Inquiry into the part played by images and figures of speech in the technique of the novels of Virginia Woolf

Agnes Kathleen Mace

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AN INQUIRY INTO THE PART PLAYED BY IMAGES AND FIGURES OF SPEECH IN THE TECHNIQUE OF THE NOVELS OF VIRGINIA WOOLF

by

Sister Agnes Kathleen Mace

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts

Montana State University

1941

Approved

Chairman of Examining Committee

Chairman of Graduate Committee
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INTRODUCTION

Virginia Woolf's novels illustrate three distinct methods of writing. She changed from a conventional narrative style to the stream-of-consciousness style and then to a style combining both narrative and stream-of-consciousness. The purpose of this study is to show that Virginia Woolf's use of images and figures of speech in these changes is particularly important in that they illustrate her viewpoint of life, the individual peculiarities of her genius, and that they exhibit her skill in adapting the things of sense to the elucidation of sensibility.

To point out her aims in general and their literary and philosophical backgrounds will be illuminating and serve as an introduction to the study of her technique.

The history of scientific philosophy supplies the pattern for the history of literature. The second reflects the efforts of the former to weave all phenomena into a single understandable web. Since Descartes' doctrine of the absolute antithesis of mind and matter, succeeding philosophy has become anthropocentric and idealistic. Everything, the objective world, its beginning and end, man and his destiny, God himself, are all studied in the light of individual consciousness. Modern fiction reflects this attitude adapted by various successors of Descartes. One of these, Henri Bergson, has influenced some of the twentieth century's intellectual, moral, and artistic attitudes to a degree that some knowledge of his theories is necessary to the fuller understanding of contemporary literature, particularly that of Virginia Woolf.
The modern novelist, including Virginia Woolf, is very much concerned with the question of Time.¹ Bergson² has undertaken to explain Time. While examining the formulas of mechanics for their philosophical implications, he decided that the geometric representation of time as a straight line is inadequate and even false when applied to the phenomena of life and mind. The physical conception of time is a spatial conception—a fourth dimension—but time or duration as the mind sees or feels it is no line on which events may be strung in order; it is durations of unequal elasticities which belong to the acts of our consciousness as well as to external things. It is the flow of the "now" into the "now." It is the continuous unrolling of our conscious life—a continual becoming, a flow of psychological states which become static in conception and, hence untrue, if we try to fix it in our intelligences.


²Henri Bergson was born October 18, 1859, in Paris of Anglo-Jewish parents. He became a naturalised Frenchman in his youth, and after brilliant successes as a student, enjoyed a long career as teacher of philosophy in France. The furore he created by his lectures in both France and England exasperated him as it seriously interfered with the intellectual concentration so necessary for him. Hence he resigned his chair at the College de France in 1921, and, after serving his country for a while in politics and international affairs, retired into complete seclusion. He died in France January 4, 1941, at the age of eighty-one, having resigned all his honors because of the discriminatory legislation against the Jews recently enacted in France. He won the Nobel Prize for literature in 1927 and was made a commander of the Legion d'Honneur, an officer of l'Instruction Publique, a member of the Academie Francaise, and a member of l'Institut. William James who acknowledged him as master introduced him to England. Such varied groups as the Syndicalist laborites in France, the young Tory Democrats of England, the Modernists, the post-Impressionists, and the Symbolists have named Bergson as their spiritual authority or inspiration.
From Bergson's conception of time arise his theory of personality and his view of life. If time is duration or durations whose interval rhythms vary according to the consciousness experiencing them, then personality becomes "a continuity of indivisible movement." Life is change.

Life as a whole, from the initial impulsion that thrust it into the world, will appear as a wave which rises, and which is opposed by the descending movement of matter. This ascending life cannot be defined because it is seen only by intuition. Mr. Thomas J. Gerrard explains it as "a conscious vital push which sees intuitively and which wills according to the exigencies of creation." The part that memory plays is not that of a file in which to place our recollections but that of a stream reproducing the whole flow of them and uniting them with the present so that all are the "now."

Bergson describes it:

...the piling up of the past upon the past goes on without relaxation...All that we have felt, thought, and willed from our earliest infancy is there, leaning over the present which is about to join it, pressing against the portals of consciousness...

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6 Bergson, Henri, op. cit., p. 5.
To understand life we must seize this change directly in an integral experience. But a direction of attention upon the stream of consciousness breaks it up and makes it unmoving. Our intellect, according to Bergson, has made concepts which apply only to the material world and are inadequate to express the life of the mind. However, there is another state, the psychical which is immensely wider than the cerebral. By exercising this other kind of introspection the intellect, will, by touching and living reality, arrive thus at intuitive knowledge. The intellect will see each one of these psychic impressions as a "swell of water." By endeavoring to "reinforce vitality" activity may develop into consciousness without losing movement and then "the ego may be seized as it really is, as a transition and a continuity." Each "swell of water" then will become an understandable part of the ocean. Life is a flux and a creation. "To exist is to change, and to change is to mature, and to mature is to go on creating oneself endlessly." The novelist who follows Bergson, consequently, must exaggerate subjectivism and individualism, underestimate intelligence, replace reason by sensation and make sensation the norm of conduct. He must cast out of the realm of reality the concept of space, for space implies

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8Slosson, Edwin E., op. cit., p. 60.
9Ibid., p. 60.
the discontinuity of bodies, namely that they are side by side—but Bergsonian reality is continuous, an indivisible flux.

Among prominent novelists who have apparently followed Bergson are Marcel Proust, James Joyce, and Virginia Woolf. Edmund Wilson states that Marcel Proust had been deeply influenced by Henri Bergson, although it is reported that Clive Bell had denied it. Mr. Wilson points out Proust's concern with the individual's turning inward to find true reality, his opposition to Time's flow that he might establish extra-temporal symbols, and his being the first important novelist who has applied Symbolist principles in fiction. The world of events in James Joyce's Ulysses make up a Bergsonian "continuum." Mr. Beach says of the book:

"He has no plot involving incidents following one another in the direction of time. He has confined his entire narrative to one day, and within that day he has spread wide, breadthwise, and plunged down far into psychology, depthwise...Thus Joyce undertakes to defy the tyranny of time."15

Virginia Woolf's novels, beginning with Jacob's Room up to and including The Waves, give us a universe of individuals in a flux of reality where

12 Stowell, F. Melian, op. cit., p. 274.
14 Ibid., p. 132.
Time is of unequal durations. To achieve her presentation she uses revolutionary methods of fictional presentation. Her definition of life implicitly accepts Bergson's metaphysics. She holds that:

"Life is not a series of gig-lamps symmetrically arranged, but a luminous halo, a semi-transparent envelope surrounding us from the beginning of consciousness to the end."\(^\text{16}\)

In answer to the writer's query as to whether or not she had been consciously influenced by Henri Bergson, Virginia Woolf kindly answered in a letter written February 24, 1941, "I have never read any of Bergson's books. Thus, if my work shows any influence from them, it must be unconscious." Despite her answer, her novels in the stream-of-consciousness style, particularly *The Waves*, illustrate Bergson's theory of Time as outlined above. Moreover, as she intimates, the influence might have come in a round-about way or she might have evolved a similar conception independently.

