers sailed off over the horizon and returned years later from the opposite direction, having travelled in a straight line, the medieval mind could not come to terms with those facts within the flat-earth concept. Similarly, in the twentieth century, we are told that a space ship cannot travel a straight line away from the earth---that space is curved and that "straight lines" are really arcs of a great circle.

Perhaps it is thus that Aiken's voyagers, travelling in the infinite, move in patterns of circles, great and small. In King Coffin,

Gerta, Sandbach, Toppan, Jones---they were arranged and fell into place, the clock moved them in its geometrical orbit, their voices and faces faded as they passed, became vivid as they approached, faded again.1

And Mr. Arcularis, sitting in his cabin on shipboard, watches the
passengers promenade around the deck, appearing periodically at the porthole:

How odd to reflect on the fixed little orbits of these things.²

His awareness of circular patterns becomes even more pronounced as he fulfills his name and travels his own little arc toward Polaris and oblivion. And Noni, solitary as a bird, is on "the great circle to Mexico" although she will not return. Cather, too, describes a "swift little arc" as the train bears him toward the inevitable future. His arcs, of course, will add up to the great circle. Here Aiken seems to reflect his reading of Bergson. Not on the trail of the same idea but following it in the opposite direction, Bergson explains,

A very small element of a curve is very near being a straight line. And the smaller it is, the nearer.³

Throughout Aiken's fiction, at all levels and of all sizes, circles appear. In Great Circle, Cather finds his progress mirrored in nature by storms which move in circular patterns. In "Silent Snow, Secret Snow", Paul's retreat into his mind is marked by a loss of his sense of time and the closing of the circle of his consciousness. In Ushant, Aiken notes the pattern of his own life:

...all this astonishingly intricate come-and-go, this maze-like pattern of persistence and devotion and infidelity, which seemed to be perpetually leading him farther and farther afield, and in ever-widening circles, whether outer or inner...⁴
And, a critic might add, Aiken himself has come full circle, returning to the South, where he was born, to die.

The circles are patterns in time. In Great Circle, Cather must return to the past and relive his mother's infidelity in order to cope with that of his wife. Before entering the time-less Harvard bar, Cather admonishes himself:

why be in such a hurry, old fool? What good is hurry going to do you? Wrap yourself in a thick gauze of delay and confusion, like the spider; hang there, like the spider, aware of time only as the rock is aware of time...5

But Cather cannot stop the range of his mind through time into the future which he knows awaits him and which he cannot face. He lives at "one hour past midnight in the human soul" and finally passes out from drinking too much and enters the timeless limbo of his mind. Aiken has prefaced the novel with a quotation from Marston, which includes the line "The soule, not subject to dimension", and Cather, like Mr. Arcularis, finds himself becoming a child again. Taken half-circle to the past, Cather faces his early traumatic experiences, in a sense "relives" them, and can ultimately face present and future. He is no longer fearful of hearing that "Einstein is waiting just outside with the fourth dimension on his forehead". Cather permits himself to be sifted by time, to wait, and finally learns the ultimate lesson: acceptance. He learns to touch the earth, not with indifference or trepidation---

at last with acceptance; as one accepts such simple things as daybreak. Such simple and shattering things as daybreak. The strange and
Cather has had to become as a little child again in order to enter the kingdom of heaven in his own mind. In so doing, he realizes that he will be reborn, yet remember his last death.

I may be a child but I wasn't born yesterday. What does that mean, yesterday? It means tomorrow. I shall be born tomorrow...

As he is being born now. Process is of the essence. Or, as Dylan says, "he who is not busy being born---is busy dying".

This cyclic pattern, when extended in a fourth dimension, becomes a spiral, a "natural spiral" of form which Aiken perceives everywhere:

It was cold, he walked quickly---looking up, he saw that the moon was now almost directly overhead, swimming rapidly, dizzily, like a spun silver coin, through a shoal of silver mackerel. It gave to the whole night a sense of ominous hurry, a sense of finality, of falling, of impending end. The downward-going vortical swirl of everything, of all nature, the swirling and inward-funnelling death, like those marvellous late Van Goghs, where all shapes seemed to be centrifugally or centripetally self-consuming---trees burning spirally on whirling and burning hillsides, burning their own doomed intensity, the hillsides themselves an exhausted flame of grass and bushes, the very rocks exhaling fiercely away in the final ecstatic "Ahhh---!

Not surprisingly, this spiral form appears as a structural factor in
Aiken's prose works. In the short story "Bring! Bring!" the movement is from sleep to sleep, the familiar device of the "return". Similarly, *King Coffin* opens and closes in Jasper's room, at sunset and at dawn. Even the plot of this novel is concentric, with Jasper at the center of a web which extends around him. "Mr. Arcularis", too, is a radial story: Mr. A's trip through space is really in the mind of the sleeping ship's passenger, Mr. A., who is really in the mind of Mr. A. on the operating room table---which is all in the mind of the reader, who may be a butterfly imagining he's a man....

The pattern of *Ushant* is cyclical or spiral---a constant returning (after a side trip) to a familiar landmark: the bells, the Blackstone theme, Ushant. But this book of many circles is itself a fragment. On the opening page we read

...beginning without beginning...

Aiken's final words are

...it had no beginning, can have no end---

and so the word-concepts "beginning" and "end" are used to demonstrate their own meaninglessness except as parts of a greater whole.

Fenollosa makes this point in discussing our perception of the world around us: in nature there is no completion--our language-conception will have it so. And other writers have been aware of this problem.
Gide, confronted with the whole, says

I consider that life never presents us with anything which may not be looked upon as a fresh starting-point, no less than as a termination.\(^9\)

And Gertrude Stein:

A great deal perhaps all of my writing of The Making of Americans was an effort to escape from...inevitably feeling that anything that everything had meaning as beginning and middle and ending.\(^\text{10}\)

In Ushant, Aiken attempts to escape this order, to display the work as a fragment trapped between two covers but still forming part of a larger whole.

Related to this is Aiken's attempt to construct a novel of concentric rings. In Ushant he provides the following sketch from rough notes he once made for "a Ushant".