This century has also a new psychology, or it would be more accurate to say a new technique of investigation into the psychology of the unconscious, furnished by Sigmund Freud.\(^\text{17}\) In one respect like Bergson,

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\(^{17}\) Freud was born at Freiburg, Moravia, May 6, 1856, and died in Switzerland, September 23, 1939. He studied medicine, lectured on diseases of the nerves, and wrote treatises on psychology in Europe. In 1907 he came to the United States. His reputation became international owing to his psychoanalytical treatment of hysteria and his theory of dreams. Certain of Freud's ideas led to the conclusion that his theories confirm Bergson's, but according to Mr. H. M. Kallen in his article on "Freudianism" in the *Americana Encyclopedia*, Freud's treatment of memory, the sub-conscious, and the like are really opposed to those of Bergson.
Freud referred constantly to things. He had no tendency to the mystical but worked with observed and recorded phenomena. The pattern that he furnished psychology may be designated as follows: Freud calls the units of action of the mind "complexes" or wishes. Normally these are integrated. However, as life is for the average person, not all these wishes can be realized. The individual must frequently choose between conflicting alternatives. Those he cannot realize, he suppresses, but suppression does not destroy the wish. It renders it subconscious. Either the subconscious wish then becomes completely disassociated from the conscious life and alternates with it, or it emerges despite repression and produces an effect on overt behavior. The primary instincts of self-preservation, sex, hunger, and gregariousness may be invoked to explain every phase of a state of mind.

Fiction had been growing during the latter half of the nineteenth century more and more subjective so that it was ready to learn a new way of probing experience and new narrative methods for recording. Freud's published conclusions produced an almost immediate effect on the thought of the century and strongly influenced literature. The novelist applied the stream-of-consciousness theory to his narrative. The discontinuities, irrelevancies, and elisions that characterize the flow of consciousness were reported concurrently with their translations into intellectual, physical, and emotional expression. And now and then in the stream up-swirled the sub-conscious. Agnes Hansen calls it a method:
capable of creating in the reader the illusion of actually participating directly in experiences of the most fleeting, varied, and complex nature. 18

Before Freud published his work, however, Proust had already arrived independently at similar ideas and methods, but after he had read Freud's published work he became definitely indebted to him. D. H. Lawrence went into the dark forest of the unconscious and therein set up a Cult of the Unconscious of which he became the high-priest. Dorothy Richardson experimented with the immediate in consciousness. She occupied herself entirely with reporting the impressions made upon her conscious and unconscious mind by the experience of life. James Joyce, who felt Freud's influence specifically and from the beginning of his writing career, planned Ulysses on the Freudian dogma that true personality must be interpreted by the activities of the sub-conscious mind. 19 He intends Bloom to represent the scientific and Dedalus the artistic temperament. Although Dorothy Richardson is generally credited with having invented the stream-of-consciousness style as used in the English novel, Virginia Woolf in the same letter to the writer already referred to stated:

Nor, when I wrote Jacob's Room had I read either Joyce or Miss Richardson. But it is of course very common for writers to share the same ideas without knowledge of each other's work.


Virginia Woolf, unlike Dorothy Richardson whose method never departs from the realm of one person's consciousness, uses the technique for a world of individuals.

The novelists, as a whole, who have borrowed from Freudian psychology are still in the mire of subjectivism and individualism bogged down further by the muck of sex-obsession. They must of necessity be ego-centric and deniers of reason and free-will as instruments of progress. Elizabeth Drew, who is not too sympathetic with the novelists already mentioned, says regarding the new technique,

"...it is natural that a living and lively art should seek experiment in new forms. We are never at the dead end of development...Art lives upon variety of attempt and the shifting of standpoints..."20

Whatever we may say of the contemporary novelists, we cannot accuse Virginia Woolf of their excesses nor deny that she has evolved methods which are original in fiction and that her achievements are significant. Robert Peel holds that there is "no more significant writer of English fiction today"21 and Peter Burra believes that she

"has emancipated English from the unnatural yoke of classical construction and yet replaced that yoke with something which is as strong as it is beautiful."22


21Peel, Robert, "Virginia Woolf," Criterion, 13:78, October, 1933

22Burra, Peter, "Virginia Woolf," Nineteenth Century, 115:125, January, 1934
Mrs. Woolf is very clear as to her aims in writing novels. In her essay, "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown", she charges the Edwardians with having failed as novelists because they have failed in character-creation. She accuses Mr. Wells, Mr. Galsworthy, and Mr. Bennett as the chief culprits. They have, she says, interpreted character through environment—a method which must result in failure since "novels are in the first place about people and only in the second place about the houses they live in." The problem for the neo-Georgians is

"To bring back character from the shapelessness into which it has lapsed, to sharpen its edges, deepen its compass, and so make possible those conflicts between human beings which alone rouse our strongest emotions." 23

The ghost of Mrs. Brown gleams and flashes through the tumbled ruins of the Georgian mansions inviting the novelist to make her a flesh-and-blood body and reconstruct for her a habitable dwelling place. And when that is accomplished "that chapter will be one of the most important, the most illustrious, the most epoch-making of them all." 24 Mrs. Woolf ends her essay on a note of prophecy, "Mrs. Brown will not always escape. One of these days Mrs. Brown will be caught." 25

Mrs. Woolf does not deny the triumphs of the earlier novelists. In her "Phases of Fiction" she recounts the history of the English

24Ibid., p. 232.
25Ibid., p. 237.
novel from Defoe, grouping the writers into truth-tellers, romantics, charactermongers and comedians, psychologists, satirists and fantastics, and poets. Each group has its strength and its weakness—the successes and failures of each have bred in the reader a desire of something different. Even their triumphs become uninteresting to the succeeding generation.

The Georgians then, and Mrs. Woolf in particular, are aiming at the same thing as their predecessors—the creation of complete human character.

"They have no obscure and enigmatical goal which the average reader cannot understand, and they themselves challenge comparison with the older generation in the same field and on the same terms. On equal terms means, of course, that the critic must accustom himself to whatever is unfamiliar in their methods; must be receptive towards a new line of vision, and eager to recognize an extension of his own human and artistic experience through contact with a new human and artistic creation."20

That new line of vision, as in Bergson's philosophy and Freud's psychology, has been sketched. It remains to be seen what new technique Virginia Woolf has evolved from it.

Virginia Woolf, daughter of the noted Sir Leslie Stephen, biographer, literary critic, and free-thinker, and of the lovely Julia Prinsep Duckworth, was born in London in 1882. Related to half the most scholarly families in England and acquainted with the distinguished

poets, painters, and novelists of her time, Virginia with her sister and two brothers grew up in an atmosphere of culture. After the death of their parents, Virginia with her older sister Vanessa inaugurated the internationally famous "Bloomsbury Group" to which belonged among others Vanessa's future husband, Clive Bell, and Virginia's, Leonard Woolf. In 1912 Virginia and Leonard married and started the Hogarth Press which subsequently developed into a real and successful publishing house. Besides her fiction Mrs. Woolf has also written essays, mostly literary, which have established her reputation as a critic. Twice bombed from her home in the war raging at the present, and fearing that she would go mad, Virginia Woolf took her own life by drowning sometime in May, 1941. Her body was recovered from the River Ouse, near her week-end house at Lewes in Sussex, April 18.