- "a" was to be the "zone of the actual", for example the narrator, on a ship, taking account of his roommates.
- "b" would be the "second zone of the actual", concerned with, for example, the narrator as writer, with the idea for a novel and its influence on the writer's reality.
- "c" would be "a new realm of reality"—the novel as it was to exist in itself—this in turn divisible into three levels:

"a" - the dreamer, whose dream was to form the substance of the book—he wakes, sleeps, etc.

"b" - the dream, in all its "iridescent ramifications", containing four people, a landscape, etc.

"c" - The kernel: a novella being translated by the four people, a book whose language and locale are constantly changing.  

Aiken goes on to explain the problems he experienced with the structure:

...the inward progression...would have had to be suspended...until the "outer" rings could be first established. But how, then? If the form was to be thus annular, or spiral, then perhaps end and beginning must be identical?...(the narrator) had once attempted a formulation of this very problem in design, obliquely in reference to Purple Passage and Dead Reckoning (Blue Voyage and Great Circle)...but it had remained fragmentary, at best. Everything was to be presented—in this view of the work of art—as on one time-level...As if the past, the present, and the future, were all presented at once...everything past would be hypothecated, everything future would be implied: the movement of these together would constitute a kind of static-dynamic, a stillness of motion round an invisible center.

This still point of the turning world is menaced always by an obscure impending tragedy. The four people would be threatened by

a timeless wave which hung over them, forever about to fall, but perhaps never falling; and themselves, in its shadow, timelessly approaching it, but perhaps never quite to arrive.
The stillness before the deluge is deafening. The silence before the bird sings is infinite....

Aiken explains that the concentric structure is an attempt at a

breaking down of reality into its so many and deceptive levels, one under another, as if one were peeling off the seven or eight layers of time and language and meaning in a thousand-year old palimpsest...\(^{12}\)

I am reminded of Peer Gynt, peeling an onion, stripping away the layers, looking for the kernel, the germ of life. A similar image is used in Hindu thought to describe Brahman, the cosmic self:

This is my self within the heart, smaller than a grain of rice, than a barley corn, than a mustard seed, than a grain of millet or than the kernel of a grain of millet. This is my self within the heart, greater than the earth, greater than the atmosphere, greater than the sky, greater than all these worlds...\(^{13}\)

Aiken goes on to explain in *Ushant* that using concentric structure was more difficult than he had anticipated----that he could never find a satisfactory point of entry into the series, though he tried! However, and despite disclaimers, in writing *Ushant*, Aiken has solved the problem he faced. The writer and the book appear on the recurrent levels "a" and "c"; Aiken is inside the book, and outside it, too, having successfully caught himself up in the spiral. And insofar as the reader helps create the book by reading it, he too is
sucked into the vortex, as the characters at the kernel of life are reading a book and are also in the book... And Gide writes a novel, Les Faux-Monnayeurs, about a novelist who is writing a novel called Les Faux-Monnayeurs, about a novelist who... This progression through levels of reality and time is evident in modern theatre as well.

In Pirandello's Six Characters in Search of an Author we are presented with a play within a play, an old dramatic device. In some contemporary plays, such as Marat-Sade, this idea is extended to include active participation by the audience, ensuring still another level of acting and time. The attempt in all cases is to present more than one time level at once. In Aiken's words,

As if—for instance—one were to focus, on a given star, an infinite series of telescopes, each of them one light-moment farther off, and, by co-ordinating this infinite series of visions, obtain a simultaneous view of all possible actions and at all possible times. As if the past, the present, and the future, were all presented at once...  

With Ushant Aiken is attempting to achieve structurally what he has elsewhere succeeded in suggesting by other means: an infinite regression. On the Quaker Oats box, there is a Quaker who holds a box of Quaker oats on which there is a Quaker who holds a box of Quaker oats... Ushant is the best literary presentation of this idea which I have seen to date.

Infinite regression is more easily suggested by imagery. In the short story "State of Mind", the narrator discovers a bowl of
Two water-snakes had inhabited this bowl. Of a sudden, obeying a simultaneous impulse, they began eating each other's tails. They had thus formed a ring, which as they devoured, became smaller. Smaller and smaller this ring of snake had become—till at last, as each snake performed the final swallow, they had both abruptly vanished. They were gone. Gone into the infinite. And here, of course, was the bowl of water to prove it.¹⁵

The image is ostensibly a visual one but, like Pascal's sphere, has a metaphysical quality beyond the sensory. Aiken may have been aware of a Mayan symbol of infinity—the worm that circles the world with its tail in its mouth. Perhaps more relevant to our time-in-language analysis is Aiken's dream of two sages, one of whom discovers a language so fragmented into particles that it would require thousands of years to gather enough of them to make a single statement; the other of whom discovers a language in which meaning is so concentrated that a single syllable is the equivalent of a thousand years.¹⁶ These examples all suggest an infinite divisibility which the Ushant fragment epitomizes. Concluding the book, Aiken says

And wasn't it all too ridiculously like the vision, somewhere described in the notes for that book, the final version for its beginningless an endless end?¹⁷

Aiken thus includes the book he is writing in the book he is writing.
In *Labyrinths*, Borges explains a similar and ancient device. In *A Thousand and One Nights*, Scheherezade tells stories to the king on successive nights. When she comes to their story, she hears the beginning of a story "which comprises all the others and also---monstrously---itself". The implication is that if the queen persists, "he will forever hear the truncated story, now infinite and circular."18

As the cycle throbs and the spiral spins, so the circular story goes on forever. By suggesting infinite regression, Aiken gives a spin to his perpetual motion machine and steps back. It becomes a microcosm of the great vortex of which it is a part and fulfills an artist's dream: the finite suggesting the infinite.

I am he
as you are he
as you are me
and we
are all together

*Beatles*

Aiken's infinite multiplicity of circles whose center is everywhere shows a perception which emphasizes the similarities between elements in our world rather than the differences. The one is comprised of the many, and the concentricity of form is designed to stress the qualities which the out-there and the in-here have in common:

...not in any sense separate, ship from water,
dream from sleeper, wave from wave, particle
from particle, drop from drop...limited and finite
yet part of an infinite series.

As Alan Watts explains in The Book, we are accustomed to think of
ourselves as creatures living in bags of skin, isolated from the
world but our skins connect us with the world, as well. On either
side of the membrane is flux. Of course Aiken uses no such organic
description. Looking out at the universe he sees

the stars, suns, moons, comets, nebulae, are
the burning jewels of that majestic invisible
mechanism, into which, perhaps, the great
horologist is this very minute gazing fixedly
through his inquisitorial eye-piece. Is it
going as it should? Is it gaining? Or losing?
...The great Gaze looks long and steadily into
the dark central recesses of the Movement, the
enormous spaces of the nothing in which time
moves, and yet always seems to remain in the
same place...

And, looking through the other end of the telescope:

Was this the Poet? It is man.
A glass-cased watch, through which you scan
The feverish fine small mechanism,
And hear it ticking*, while it sings:
Behold, this delicate paroxysm
Obedient to rebellious springs! 21

In the Author's Preface to Three Novels, Aiken notes our attempt at
a "totality of response to the universe with which we are faced,
outer and inner". His characters set out on their "individualist
Faust-Tamburlaine conquests of the inner and outer worlds..." Thus,
In "Mr. Arcularis" the hero is afloat on a sea of water, a sea of the mind, a sea of life, of space, of time. In Blue Voyage, Demarest, as his name suggests, is a "steaming universe of germ cells"; then the novel is ended with a letter from Demarest the writer, who explains that in his work he tries to present the reader with

wide-ranging chaos, in the vain hope that at the end he will see that the whole thing represents only one moment, one person, one feeling.  

He and his fellow-characters are variations on a theme, or manifestations of one impulse, as Jasper Ammen is his victim, Jones.

Another aspect of the same idea appears in Ushant when Aiken tells us of the "dream coterminous with sleep and the sleeper". How tell the dreamer from the dream? If the circles connect us as well as separate us, where does the big "I" begin and end? And what happens to our subject-object, active-passive dichotomies?

In Ushant, Aiken's narrator encompasses the dualities, becoming dancer, dance and spectator. He is "the watching and the watched".

The great horologist observes the mechanism,

but does the Gaze observe also, as it were at the very center of all this catastrophic and instantaneous eternity, another, and very different gaze, an outward-looking gaze, the gaze of the one who lies awake in Cabin 144 on a ship, this ship, at sea?  

The eye-beams intertwine, making both one. If space is curved, the gaze must return upon itself. Or, in Eckhart's words,
The eye wherein I see God is the same eye wherein
God sees me: my eye and God's eye are one eye,
one vision, one knowing, one love.  

In King Coffin, Jasper Ammen stands in a silent room, looking into a mirror and hears

his own silence once more beginning to deepen
and widen, and as he leaned closer to the glass
to look into his black pupils it seemed to him
that the sense of limitless silence and peace
came from his own eyes. The mystery lay there,
the solution lay there, was already known there,
it was as if he were looking into an immense
depth, an immense distance, and trying to make
out some far-off and tiny and incredible
action. Had it already taken shape there?
But remember, if thou gazest into the abyss
the abyss will also gaze into thee. 

The quotation from Nietzsche in the last line emphasizes
the nature of perception—"seeing" is as much active projection as
it is passive acceptance. Unfortunately for Jasper, it is not love
which he perceives-projects. Looking out there and into himself,
Jasper can see forever, down an infinite tunnel of time which is
empty—the silence of the void is the echo of his madness.
And all our intuitions mock
The formal logic of the clock

W.H. Auden
"New Year's Letter"

... 

And God made him die during the course
of a hundred years and then He revived
him and said:

"How long have you been here?"
"A day, or part of a day," he replied.

The Koran, II

... 

"If you knew Time as well as I do," said the
Hatter, "you wouldn't talk about wasting it.
It's him."
"...Now if you only kept on good terms with him,
he'd do almost anything you liked with the
clock. For instance, suppose it were nine
o'clock in the morning, just time to begin
lessons: you'd only have to whisper a hint to
Time, and round goes the clock in a twinkling!
Half-past one, time for dinner!"

Lewis Carroll
Alice's Adventures in Wonderland

Much of what has been written on time is an attempt to justify the
clock's ways to man. The enormous disparity which exists between time
as measured by an arbitrary scale and time as it appears in our personal
and individual experience has long perplexed the human mind. At one
end of this objective-subjective continuum is, for example, Newton:
Absolute, true and mathematical time, of itself and from its own nature, flows equably without relation to anything external.¹

At the other pole, for example, is F.H. Bradley:

My external sensations are no less private to myself than are my thoughts or my feelings. In either case my experience falls within my own circle, a circle closed on the outside; and, with all its elements alike, every sphere is opaque to the others which surround it... In brief, regarded as an existence which appears in a soul, the whole world for each is peculiar and private to that soul.²

Bradley states the completely subjective nature of all reality. But within that statement, how do we account for obvious differences in perception?

Matching Bradley's as a statement of radical subjectivism is the following one by Borges, which takes into account the modern fusing of time-place:

I deny, in a high number of instances, the existence of succession. I deny, in a high number of instances, contemporaneity as well. The lover who thinks "While I was so happy, thinking of my love's faithfulness, she was busy deceiving me", is deceiving himself. If every state in which we live is absolute, that happiness was not contemporary to that betrayal.³

For Borges, every instant in every place is autonomous.

Bergson tries to cope with both ends of the spectrum:

We do not think real time. But we live it, because life transcends intellect.⁴

This implies that living does not include thinking, and Bergson's "intuition" always takes precedence over his "intellect". Of course, in a world whose physics is based on Einstein's theories, we are more likely to confront the social application of relativity. For example, (1) there are as many time series as there are perceivers, and (2) time can vary for each perceiver. I have no intention of venturing
further into the bog of metaphysics to speculate on whether or not a
clock keeps time if there is no one there to watch it. Aiken seems to
be aware of the possibilities at both ends of the philosophical spectrum
and he uses them at will. How long is an instant? Or eternity?

At the subjective end, for example, we should not be surprised,
having been told that Mr. Arcularis has lost all sense of time, to
discover that the entire leisurely and lengthy story of voyage and
romance takes place in the mind of the central character just before
he dies. This distortion of time, or rather "absolute subjectivity"
of time, will be familiar to readers of Poe and Faulkner, and there
is a striking similarity in time structure between "Mr. Arcularis" and
Ambrose Bierce's "Incident at Owl Creek Bridge".