Virginia Woolf's fiction falls into three distinct groups or phases. Her first novel *Voyage Out* written in 1906 when she was twenty-four years old but not published until 1915 is fairly traditional in treatment. It has been compared technically with the novels of E. M. Forster\(^27\), Jane Austen\(^28\), Sterne\(^29\), and Scott\(^29\). *Night and Day* which followed in 1919 is undoubtedly conventional. The lack of

\(^27\) Mortimer, Raymond, "Mrs. Woolf and Mr. Strachey," *Bookman*, 68:629, February, 1929.


plot observable in *Voyage Out* is not evident here. Her attempt to combine a romance of love with a comedy of manners in her second novel has been compared with Meredith's *Richard Feverel*. Although quite readable, *Night and Day* was a failure, a result which probably turned the author's efforts toward a new way of expressing character, time, and the variety and simultaneousness of human life.

*Monday or Tuesday*, a collection of sketches published in 1921, was her first experiment in a new style. *Jacob's Room* (1922) was an attempt to use the new method at a greater length and began the stream-of-consciousness group of novels which include *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925), *To the Lighthouse* (1927), and culminated in *The Waves* (1931). In the last the author had apparently solved the question of Time which she had pursued through five novels; she had apparently adopted Fater's to "burn always with this hard, gem-like flame, to maintain this ecstasy," as a formula for living and the pattern for its interpretation; she had reduced narration to the utmost minimum so that character might be revealed through sensibility. What, asked her readers, could come after *The Waves*? She answered the question in her last novel, *The Years* (1937), by returning to a chronicle style combined with the stream-of-consciousness method.

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30Peel, Robert, *op.cit.*, p. 83.
In both the first novels, *Voyage Out* and *Night and Day*, the characters are engrossed with the same problem, that of communicating adequately with each other. The second novel adds a comedy of manners. Love and death are the chief realities in *Voyage Out* and love in *Night and Day*. Heroines in both novels awaken to the meaning of love and Terence in *Voyage Out* to the meaning of death.

The unity in *Voyage Out* arises less from a progression of motives or an ordered pattern of action than from the gathering of people together in a boat and later in a hotel. The plot thread is faint. *Night and Day*, on the other hand, is more traditional in its construction. There is a conflict and although its outcome is early seen to be inevitable, yet obstacles interpose themselves in the established manner. One, the love affair of Cassandra and William, forms almost a sub-plot. Considered from the viewpoint of the history of structure, *Night and Day* should have come first in Virginia Woolf's writing.

Katharine Hilbery, heroine of *Night and Day*, like Virginia Woolf herself, is related to many of the scholarly families of England. Her parents have known and entertained all the poets, all the novelists, all the beautiful women and distinguished men of their time. However, Katharine rebels at the heavy atmosphere of reverent culture in which
she lives and cherishes a secret desire to live apart, alone, in silence where she can study mathematics and astronomy. She meets in her home a clerk from a solicitor's office, Ralph Denham, who violently despises the sophistication and lack of worthwhile accomplishment of the Hilbery type and yet falls in love with Katharine. Katharine courted by William Rodney, a clerk, a respecter of tradition and manners, and a pursuer of art, finally consents to marry him as a means of escaping the frustration she suffers at home. Later Katharine perceives that William has fallen in love with her cousin Cassandra and releases him from the engagement. Their decision not to reveal their broken engagement results in a mild bit of scandal and a distressing scene with Mr. Hilbery when the family discover that William is paying more attention to Cassandra than is proper for an engaged man. In the meantime, Ralph, like the traditional lover, grows exceedingly distracted, begins a night vigil before Katharine's window from which he is rescued by his supposed rival. Katharine after many heart searchings surrenders to the passion of love for Ralph Denham. Mary Datchet, a woman suffragette, friend of the main characters, is also in love with Ralph but has refused his proposal of marriage because she perceives he is not really in love with her. The separated couples, William and Cassandra, Katharine and Ralph, are finally happily united through the efforts of Mrs. Hilbery.

The story of Voyage Out has to do with Rachel Vinrace, twenty-four years old, the motherless daughter of Willoughby Vinrace, owner
of ten ships which voyage between London and Buenos Aires. Rachel, reared on the ship "Euphrosyne," is at twenty-four an accomplished musician but otherwise comparatively uneducated and innocent of life to such an extent that she scarcely knows that men desire women. Her mother's sister, Helen Ambrose, and Helen's husband, Ridley Ambrose, embark on the "Euphrosyne." Helen gains Rachel's confidence and learns that Mr. Dalloway, a married man and also a passenger with his wife on board, has kissed Rachel. Indignant that Rachel's rearing has made her totally unprepared for this, or indeed any problem of living, Helen takes Rachel with her to Santa Karina where she may meet people. The next five months introduce to Rachel a hotel full of characters, each of whom is vividly individualized and has his own story to tell. Among them are two friends, St. John Alaric Hirst and Terence Hewet. Hirst tries to educate Rachel by lending her books to read but succeeds only in making her dislike him very much. Hewet and Rachel fall in love and become engaged during a ten-day expedition up a South American river. They are ecstatically happy. Then Rachel falls ill of a fever and dies. Hewet had once said to Hirst:

"You can't see my bubble. I can't see yours; all we see of each other is a speck, like the wick in the middle of that flame...And supposing my bubble could run into someone else's bubble—"

"And they both burst?" put in Hirst.¹

Death is the running together of Hewet's and Rachel's bubbles. It

completes for Hewet in some mystical fashion that intensely desired union of his soul with Rachel's which love had not entirely granted them. Nearly all the characters in the book, even the unsocial and cynical Hirst, are engrossed by the effect of personalities and are seeking the way of perfect communication one with another. In their quest sensibility is the only possible guide, for religious values are openly denied, and the others, economic, sociological, scientific, and moral, are ignored.

With the desire, then, to solve the problem of perfect communication, an aim clear in Voyage Out and also existing though somewhat obscurely in Night and Day, technique becomes important. A concern with sensibility would demand primarily a large use of concrete imagery and figures of speech.

Visual images in both novels are about three times as many as the total of tactile, auditory, olfactory, and gustatory together, a proportion that is doubtless normal since nearly everyone perceives visual images more frequently and easily than any of the others. Of the visual images color words, red, yellow, green, and blue occur in the proportion indicated by the order. Red in lips, cheeks, hands, flowers, furnishings, and garments is specifically pointed out. Likewise yellow in faces, flowers, animals, insects, vegetables, dress, and light. Trees and leaves are green; the sky and sea are blue. More often than not an object named is qualified by its color, particularly the parts of the body, garments, and books. Rachel has "red cheeks".
The hospital nurse has a "little round red face." At the Hunt balls gentlemen wear "red coats." The hotel floors are of "dark red tile." Rachel reads "modern books, books in shiny yellow covers." Someone at the ball wears "shiny yellow satin." A river is merely a channel "of dry yellow stones." The earth lies dark against the "paler blue of the sky." Gibbon has a "brown cover" and Balzac a "mottled blue." Rachel picks "red flowers and thin green leaves."

As a whole the use of color is more vivid in *Voyage Out* than in *Might and Day* but in neither is it extraordinarily impressive. The following passages, one from each novel, are typical of the best use of color words in each:

The path narrowed and turned; it was hedged in by dense creepers which knotted tree to tree, and burst here and there into star-shaped or crimson blossoms. The sighing and creaking up above were broken every now and then by the jarring cry of some startled animal. The atmosphere was close and the air came at them in languid puffs of scent. The vast green light was broken here and there by a round of pure yellow sunlight which fell through some gap in the immense umbrella of green above, and in these yellow spaces crimson and black butterflies were circling and settling.²

Their way took them round the verge of a wood of thin trees standing at the edge of a steep fold in the land. Looking between the tree-trunks, Ralph saw laid out on the perfectly flat and richly green meadow at the bottom of the hill a small grey manor house, with ponds, terraces, and clipped hedges in front of it, a farm building or so at the side, and a screen of fir trees rising behind, all perfectly sheltered and self-sufficient. Behind the house the hill rose again, and the

²Woolf, Virginia, *Voyage Out*, p. 270.
trees on the farther summit stood upright against the sky, which appeared of a more intense blue between their trunks. His mind at once was filled with a sense of the actual presence of Katharine; the gray house and the intense blue sky gave him the feeling of her presence close by.3

References to light, the light of sun or moon, of fire, to the shining of silver, and to darkness outnumber color words by at least one hundred in Voyage Out and by more than two hundred in Night and Day. In both novels light images occur more times than dark. Again, these proportions are natural. Light and darkness, black and white, in all their variations are part of man's daily experience, are present in a multitude of objects about him. He lives largely in the daylight. Much reference to it, then, would be normal. Although in both novels the majority of references are casual descriptions or mention of a person's white body or black clothes, the darkness of night or the brightness of the sunlight, of fires in fireplaces, and of black or white objects, there are passages of poetic beauty, especially in the diurnal contrast of light and shade, in the recurring picture of one-half the world in darkness and the other half in light:

All over the shadowed half of the world people lay prone, and a few flickering lights in empty streets marked the places where their cities were built. Red and yellow omnibuses were crowding each other in Piccadilly; swarthy women were rocking at a standstill; but here in the darkness an owl flitted from tree to tree, and when the breeze lifted the branches the moon flashed as if it were a torch. Until all people should awake

again the houseless animals were abroad, the tigers and the
cattle, and the elephants coming down in darkness to drink
at pools. The wind at night blowing over the hills and woods
was purer and fresher than the wind by day, and the earth,
robbed of detail, more mysterious than the earth coloured
and divided by roads and fields. For six hours this profound
beauty existed, and then as the east grew whiter and whiter
the ground swam to the surface, the roads were revealed, the
smoke rose and the people stirred, and the sun shone upon the
windows of the hotel at Santa Marina until they were uncurtained,
and the gong blaring all through the house gave notice of
breakfast. 4

The oft-mentioned recurrence of night and day is furthermore
used as a device to convey the passage of time, for the thinness of
plot and the emphasis on sensibility tend to make the story stand
still. Sixteen of the twenty-seven chapters open or close with the
specific mention or description of the coming of night or of the
dawning of day, besides similar passages within several other chapters.

The darkness fell, but rose again, and as each day spread
widely over the earth and parted them from the strange day in
the forest when they had been forced to tell each other what
they wanted, this wish of theirs was revealed to other people,
and in the process became slightly strange to themselves. 5

Following their engagement,

The people at the hotel dance all night:

Yes—there was the dawn. While they had been dancing the
night had passed, and it had come. Outside, the mountains
showed very pure and remote; the dew was sparkling on the grass,
and the sky was flushed with blue, save for the pale yellows
and pinks in the East. 6

4Woolf, Virginia, Voyage Out, p. 111.
6Ibid., p. 290.
7Ibid., p. 167.
Night and Day does not need such a device to advance its plot. Its most effective images of light and darkness occur in the metaphors and similes which will be discussed a little farther on in this chapter.

Background and persons in both novels are described with sufficient detail for clearness. Landscapes and rooms sometimes receive quite full pictorial treatment, but rarely persons, who are swiftly sketched with a few strokes to outline their salient characteristics. Sometimes other characters add bits of detail from time to time until the picture of the person grows complete though never in a photographic sense.

Very clear is the approach to San Marin:

Moving very slowly, and rearing absurdly high over each wave, the little boat was now approaching a white crescent of sand. Behind this was a deep green valley, with distinct hills on either side. On the slope of the right-hand hill white houses with brown roofs were settled, like nesting sea-birds, and at intervals cypresses striped the hill with black bars. Mountains whose sides are flushed with red, but whose crowns were bald, rose as a pinnacle, half-concealing another pinnacle behind it. The hour being still early, the whole view was exquisitely light and airy; the blues and greens of sky and tree were intense but not sultry.

Equally distinct is the dinner table in the Hilbery home:

There was no cloth upon the table, and the china made regular circles of deep blue upon the shining brown wood. In the middle there was a bowl of tawny red and yellow chrysanthemums, and one of pure white, so fresh that the narrow petals were curved backwards into a firm white ball.

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To acquaint us with Helen's appearance the author tells us that:

Tall, large-eyed, draped in purple shawls, Mrs. Ambrose was romantic and beautiful; not perhaps sympathetic, for her eyes looked straight and considered what they saw. Her face was much warmer than a Greek face; on the other hand it was much bolder than the face of the usual pretty Englishwoman.\(^{10}\)

Mrs. Dalloway's impression of her is that:

Though slightly eccentric in appearance, she was not untidy, held herself well, and her voice had restraint in it, which she held to be the sign of a lady.\(^{11}\)

Hirst's is that:

He liked the look of her immensely, not so much her beauty, but her largeness and simplicity, which made her stand out from the rest like a great stone woman.\(^{12}\)

Equally impressionistic in Night and Day are the descriptions of characters. Katharine's aunts

had that look of heightened, smoothed, incarnadined existence which is proper to elderly ladies paying calls in London about five o'clock in the afternoon. Portraits by Romney, seen through glass, have something of their pink, mellow look, their blooming softness, as of apricots hanging upon a red wall in the afternoon sun. Mrs. Cosham was so apparelled with hanging muffls, chains, and swinging draperies that it was impossible to detect the shape of a human being in the mass of brown and black which filled the arm-chair. Mrs. Milvain was a much slighter figure; but the same doubt as to the precise lines of her contour filled Ralph, as he regarded them, with dismal foreboding. What remark of his would ever reach these fabulous and fantastically unreal characters?—for there was something fantastically unreal in the curious swayings and noddings of


\(^{11}\)\textit{Ibid.}, p. 42.