In the short story "The Moment" we are told that Hamerton, the
central figure,

had a singular theory about moments—he believed that
one's life consisted of at most half a dozen moments
of supreme experience, or perhaps not even as many as
that. There might be nothing to show for these moments
—they might be simply an instant of acute awareness or
of misery, or of exaltation.

This is the sort of moment which can and does provide the basis for
Aiken's stories, and even novels. Aiken is remarkably sensitive to the
fact that an "instant", a rough measurement of time, can be of any
duration. The instant is infinite in the mind. Thus, we have Aiken
describing, in Ushant, his childhood discovery of his parents' murder-
suicide:

after the desultory early-morning quarrel; came the
half-stifled scream, and then the sound of his father's
voice counting three and the two loud pistol-shots; and
he had tiptoed into the dark room, where the two bodies
lay motionless and apart, and, finding them dead, found
himself possessed of them forever.
Forever is a long time.

But this dependence on the moment in the mind provides the cyclical structure for stories such as "Mr. Arcularis" and "Bring! Bring!". It is as though a moment, like a bubble, swells and escapes from "normally" elapsing time. A similar case can be argued for King Coffin. Although the novel takes place over a period of weeks, it begins and ends with Jasper Ammen surveying the world from his apartment and noting the time. Within this circle lies an area which is a "moment"—an experience, lifetime, infinity.

At times, Aiken emphasizes the completely subjective nature of all things. For example, he describes being with friends, drinking toasts to a dead uncle,

\[
\text{toasts to one who, as long as they lived, would be immortal.}^7
\]

This is a Proust-like dependence of the dead on the living for their existence. Yet we forget Newton's "absolute time" or even the convention of clock time at our peril. Aiken best describes this in King Coffin, where the central character's time sense acts as the thermometer of his sanity.

Jasper Ammen is crazy as Caligula and just as clever. It is never Ammen's intelligence or rationality which is questioned; it is the madness of his ends.

\[
\text{That waterfall. And this seashell, if I touch it--it gives itself to me without asking anything in return. The truth is, you're alone, everyone is against you, and that, even if you don't like it, is all for the best!}^8
\]

Accompanying Jasper's growing egomania is an increasing emphasis on the subjectivity of time, until
Between his own world and the world outside, a peculiar division had now arrived, and if time still existed importantly for himself, it had no longer any important existence elsewhere. Jasper's ego runs amok and emphasizes "the world outside" and himself "inside" as opposing dualities. He has a mask of Nietzsche and bronze Buddha in different rooms, wishes to know but not be known. Ammen equates knowing with killing and says that when a cat plays with a mouse, it "understands" its victim. Thus, Ammen looks out, unseen, on a neighbor and "the young fool was comprehended, or killed..." When Ammen decides to kill someone chosen at random, just seeing them is "sufficient murder for the moment". And so Ammen refuses to be known. He must be chaste and epicene, pure. Of his friends he thinks, "What they must learn was that he could intrude, but not they..." Gerta, who is as close to him as anyone, observes

You're afraid I'll contaminate you, so you prefer to have me contaminate Sandbach, or to be contaminated by him. You prefer to get your contamination at one remove, and to experiment with us as if we were guinea pigs! Ammen agrees; he has decided to live outside society and common time, one of its conventions. Part of his preoccupation is with the purity, the resistance to change, of the abstract, the conceptual. He decides to extend this thought to the murder he is planning.

An action should have the purity of a work of art—it would be as abstract and as absolute as a problem in algebra. But the point is that there is no such thing as an abstract action. We are aware of the passage of time only through change and Jasper, in his quest for purity, would stop change and time. Ammen the egotist attempts to impose his will on the universe, to forcibly
restrain the hands of the clock. He might as well try pulling the hands from his pocket watch...

To achieve reality, Ammen's actions must be defined in space and time, "the dream made flesh". But throughout the novel we see that he tries to remain outside the flow of time while still affecting events within it. Once he has made up his mind about the murder, about the "rightness and terribleness of the deed" he feels relieved of the pressure of time:

And there was now, all of a sudden, plenty of time--for with the sense of relief had also come a curious alteration of his sense of hurry--as if the hurry no longer need be transacted externally but could become, and without pressure, concentric, an affair of his own, a mere matter of revolving within or around himself.¹²

Ammen now feels that if time exists for himself, it no longer has any existence for the rest of the world.

The situation, or series of situations, which he had created, would remain as if suspended until he chose to resolve them: Gerta would be waiting, Sandbach would be waiting, everything would hang motionless in a kind of timeless limbo.¹³

Ammen goes on to compare the situation he has created to the Grecian Urn. However, Ammen's masterpiece requires constant attention, being composed of living parts subject to change, and he is constantly forced to be aware of the passage of time. He cannot remain outside time and make his idea a reality. As Ammen's idea materializes, he finds his victim, Jones, gets to "know" his every aspect, plans the murder--and suddenly recognizes himself in the stranger. Logically, in accordance with the idea of "know thyself", Jasper commits suicide. As he inexorably approaches his self-realization and inevitable death, he becomes intensely aware of the flow of time. Like Camus' outsider
on the beach, he experiences an hiatus in time. Jasper

saw the sun just emerging with swimming rim, a
pale, lemon-yellow, from a bright edge of cloud.
It was time caught in the act of moving, time in its
dizzy descent to time.14

In the flash of a moment, Jasper can almost hold time. He can slow
it down or speed it up but he cannot stop it.

Nor can he escape the past, despite his efforts. At one
point he remarks that

the past should always be cut ruthlessly away,
allowed to fall from one, remembered not for its
leaves but for its seeds...15

And so it is important that, towards the end, along with his con­
stant awareness of clocks striking, Jasper should discover a letter
from his hated father;

it lay there like some ugly relic of his own past,
something hateful and obscene, something to be
destroyed.16

But, significantly, he doesn't, he can't destroy it. The only thing
he can destroy is himself, which he proceeds to do. I am reminded of
Aldous Huxley's comment, made in a social context, that time cannot
be worshipped with impunity. Neither can it be controlled. Where
Cather learns acceptance, Ammen places himself in opposition to the
universe of time and nature, around him and within him. King Coffin
is a very moral tale--ending in madness and death.
VII

Romance is the great traditional enemy of the Present.

Wyndham Lewis

Jasper Ammen's infuriation with a past which is beyond his grasp brings to light another aspect of the time problem. In Island, Aldous Huxley's bird cries "here and now! Here and now!"

In the early poetry, Aiken's bird cries "previous, previous".¹

In Ushant, Aiken acknowledges the Romantic qualities in his work, particularly that of his youth. Travelling in Europe as a young man, Aiken visited Italy where

the identification with Keats had...reached its bathetic and pathetic apogee...²

This is the period when Aiken was writing on the fly-leaf of his Palgrave's Golden Treasury:

The Pillars of Hercules go down
Like clouds beneath the sea;
O that man's griefs went down so soon
In Time's immensity!³

Older and more disciplined, Aiken still expresses a preoccupation with "yesterday and yesterday and yesterday". In Ushant we see the young Aiken failing to pursue his first love affair but having "the definite feeling that the next time would be the time..."⁴ But Aiken now knows that there is never any next time. This is often expressed as a "carpe diem" theme as, for example, in the short story "The Necktie"
or in Aiken's account in *Ushant* of a assignation which he missed because he felt he could not go in worn-out trousers. The moment was gone forever. In *Blue Voyage*, the narrator describes men, in a smoking room, recounting their conquests to one another:

> Was it, as always assumed, a mere boastfulness, a mere rooster crow from the dunghill? No...It was the passionate desire to recreate, to live over again those inestimable instants of life, so tragically few, so irrecoverably lost.\(^5\)

Later in the novel, the narrator discovers that he does have access to the past, that it is present around and within him—but in the present. As Bergson explains, to "go back to a time" involves reversing the process of "duration" and un-doing the events which have taken place since that time. If the past is to be revisited, this must be done from the here-and-now.

Faulkner's past can be summoned at will:

> for every Southern boy fourteen years old, not once but whenever he wants it, there is the instant when its not yet two o'clock on that July afternoon in 1863.\(^6\)

Faulkner's past is not only accessible, but inescapable. Characters step off the back porch into another century, for their past lives all around them. One whiff of wistaria and they're gone. Logically extended, this awareness of the past leads to an inability to exist except in retrospect. One of Gore Vidal's characters epitomizes this problem:

> he would have to wait until he could safely recall this scene in memory; only in the future could he ever discover what, if anything, he had felt: he existed almost entirely in recollection, a peculiarity of considerable value to him as a writer, though disastrous in his life since no event could touch him until it was safely past, until alone in bed at night
he could experience in a rush all the emotions he had been unable to feel at the appropriate time; then he would writhe, knowing it was again too late to act.\(^7\)

Here is "emotion recollected in tranquility" in the extreme.

The past of poor Thomas Wolfe springs out upon him, bringing nothing but grief:

And time still passing...passing like a leaf...
Time passing, fading like a flower...time passing like a river flowing...time passing...and remembered suddenly, like the forgotten leaf and wheel.\(^8\)

As critic Marjorie Church points out, Wolfe's past can be recalled but not recaptured.

In contrast to this is Proust, whose trilogy of time is concluded with \textit{The Past Recaptured}, in which he explains it was now possible

for the being within me to seize, isolate, immobilize for the duration of a lightning flash what it never apprehends, namely, a fragment of time in its pure state.\(^9\)

Proust's \textit{La Recherche du Temps Perdu} has for an English title \textit{The Remembrance of Things Past}, but a literal translation would be "In Search of Lost Time". This is an important distinction because Proust goes searching for the "lost" past—and finds it. The looking and the finding take three volumes, prompting Huxley's Mark Rampion in \textit{Point Counter Point} to refer to Proust's "Horrible great book" as an "endless masturbation".

Proust's moment of time in its "pure state" recalls Jasper Ammen's hiatus in time. Both Proust and Aiken read Bergson and their time is superficially his. The instant of time is preserved from Bergson's duration,
of which the flow is continuous and in which we pass insensibly from one state to another.

Both present and past exist simultaneously and every moment contains both. Says Bergson,

our duration is not merely one instant replacing another; if it were, there would never be anything but the present--no prolonging of the past into the actual, no evolution, no concrete duration. Duration is the continuous progress of the past which gnaws into the future and which swells as it advances.\(^\text{10}\)

Bergson's best image is that of the present as a giant snowball which contains the past and grows as it rolls. In *Ushant*, Aiken speaks fondly of the pleasure of reminiscence, thoughts over a leisurely drink, conversation while strolling in the park. He considers an opinion by one of his women that "reminiscence was weakness" and puts it aside, calling recollection not only a pleasure but "the ultimate essence of life";

it was precisely in proportion to one's ability to combine a maximum of just such awareness of the past with the nexus of the moment, and the then going forward, that one accomplished, with any grace, any beauty, the 'precarious gait we call experience'.\(^\text{11}\)

The 'precarious gait' is executed on top of Bergson's snowball.

But Bergson's theory leaves a great deal to be said about the future. Bergson's "simple law" is that

*the present contains nothing more than the past,*

and what is found in the effect was already in the cause.\(^\text{12}\)

Bergson, interested in the process of time as reflected in the past-present relationship simply dispenses with speculation on the unknown future.
Of the future, only that is foreseen which is like the past or can be made up again with elements like those of the past.13

Bergson is careful not to limit the future, speaking only of that which can be foreseen, but he says no more of the matter and it is clear that he is not really interested in this problem. If, as Sartre says, Faulkner decapitates time, so does Bergson. This is not the case with Aiken however, whose present contain both past and future.
VIII

If you can look into the seeds of time,
And say which grain will grow and which will not,
Speak then to me...

Macbeth

One of the most interesting observers of time in the twentieth century is J.W. Dunne, an English engineer whose several books, including An Experiment with Time, explain his interest in this subject. Dunne summarizes the conventional view of time in several points: it is the fourth dimension, there is a present which "moves" along a continuum in some way, effecting a "passage" of time, and so on.\(^1\) Dunne's first objection to this description is that motion in time must be timeable, requiring an outside observer, who also must be timed, in the best Quaker oats tradition. This sort of progression Dunne called "serialism". We have seen Aiken using this as "infinite regression".