\(^{12}\)\textit{Ibid.}, p. 135.
Mrs. Cosham, as if her equipment included a large wire spring. Her voice had a high-pitched, cooing note, which prolonged words and cut them short until the English language seemed no longer fit for common purposes.  

Many of the sounds of life are audible in both novels—of persons and of things. People talk, laugh, cry, snore, swear, sing, cough, and drop shoes. Drays thunder, hansom jingle, traffic hums, water chuckles, steamers hoot, bells ring, clocks tick, and rain beats. Like the majority of the visual images, however, these auditory ones do not obtrude themselves but blend into the background, with one notable exception, which occurs during the few hours after Rachel's death. She died about three o'clock in the morning:

For two or three hours longer the moon poured its light through the empty air. Unbroken by clouds it fell straightly, and lay almost like a chill white frost over the sea and the earth. During these hours the silence was not broken, and the only movement was caused by the movement of trees and branches when stirred slightly, and then the shadows that lay across the white spaces of the land moved too. In this profound silence one sound only was audible, the sound of a slight but continuous breathing which never ceased, although it never rose and never fell. It continued after the birds had begun to flutter from branch to branch, and could be heard behind the first thin notes of their voices. It continued all through the hours when the east whitened, and grew red, and a faint blue tinged the sky, but when the sun rose it ceased, and gave place to other sounds.

The first sounds that were heard were little inarticulate cries, the cries, it seemed, of children or of the very poor, of people who were very weak or in pain. But when the sun was above the horizon, the air which had been thin and pale grew every moment richer and warmer, and the sounds of life became bolder and more full of courage and authority.

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The novelist leaves the reader without any clue to the source or meaning of that "slight but continuous breathing." Perhaps it is a symbolical retelling with a pantheistic explanation of Rachel's death, though without other clues that explanation seems far-fetched. It might be Terence's own breathing of pain at his loss—a sound that is soon lost in the sounds of life. Whatever the meaning, the effect is subtly pleasing.

Silence, not words, is the medium best fitted for the intimate communication of personality. Hewet tells Rachel that he wants to write a novel about silence. Then they are together, they are often silent for long periods, not "silences of struggle and confusion but refreshing silences, in which trivial thoughts move easily." Katharine Hilbery, too, loves silence, but she has little opportunity to enjoy it, for apparently no other character in Night and Day shares her preference.

Tactile images number about fifty in Night and Day and none are especially keen. The heat of the fire, the chill of the damp winter days, a few chaste embraces come in for mention. Voyage Out contains about seventy, and although most of them, too, refer to heat or cold, they are much more vivid than those in the other novel. Richard Dalloway kisses Rachel passionately:

so that she felt the hardness of his body and the roughness of his cheek printed upon hers. She fell back in her chair, with tremendous beats of the heart, each of which sent black waves across her eyes...They were both trembling...Her head was cold, her knees shaking, and the physical pain of the emotion was so great that she could only keep herself moving above the
great leaps of her heart. She leant upon the rail of the
ship and gradually ceased to feel, for a chill of body and
mind crept over her.  

Particularly vivid also are the descriptions of tropical heat:

The afternoon was very hot, so hot that the breaking of
the waves on the shore sounded like the repeated sigh of
some exhausted creature, and even on the terrace under an
awning the bricks were hot, and the air danced perpetually
over the short dry grass. The red flowers in the stone
basins were drooping with the heat, and the white blossoms
which had been so smooth and thick only a few weeks ago
were now dry, and their edges were curled and yellow.

Likewise are those describing Rachel's last illness during which she
imagines, in her delirium that she inhabits a "deep pool of sticky
water" or is "curled up at the bottom of the sea."

Food or drink is mentioned in Night and Day about seventy
times. Tea is partaken of sixteen times and the characters apparently
subsist on very plain teas and dinners, for they mention only bread
and butter, cake, meat, tea, and wine without any attempt at making
them sound particularly inviting. Food is mentioned about forty times
in Voyage Out. The only vivid images there are unpleasant ones such
as: "The waiters made their meal voraciously off broken meats sop-
pling up the gravy with bits of crumb." "— a very miscellaneous
collection of Europeans were now engaged in eating, in some cases
in gnawing, the stringy foreign fowls." "— certain glazed asparagus
swimming in oil finally conquered him."

15Woolf, Virginia, Voyage Out, p. 76.
16Ibid., p. 326.
Olfactory images are the fewest in both books, occurring nine times in *Voyage Out* and sixteen in *Night and Day*. Flowers, sea, cedar log burning, cigarette smoke, the freshness of the air are the odors noted. In both books the redolence of kid gloves is mentioned.

Words denoting motion constitute about three per cent of the words in each novel. Nearly all have to do with the motions of persons walking, riding, sitting, or gesturing. The verbs are nearly always specific. However, the interest of the reader is largely engaged with the emotions and thoughts of the characters, an emphasis which the novelist evidently intends, so that little impression of physical motion results, and none that is memorably vivid.

There are nearly two hundred figures of speech in *Voyage Out*. Slightly more than one-half of them are stated similes. The remainder are about equally divided into implied similes and metaphors. Virginia Woolf's preference for formal comparisons and her occasional use of the epic simile point to the influence of the classical writers.

*Night and Day* contains nearly three hundred figures, using one hundred and five metaphors, ninety-five stated similes and eighty implied similes, a grouping which divides the total of the figures nearly into thirds. The large use of metaphors is interesting and is another reason for placing *Night and Day* first in the order of writing.

Metaphor means, of course, that the tenor and the vehicle or the thing compared and the comparison, are not both named, but only the latter. When both are named, without the use of "like," or "as," the figure is an implied simile. Many writers class the implied
simile with the metaphor but as Gummere points out:

"He fought like a lion" is simile; 'He was a lion in fight' is metaphor. Surely the latter is implied simile. Everyone understands by 'was' just about what one understands by 'was like'. The idea of comparison and likeness is present in both cases. But the metaphor boldly expresses one thing in terms of another, does not place the two objects before the mind. A simile, then, is where two objects are presented to the mind for comparison.¹⁷

Using "like" or "as" to connect the tenor and vehicle produces a stated simile.

In both novels the figures may be grouped into divisions having the same or closely related vehicles. Nearly half of the number of figures in Voyage Out fall into two groups. The first, slightly larger numerically, uses water, the sea, or allied objects as the vehicle and the second group uses animals for a comparison. Other groupings are as follows: fire or light as vehicle appears approximately fourteen times; domestic articles that particularly a woman would choose number about ten; vehicles explaining the idea "words" also number ten. In Night and Day fire or light vehicles form the largest group with water vehicles a very close second. Animals are third. These three divisions constitute nearly half of the total number of figures in the novel. Other groupings are plants as vehicles, seventeen; domestic articles, seventeen; vehicles explaining the tenor "words," seven. The remaining miscellaneous figures in each book are largely concerned in explaining man, his actions, or the products of his skill.

Very few personifications appear, and they are not noteworthy.