Why bother to foresee that fatality of decay and change, of clicking and mechanical and inevitable death, when one remembers that even oneself, the foreseer, was foreseen in the act of foreseeing, and that even one's newness is old?\(^2\)

The progression is infinite, a continuum whose ends can be seen only by Kant's infinite God. Dunne simply leaves this problem and dispenses with outside observers by accepting an idea from relativity theory which is
quite clear upon one very important matter. The time dimension, for any given observer, is simply the dimension in which his own world-line happens to extend through the four-dimensional continuum.\(^3\)

Thereafter, Dunne is content to examine only his own time dimension, whose unconventional behaviour got him interested in time in the first place. He states that if the universe is space stretched out in time, then our view of this space-time continuum is false—

a view with the "future" part unaccountably missing, cut off from the growing "past" part by a travelling "present moment"...\(^4\)

Having thus dispensed with Bergson, Dunne goes on with his experiment, which is simply a controlled proof, for his logical mind, of the pre-cognition which he had experienced. Dunne found he had access to the future when certain of his dreams became reality. Like a Mayan whose past is not behind him, but around him, Dunne had to cope with a "future" which seeped into his "present". He points out that this happening just once is enough to destroy the validity of our conventional ideas on time. Similarly, Proust observes,

One minute freed from the order of time has created in us, so that we can feel it, man freed from the order of time...the word "death" has no meaning for him; situated outside time, what could he fear of the future?\(^5\)

Proust's attempts to go back in time, to break the order of time is here seen to be linked to fear of the future, the great unknown. If the future were known, would we fear it less, or would there then be nothing of interest ahead?

In any case, the conventional past-present-future sequence to which our minds are trained is altered for some people. In its mildest form, it is \(d\acute{e}j\acute{a} vu\), the sense of having already seen something
or been somewhere. Aiken describes it well in *Ushant*:

> the same feeling of being beckoned to on all sides; everything was at once familiar: the mysterious familiarity of the *deja vu*...  

When this happened on a "transcendental, and overpowering scale" Aiken felt as though he had been leading a double life, had just witnessed "some miracle of temporal transformation". Aiken's characters undergo similar experiences. For example, with the increasing distortion of his time sense, Mr. Arcularis thinks,

> it was all like something he had experienced somewhere before.

Or the precognition can take a more definite form, as in the actual predicting of the future. In *Ushant*, Aiken recounts a meeting with a clairvoyant who spoke with "astonishing foresight and accuracy" and Aiken himself had accurate precognitive dreams—characteristically about ship tragedies.

Aiken's best treatment of the idea of access to the future is in *Blue Voyage*, the familiar tale of shipboard adventure, intrigue and romance on the high seas—of time. The novel is prefaced by a quotation from Coleridge in which man is described as a "phantom dim of past and future wrought". The voyagers become aware of

> the sense of the infinite, and of being isolated in its garish and terrifying profanity,

as they move into a state of consciousness in which past, present and future play equally important roles, each recurring until there is no distinction between these states, which exist at once.

The sense of unity of time is added to in this novel by the presence of a clairvoyant and a discussion of the opium or hashish which he probably uses. The narrator, Demarest, knows about these drugs and
explains their influence on him:

it seems to me that I can foresee everything, exactly the feeling that one has in a hashish or mescal trance... You lost the power to distinguish in time and place.  

As the novel develops this loss of time-sense expands to become

a crippling sense of having foreseen every possible action or feeling or thought, not only of my own, but also of everyone else...

He perceives himself and the other passengers as travellers in a timeless, placeless universe. Their orbits weave patterns in the infinite. When Demarest "coincidentally" meets on shipboard the fiancée he is going to Europe to seek, she remarks that this meeting made one feel like Buddhists, or some such thing--meeting, reincarnated, every thousand years or so...

With the fusing of time, and his growing omniscience, Demarest develops a sense of the infinite and an awareness of the cyclical nature of the universe.

The short story "The Disciple" takes place under similar circumstances. The central character finds himself able to answer, perhaps by chance, certain questions which require foreknowledge. This prompts his questioner to reveal himself:

"I am Ahasver - the eternal Jew".

"Oh! You are- I see. And we meet every Easter Eve".

"Every Easter Eve."

"You are eternal - of course, I've heard of you. As for me, I suppose I'm just, for the moment, reincarnated."

"Reincarnated".

Dace finds he is supposed to be Jadas. The two meet, cyclically, every year to re-enact their part in the crucifixion. But Dace breaks the
pattern, raising the question of whether or not action can be taken to change the future as it is foreseen; if so, the future is different and what was foreseen was not the future. But I digress...

In *Blue Voyage*, Demarest confronts his own past and future, manifest in the present in the form of the other passengers. These "aspects of the infinite" are finally drawn together in the dream sequence, when the central characters meet on deck at night. Cynthia remarks to him about the others,

They are about us. They go with us where we go. They are our history and we are their immortality.13

As Demarest's present is his past and future, so is he himself all the other people. This is an extension of the "doppelganger" into a multiplicity not only of character but of time as well.

In his excellent book *Man and Time*, J.B. Priestley discusses a phenomenon which some people have experienced (I believe Priestly quotes Kirkegaard) and which is akin to *déjà vu*. You are a young man, walking with a friend, and are approached by an older man who identifies himself as your older self. You deny any such thing and depart with your friend. Years later, you are out walking and meet two young men, one of whom you recognize as yourself when still young. You explain this to him but he scoffs and departs.14 This "loop in the life-line" is remarkably similar to the experience of Demarest. One of his fellow-travellers in particular appears to be more and more like one side of Demarest's character. We are told that this is "that dark self which wants to die".