Both tenor and vehicle in the figures are nearly always concrete. The exceptions number nearly thirty in *Voyage Out* and fifteen in *Night and Day*. Of these only two use an abstract vehicle. Otherwise, the normal, average procedure of using a concrete object to explain an abstraction is followed. The figures involving an abstraction group themselves into three almost numerically equal groups dealing respectively with the mind or its processes, with emotions, and with life either of the individual or life in general.

The largest group of figures, as already noted, employs water, the sea, or allied objects for comparison. More than half of the water-vehicles in *Voyage Out* liken the environment of the characters to an ocean or a river with the persons generally remaining human beings, although occasionally they become a boat, a limpet, a fish, a gull, or a shell. Thus Hewet and Rachel at a dance "clasped hands and swept off magnificently into the great swirling pool." The same evening Hewet "swam down the room." At another time Hewet and Rachel are so rapt in one of their silent communings with each other that "voices crying behind them never reached through the waters in which they were now sunk." A revelation of the shallowness and smugness of the worshipping nurse at Sunday services fills Rachel with horror. She sees the nurse as a "limpet with the sensitive side of her stuck to a rock forever dead to the rush of the fresh and beautiful things past her." Voices in the book are "washed by
the air" and they sound "as if they fell through the waves of the sea."

There is a tendency, however, observable in about a dozen figures for the novelist to make a more individual and original use of the water figure. In these, persons or their mental and emotional processes become identified with water. Helen, trying to instruct the inexperienced Rachel in the ways of men, watches Rachel's original mood of exhilaration succeed to one of despair:

All these moods ran themselves into one general effect, which Helen compared to the sliding of a river, quick, quick, quicker, quicker still, as it races to a waterfall. Her instinct was to cry out Stop! but even had there been any use in crying Stop! she would have refrained thinking it best that things should have their way, the water racing because the earth was shaped to make it race.18

Such comparisons combined with the symbolic setting in which the ship "Euphrosyne" carries Rachel over oceans to San Marino and down the South American river, giving her and Terence a few days of happiness until Rachel must voyage alone on the bitter waters of Death point to a fairly close integration of the water-figure, but one still quite traditional in conception.

The occurrence of water-images in Night and Day, although not illustrative of either setting or title, are as numerous and according to the same plan as in Voyage Out. Katharine feels the fluidity of her surroundings. A walk on the city street hypnotizes her into

18Woolf, Virginia, Voyage Out, p. 222.
either a mood of despondency or exaltation by the "flow of faces
streaming on either side of her." She notices that Jean Denham's
entrance into the room where the Denham family is at tea "set the
waters of family life dashing in brisk little waves again." William
sees Katharine as "the purple waves of the sea." Denham and Katharine
once part for the night, the latter without speaking. To her lover
this incident opens a chasm "down which the tide of his being plunged
in disorder, fell upon rocks; flung itself to destruction." Katharine
is angry with her mother for wasting time on the memoirs she is
writing. Outwardly Katharine is calm but she feels her anger break
"like some wave that has gathered itself high above the rest." Re­
calling almost immediately that she must tell her mother some unpleasant
news, "the waters were resumed into the sea again, and Katharine felt
once more full of peace, and solicitude, and anxious only that her
mother be protected from pain."

The figures involving light or fire, (each is used about the
same number of times and often interchangeably even within the same
passage), in Night and Day explain persons, their mental and emotional
states, life, words, books, places, time, and truth. Fairly often
the use is somewhat well worn: love is a fire, truth is a light,
people are candles or lighthouses.

One of the more noteworthy uses occurs in the passage picturing
Ralph keeping vigil outside Katharine's home the windows of which are
lighted. To Ralph the lighted room beyond is "the center of the dark,
flying wilderness of the world," the identity of those within is "dissolved in a general glory of something that might, perhaps be called civilization...Its purpose was beneficent; and yet so far above his level as to have something austere about it, a light that cast itself out and yet kept itself aloof." He imagines the persons within physically bathed in the material light but Katharine herself "he seemed curiously to see her as a shape of light, the light itself." He likens himself to a lost bird fascinated "held to the glass by the splendor of the blaze." Katharine, also, feeling the passion of love, sees Ralph as "a fire burning through its smoke, a source of life." Together they are "masters of life, but at the same time absorbed in the flame, giving their life to increase its brightness, to testify to their faith." 

Although fairly large, the animal (which includes insects and birds) group of images reveals comparisons that are on the whole fairly external and obvious and frequently trite. The more vivid and original examples are generally unpleasant. Persons are likened to donkeys, sheep, cows, cats, dogs, horses, hens, pigs, flies, grasshoppers, hippopotamuses, reptiles, caterpillars, ants, and birds. Such well-worn expressions as the following appear: "lead a dog's life," "go at a snail's pace," people are "exactly like a flock of sheep," and

20 Ibid., p. 505.
family sorrow "seemed almost to prey" upon Mrs. Hilbery's mind. If vivid, the emotional attitude is generally in the following vein:

Their silence, he said, reminded him of the silence in the lion-house when each beast holds a lump of raw meat in its paws. He went on, stimulated by this comparison, to liken some to hippopotamuses, some to canary birds, some to swine, some to parrots, and some to loathsome reptiles curled round the half-decayed bodies of sheep. The intermittent sounds—now a cough, now a horrible wheezing or throat-clearing, now a little patter of conversation—were just, he declared, what you hear if you stand in the lion-house when the bones are being mauled.21

In conclusion, then, the study of the images in Virginia Woolf's first two novels reveals that her concern with sensibility demands a moderately numerous and concrete use of them, but that her adherence to a fairly traditional narrative style tends to keep the majority of them unobtrusive. The order of sense appeal—visual, auditory, tactile, gustatory, and olfactory—is normal. Gustatory images that approach vividness are unpleasant. Although the majority of all images tend toward the reportorial rather than the aesthetic, there are passages, particularly those using light and darkness that are unusually pleasing. The description of the recurrence of night and day, or even its mention, tends to move the story on in Voyage Out. Places receive more fullness of detail in description than do persons who are depicted more impressionistically.

In the figures of speech, Virginia Woolf employs more stated similes than either implied similes or metaphors—a preference which

21Woolf, Virginia, Voyage Out, p. 177.
indicates classical influence. Concreteness in both tenors and vehicles is the general rule in the figures. The figures of speech fall into three main groups according to the vehicles employed. The largest, using water or allied objects for comparison, are most numerous in *Voyage Out*; the next, using fire or light, are most numerous in *Night and Day*. The third, comparing persons with animals, offers the fewest vivid examples and these are unpleasant or disgusting. The water, or allied vehicles, likens the environment of the characters to the ocean. A few, more vivid, tend to identify persons themselves or their emotions with water. Fire or light figures of speech explain persons, their emotions, life, love, and time. The tendency to use recurring vehicles, evident in these groups, points toward symbolism. Like the images, the majority of the figures of speech in these two novels are unobtrusive—more decorative and conventional than integral and individual.
Chapter II

STREAM-OF-CONSCIOUSNESS METHOD

*Jacob's Room*, published in 1922, contains Virginia Woolf's early attempts at a direct, unaltered, and spontaneous recording of impressions in the form of a novel. She is evidently uncertain in using the new method and employs much more narrative than she does in her later works. The book opens with Betty Flanders, recently widowed, at Cornwall with her three little boys—Archer, Jacob, and John. She returns to her home in Scarborough where she receives weekly visits from Captain Barfoot whose wife is an invalid. She refuses a marriage proposal from Mr. Floyd, the boys' tutor. Mr. Floyd, thereupon, decides to leave for another parish and gives the boys their choice of farewell gifts. Archer takes a paper-knife; Jacob, the works of Byron in one volume; and John, a kitten. Mrs. Flanders finds Jacob the most difficult of her sons to manage. He collects butterflies, moths, and beetles, attends Rugby, and later, in October, 1906, Cambridge. Various scenes picture him traveling in a compartment with the imaginative Mrs. Norman, attending chapel service, dining at a don's house, boating with a classmate, visiting Durrant's home in Cornwall, going to the opera in London, learning disillusionment in an amorous affair with Florinda, hunting in Essex, studying Marlow in the British Museum, reading Plato, traveling in France, Italy, and Greece, and falling in love with a married woman. The final chapter, a page and a half long, pictures Jacob's room, just
as he left it when he went to war. His mother and his friend, Bonamy, are disposing of his things. The lives of many characters touch Jacob's. Through their eyes we see him. The novelist endeavors to describe the functional relationship of each person with every other in the universe rather than to give an ordered narrative with rising action and climax.

Mrs. Dalloway, published in 1925, unlike Jacob's Room, which scatters the characters through time, gathers them into a single June day during which the lives of many characters touch each other. Mrs. Dalloway is going to give a party. Morning sees her buying flowers for it. The passing hours bring a lover of her earlier years, Peter Walsh, for a visit. This, her husband's invitation to Lady Bruton's lunch, her daughter Elizabeth's bringing her friend, Miss Kilman, to her home, and the party are the chief events of Clarissa's, Mrs. Dalloway's, day. The same day is the last for Septimus Warren Smith, veteran of the war of 1914. Lucrezia, his little Italian wife, is betrayed by the doctors to whom she appeals to help her insane husband. Their efforts to separate the husband and wife and confine Septimus cause him to take his life. The news of the tragedy reaches Clarissa's party and reveals to her the meaning of death. The various characters, during the day, see the royal motor car in the street, an aeroplane smoke-writing in the sky, Lucrezia and Septimus in the park, and the speeding ambulance bearing Septimus's body. Thus their lives touch. Their sensations regarding the same object are recorded. This means used to bring their sensations together and the confining of most of the record largely to a few characters,
particularly Mrs. Dalloway, Peter, and Septimus, tend toward a unification that would otherwise be lacking. Abrupt transition proves somewhat bewildering to the reader. Clarissa's attempts to share the imaginative vision of her husband, of Peter, of Elizabeth, Miss Kilman, and of her guests at the party, and thus to enter into communication with them, as recorded, burn with the flame of poetry and the rapture of life. Septimus's ability to see through the humbug and stupidities of civilization, likewise, burn with hard gem-like flame of poetry and the rapture of death. Again, love and death are the chief realities, and more clearly so than in Jacob's Room.

In her next novel, To the Lighthouse, (1927) Mrs. Woolf gives us two days, ten years apart, in the lives of her characters. The first day introduces Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay, their family of eight children, and their five guests, at their summer home in the Hebrides. James Ramsay, six, is ecstatic at the expectation of visiting the lighthouse across the bay in the morning. His father brusquely declares the weather will not permit. That reply, though his mother endeavors to lessen its finality, leaves an imprint on the sensitive child's nature that the years do not erase. Beautiful Mrs. Ramsay is the symbolical lighthouse that draws and illuminates the lives of her family and friends, and all with whom she comes into contact. Like Clarissa Dalloway in the preceding book, but much more so, Mrs. Ramsay is the means of giving unity to the book. Part two is called "Time Passes." In it brief narrative sentences, baldly stated, are set in a poetic description of the gradual
dilapidation of the house where the action has passed and will pass again. The narrative informs the reader that Mrs. Ramsay died suddenly one night; that Prue Ramsay married and died in childbirth; that Andrew Ramsay was killed in the War of 1914; that Mr. Carmichael published a book of poetry. Ten years later, Mr. Ramsay, his youngest son and daughter, James and Cam, Lily Briscoe and Mr. Carmichael, guests of the day ten years ago, return to the summer home. Mr. Ramsay, with a very reluctant James and Cam, make the visit that was refused ten years earlier—to the lighthouse. On their way James and Cam learn to enter into a more harmonious communication with their father, against whose personality they had rebelled. They reach the lighthouse. The partly direct communication between characters in Mrs. Dalloway and in Jacob's Room has almost vanished. Each character reveals her subjective feelings against a background of nature description. It is a protracted psychic revelation on the subjects of love and death.

The Waves (1931) uses the method tried in To the Lighthouse and entirely abandons direct communication between the characters. It reduces narration to the utmost minimum compatible with conveying meaning. Six characters reveal in alternate monologues their subjective feelings concerning all experience. They let fall hints from which we learn that as children they are in a boarding school together in Switzerland. The boys also attend a preparatory school together. Bernard, who writes, marries. Susan, the maternal, returns to her farm in England, marrying, and has many children. Jinny, the beautiful, becomes a social success
and grows old. Rhoda whose trust is only in solitude and death commits suicide. Her lover, Louis, becomes an opulent businessman and keeps a mistress. Neville, the intellectual, remains a solitary. Percival, whom we never meet but in whom each finds what he lacks in himself—emotional certainty in human love—is their ideal and also serves, like Jacob, Clarissa Dalloway, and Mrs. Ramsay, in the other novels, to keep a certain unity in the story. The monologues of these six give the effect of double personalities or characters, one part of the person acting, the other regarding. A series of interludes describing a marine landscape from dawn to dark give a sense of external passage of time and become also symbolical of the subjective experiences of the characters in childhood, youth, adulthood, and death.

The attitude of philosophical thought at the opening of the present century, as was pointed out in the introduction, tended to be anthropocentric, and the novelists following it created subjective individualists who search inwardly for true reality. The stream-of-consciousness method is a manner of recording subjective life—the stream of sensations that enter personal consciousness and become physical, emotional, or intellectual expressions. Images of the external sensory stimulation are, of course, fundamental in this reporting.

It would seem probable, therefore, that in abandoning the traditional narrative method Virginia Woolf would increase the number of images used. However, such an increase does not happen, at least not in the first three novels of this period. Jacob's Room and To the Lighthouse each contain about nine-tenths the number in Night and Day.
and one-half those in *Voyage Out*. Mrs. Dalloway uses nearly as many as *Night and Day*. The *Waves*, however, the surest in style of her stream-of-consciousness novels, contains approximately twice the number in *Voyage Out* and nearly three times as many as are in any of the others, so that the critic’s definition of Virginia Woolf’s art as consisting “in receiving an infinite stream of sensations, and throwing them back in an infinite stream of images”\(^1\) becomes justified.