Smith represents... that little something hidden in all of us... It's the something that remembers birth, the horror of birth, and remembers not only that but also
the antecedent death; it remembers that nothingness which is our real nature, and desires passionately to go back to it. And it will go back to it.15

Fittingly, Smith is an old man on his way back to England to die—the alter ego of Mr. Arcularis as well. Cynthia is Demarest's romantic love, his idealized woman, his nebulous future. Mrs. Faubion, the gay divorcée is his immediate, tangible future, the one which will come knocking on his stateroom door that night. Demarest finds his future incarnate. His circle now contains past, present, and future. Despite his uncertain gait, he can now see where the snowball is going.
And yonder all before us lye
Desarts of vast Eternity

Marvell
"To His Gay Mistress"

But in our culture, the future is the great repository for all that which is not now. It is in the future, under certain conditions, that we will be happy. At some time in the future, after our deaths, we will find eternity, and so on. If, in the present, we have access to past and future, where is eternity?

A standard English dictionary, reflecting the confusion in our language-consciousness progression, states that eternity is both "the future life" and also "infinite time, especially future".\(^1\) A dictionary of philosophy emphasizes the latter definition, in which eternity is

\[
\text{an infinite extent of time, in which every event is future at one time, present at another, past at another.}\quad 2
\]

In other words, eternity is the whole length of the time continuum. Time is eternity.

Platonic, Christian and Neo-Platonic thought share the belief that time and Eternity are opposed dualities. Time or succession is mere becoming; to exist in time is to exist imperfectly. Eternity is being, the perfection of permanence. The many and the one are irreconcilably opposed. Time is the moving image, the shadow of Eternity.
This belief appears in Western literature in descriptions of eternity as a magic place out of time, like the garden described in *The Romance of the Rose*. For example, in what passes for a "mystical" tradition, we find Yeats seeking the "artifice of eternity" out of time and out of nature. But Yeats' eternity cannot be attained until the end of time.

When all sequence comes to an end, time comes to an end, and the soul puts on the rhythmic or spiritual or luminous body and contemplates all the events of its memory and every possible impulse in an eternal possession of itself in one single moment.³

Time and eternity remain opposed.

As Susuki points out in *Mysticism: Christian and Buddhist*, the reconciliation of the two "opposites" in the sermons of Meister Eckhart is surprisingly Eastern. Eckhart says we should consider the individual to be born between one and two. The one is eternity, ever-above and without variation. The two is time, changing and given to multiplication.⁴

Both elements are necessary to the whole, as two sides form a coin. From the moment we are born, we begin living--and dying. For Eckhart, life is a process of births, a continuous birth-in-life; he is "busy being born", not busy dying.

...therefore, I am my own first cause, both of my eternal being and of my temporal being. To this end I was born, and by virtue of my birth being eternal, I shall never die. It is of the nature of this eternal birth that I have been eternally, that I am now, and shall be forever. What I am as a temporal creature is to die and come to nothingness, for it came with time and so with time it will pass away. In my eternal birth, however, everything was begotten. I was my own first cause as well as the first cause of everything else. If I had willed it, neither I nor the world would have come to be! If
I had not been, there would have been no god. There is, however, no need to understand this.5

There is, however, no need to understand this.

Eckhart's eternity is always accessible in the present—

eternity would not be eternal could it newly become and were not always.6

Since the eternal is what is constantly present, and in a world of flux, the only constant is change, then time and eternity are one.

Similarly, Buddhist thought includes both time-serialism and eternity, without isolated and opposing dualities. Suzuki explains,

Time is eternity and eternity is time...zero is infinity and infinity is zero.7

Nakamura quotes a translation from Indian Buddhist scripture by Master Dogen, thirteenth century Japanese Zen master:

Buddhahood is time. He who want to know Buddhahood may know it by knowing time as it is revealed to us. And as time is something in which we are already immersed, Buddhahood is not something that is to be sought in the future but is something that is realized where we are.8

And Suzuki explains that those who live in the light of eternity always "are" and are never subject to the transitory "was" and "will be". Thus eternity, like happiness becomes a state of mind rather than a goal—a realization in the present, not the future. This, in Eckhart's words is "the eternal now".9

We have seen in Aiken's prose that the "moment" can be of varying length, and that all time occurs in the present. From the conjunction of these ideas comes an "eternal instant" which is remarkably like Eckhart's. It is rather vague and romantic in the early "Mr. Arcularis"; as Mr. A. takes final leave of Miss Dean,
time ceased for them, for an eternal instant they were happy. 10

But in Ushant, the vision is clarified:

D. could hear, in the folded interval between past and future, and therefore as if timeless, someone running down that cobbled street... 11

This is the "forever" that is always now, the eternity in Donovan's "seagull flies across my eye forever". It is a magic place out of time, but not beyond it or after it. It is an eternity in time, into time, through time—a wedge of "now" driven between past and future.

Like Eliot's "still point of the turning world", Aiken's "now"

lies there, intensely still, as the all-embracing moment of comprehension, the invisible center of the circle. 12

Other writers have seen this eternal moment and attempted to catch it. In "Dining-Room Tea" Rupert Brooke describes his experience:

For lifted clear and still and strange
From the dark woven flow of change
Under a vast and starless sky
I saw the immortal moment lie.

But glimpses of eternity are fleeting,

... and Time began to creep.
Change closed about me like a sleep.

In Story of a Novel, Thomas Wolfe explains his three time levels:

actual present, past and

time immutable...a kind of eternal and unchanging universe of time against which would be projected the transience of man's life, the bitter briefness of his day. 13

The conjunction of these time levels produces an all-inclusive moment of timeless suspension. For example, in Look Homeward, Angel, Wolfe describes
the terrible moment of immobility stamped with eternity in which, passing life at great speed, both the observer and the observed seem frozen in time. There was one moment of timeless suspension.14

In this moment, Eugene and Ben in the thousands people the square; the sequence of time is telescoped to an instant, much as Aiken suggests doing on a cosmic scale in Ushant.

In a printed interview, Faulkner explains that "there isn't any time":

In fact, I agree pretty much with Bergson's theory of the fluidity of time. There is only the present moment, in which I include both the past and the future, and that is eternity.15

Faulkner may be a bit free with Bergson's time scheme but, not, I think, to its detriment. Bergson did find an eternity, an "eternity of life" attained through intuition, as opposed to the "conceptual eternity, which is an eternity of death".16 Despite the centuries-old tradition of la logique française a strong underground maintains that

the heart has its reasons which reason cannot know...

The extent of Bergson's influence on Aiken has been demonstrated. At its most important, it leads to Aiken's emphasis on process and his belief that "if it's not now, it's not ever".

A good example of the role of past and future in the present is given by Suzuki in his explanation of Zen parable.

They are both there: the winter snows do not melt away when spring starts. The spring breeze passes over the same old winter snows. The old and the new are mingled.17

Suzuki points out that the imaginary lines dividing one from another exist in language, not experience. It seems that language and thought, "in spiral ascent" can rise far above any perceived reality, and then
deny its existence.

Other writers have seen the disparity between time as they experienced it and the language-consciousness syndrome, and have attempted to break the circle. Gertrude Stein explains,

I wrote a negro story called Melanctha--In that there was a constant recurring and beginning there was a marked direction in the direction of being in the present although naturally I had been accustomed to past present and future, and why, because the composition forming around me was a prolonged present.18

Like Aiken's concentric circles of "now", Miss Stein's "being in the present" emphasizes the necessary currentness of reality.

I would like to conclude this discussion of eternity with a quotation from Thomas Mann's "Tales of Jacob". It is the most emphatic affirmation of the "here and now" which I have seen to date.

For the essence of life is presentness, and only in a mythical sense does its mystery appear in the time-forms of past and future... For it is, always is, however much we may say It was.19
Aiken's minutiae of time, the pattern of his prose and the structure of his stories combine to present a view of time which is uncharacteristic of our age and culture. The insistence on the necessary currentness of reality becomes the more emphatic for Aiken's occasional lapse to nostalgie longing for the past or to anticipation of the future. His characters learn again and again that it's now -- forever. Cather and Demarest confront the paradoxes of time and react in horror. Yet they are forced to go deeply into the problem, lose themselves, and eventually emerge on the other side, beyond paradox, accepting rather than resolving it. Before enlightenment a man is a man, a tree is a tree, a rock is a rock. During enlightenment, a man is no longer a man, a tree is no longer a tree, a rock is no longer a rock. After enlightenment, a man is a man, a tree is a tree, a rock is a rock.

Aiken's answer to the time problem is characteristically Eastern: now is forever as time is eternity. The past and future exist in the present, inherent in a current reality. More than any other modern American writer, Aiken works to develop a new awareness of time, a consciousness which goes beyond the conventional time continuum. The language-consciousness spiral is ever-widening, ever-diminishing. The continuum is gone. It is now.
It is with reference to the present that Sartre quotes the French poet Ponge: "man is the future of man". We shape and mold the future by our decisions and actions in the present; we are creating the future right now. As a moral critic, Sartre rejects the past-oriented writers—he is drawn to Faulkner but disapproves of him: "I like his art, but I do not believe in his metaphysics". Similarly, the French nouvelle vague writers react to traditional views on time by chopping sequence into pieces which are then scrambled and spread out in a sort of omelette of time.

Traditionally, it is to the artist that we look for an expression of our environment. We expect the artist to guide our perception, in fact, to be "ahead of his time". Gertrude Stein objects to this phrasing.

No one is ahead of his time, it is only that the particular variety of creating his time is the one that his contemporaries who are also creating their own time refuse to accept. And they refuse to accept for a very simple reason and that is that they do not have to accept it for any reason. 

Borges extends this idea to cover the past, and restates it:

The fact is that every writer creates his own precursors. His work modifies our conception of the past, as it will modify the future.

Again, the dependence is on the present, a present in which the artist creates all other times. Shelley explains this in discussing the role of the poet.
He not only beholds intensely the present as it is, and discovers those laws according to which present things ought to be ordered, but he beholds the future in the present, and his thoughts are the germs of the flower and the fruit of latest time...A poet participates in the eternal, the infinite, and the one.4

This view sees the artist as discoverer as much as creator. In either case, the work of art transcends time by preserving a moment, making it "timeless". The Grecian Urn, for example, has relevance to all times because it is the embodiment of an eternal truth. This is the truth which carries Proust to the past, which prompts him to conclude that a work of art is "the only means of regaining lost time".5

In Ushant, Aiken mentions various attempts, such as yoga, to gain access to the source of such verity. The spring, he knows, is in the land of the psyche, "a land of which one could make oneself possessor by a mere strictness of awareness".6 But Aiken's real discipline is that of the writer. Elsewhere in Ushant he explains his discovery that writing was the stratagem by which he could remain forever on the floor in that room at Savannah, reading, for the first time, a passage of verse; a passage which, like Paul's sheathed arches of eternity, unfolding and receding endlessly away, was indeed a passage, a passage to every-where; but from which he would return, at last, to find that he had never in effect gone anywhere at all, and was still, exactly, there.7

First reading, then writing the magic words of passage to everywhen.

Aiken's access to a timeless world comes through his art--but not in any static work of art. Characteristically, the answer is in process, in the act of writing. Carried through the landscape of his soul by the flux of time, Aiken finds a hole between the past and the future, and disappears down it into a new dimension--an eternity
of art. Here is the "invisible center of the circle", here is the "divine harmony", here is the eternity of an instant.
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There is little criticism on Aiken and almost none on his prose. Hoffman's book contains one short chapter on the fiction, and there are references to it, in passing, by other critics. The only comments on Aiken's use of time are one by Randall Jarrell, who objects that Aiken uses words such as "time, "infinity", "chaos" and "space" obsessively;\(^1\) and one by Hoffman, who remarks that while "the paradoxes of time were real and viable for Donne and his contemporaries, as indeed they are for Eliot. /by Aiken/ they cannot be indulged in, or meaningfully employed."\(^2\)

Of the books on time, Priestley's is the best general introduction to the subject. Fraser's anthology is an excellent collection of specialized views. Church and Mendilow are interesting on time in literature, although neither mention Aiken.
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9. Suzuki, p. 73.

10. Aiken, *Collected Short Stories*, p. 52.
12. Ibid., p. 329.

17. Suzuki, p. 54.

CHAPTER X

1 Jean-Paul Sartre, Literary Essays, New York, 1957, p. 81.
2 Stein, Composition as Explanation, p. 455.
4 Shelley, Defence of Poetry, III.
5 Proust, Time Recaptured, p. 251.
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7 Ibid., p. 301.
A NOTE ON BIBLIOGRAPHY