Visual images are generally twice as many as the sum of the tactile, auditory, olfactory, and gustatory, except in *Mrs. Dalloway* and *The Waves* which use a large number of auditory appeals. The novels glow with the primary colors. Most of these are conventional reproductions or descriptions of actuality. Lovers with "red faces," Mrs. Plumer tapping on the table with her "bare red hand," "patent leather shoes slashed with scarlet." Lights, birds, boxes, lips, cloth, feathers, vegetables, and eyes are frequently red or flame-colored. The sky is "yellow." When the lighthouse is lit, "a pale yellow light shot across the purple sea; and shut." Jacob finds a sheep’s jaw with "yellow teeth in it," eats "yellow cherries," and looks across a meadow "gilt with buttercups." Grass, water, and leaves are generally prefixed with "green." The color of objects is frequently named. These images of colour—also of light and shade—that stress the purely pictorial effect, that captivate only the sensuous sense of seeing are not the most vivid nor

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the most satisfying of her images. The outward-moving activity of the brain in meeting the inward-sweeping stream of consciousness recognizes relationships between the objects proffered to the senses and the personality itself. The "I" projects itself into these objects, claims them, appropriates them as a part of its own nature.2

This "animism" or identifying imagination is common to poets. Virginia Woolf uses it in reference to color faintly in Jacob's Room more frequently in To the Lighthouse, and often in The Waves. Colors in nature just before a storm make Betty Flanders feel the "astonishing agitation and vitality of nature" and think of "responsibility and danger."

Characters in To the Lighthouse project themselves into the colored sea:

First, the pulse of colour flooded the bay with blue, and the heart expanded with it and the body swam, only the next instant to be checked and chilled by the prickly blackness on the ruffled waves.3

...the blue went out of the sea and it rolled in waves of pure lemon which curved and swelled and broke upon the beach and the ecstasy burst in her eyes and waves of pure delight raced over the floor of her mind and she felt, It is enough! It is enough!4

More integrated, more compressed are the similar identifications in The Waves. Susan describing her passion for maternity says, "I shall be sullen, storm-tinted and all one purple." Rhoda telling of serenity says, "Gold runs in our blood." Jinny telling of the youth and beauty

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4Ibid., pp. 99-100.
of the six, not yet twenty-five years old, all gathered into one room, says, "The room is golden, and I say to him, 'Come.'"

Such individual reaction to phenomena at some tense moment, the hardness and economy of words, the condensation in the presentation of the image closely resembles achievements of the imagist poets. Certainly the following are like bits of imagist poetry:

Now the cock crows like a spurt of hard, red water in the white tide.\(^5\)

The yellow canopy of our tremendous energy hangs like a burning cloth over our heads.\(^6\)

Those are yellow words, those are fiery words...\(^7\)

The yellow warmth in my side turned to stone when I saw Jinny kiss Louis.\(^8\)

Virginia Woolf is one with Spenser and Milton in her evident fondness for light and gold and silver and shadows and darkness. Such adjectives as "bright," "spangled," "silver," "flashing," "white," "black," "shadowed," and "grey" are nearly as numerous as the colors. The rhythmic succession of days and nights in Jacob's Room provides light and darkness and is still, as in Voyage Out, a device for the passage of time. Sometimes a single sentence draws the scene as "Black


\(^6\)Ibid., p. 146.

\(^7\)Ibid., p. 20.

\(^8\)Ibid., p. 15.
shadows stood still over the silver moors." At other times the passage is longer as:

Now the agitation of the air uncovered a racing star. Now it was dark. Now one after another lights were extinguished. Now great towns—Paris—Constantinople—London—were black as strewn rocks. Waterways might be distinguished.

Sunlight strikes in upon shaving-glasses; and gleaming brass cans; upon all the jolly trappings of the day; the bright, inquisitive, armoured, resplendent, summer's day, which has long since vanquished chaos; which has dried the melancholy mediaeval mists; drained the swamp and stood glass and stone upon it; and equipped our brains and bodies with such an armoury of weapons that merely to see the flash and thrust of limbs engaged in the conduct of daily life is better than the old pageant of armies drawn out in battle array upon the plain.

The device is dropped in Mrs. Dalloway, which occupies only one day, and is used once again in To the Lighthouse. Probably the most beautiful passage Virginia Woolf ever wrote is the description there of the ten-year cycle of nights:

But what after all is one night? A short space, especially when the darkness dims so soon, and so soon a bird sings, a cock crows, or a faint green quickens, like a turning leaf, in the hollow of the wave. Night, however, succeeds to night. The winter holds a pack of them in store and deals them equally, evenly, with indefatigable fingers. They lengthen; they darken. Some of them hold aloft clear planets, plates of brightness. The autumn trees, ravaged as they are, take on the flash of tattered flags kindling in the gloom of cool cathedral caves where gold letters on marble pages describe death in battle and how bones bleach and burn far away in Indian sands. The autumn trees gleam

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10 Ibid., p. 273.

11 Ibid., p. 279.
in the yellow moonlight, in the light of harvest moons, the
light which mellows the energy of labour, and smooths the
stubble, and brings the wave lapping blue to the shore.

It seemed now as if, touched by human penitence and all its
toil, divine goodness had parted the curtain and displayed behind
it, single, distinct, the hare erect; the wave falling; the boat
rocking; which, did we deserve them, should be ours always. But,
alas, divine goodness, twitching the cord, draws the curtain; it
does not please him; he covers his treasures in a drench of hail,
and so breaks them, so confuses them that it seems impossible that
their calm should ever return or that we should ever compose from
their fragments a perfect whole or read in the littered pieces
the clear words of truth. For our penitence deserves a glimpse
only; our toil respite only.

The nights now are full of wind and destruction; the trees
plunge and bend and their leaves fly helter skelter until the
lawn is plastered with them and they lie packed in gutters and
choke rain pipes and scatter damp paths. Almost it would appear
that it is useful in such confusion to ask the night those ques­
tions as to what, and why, and wherefore, which tempt the sleeper
from his bed to seek an answer.12

The series of interludes in The Waves is nearly as good. There are nine:
picturing before dawn which indistinguishably merges sea and sky; sun­
rise touching the jeweled sea with sparks of fire; high-noon, hot and
golden; afternoon with lengthening shadows; night, sky and sea indis­
tinguishable. The one day of light and shadow over a marine landscape
parallels in a symbolic sense the lives of the characters from birth to
death and divides the monologues into their appropriate time divisions.

Although objects are bright with color or light, the novelist
rarely describes with any elaboration of detail a person's entire appear­
ance or a whole scene. She chooses a salient feature of person, place,
or thing and concentrates the light on that. In Jacob's Room *the street
market in Soho is fierce with light. Raw meat, china mugs, and silk

12 Woolf, Virginia, To the Lighthouse, pp. 192-93.
stockings blaze in it." All that is told of Mrs. Plumer's appearance is that she has "red hands," of her two little girls that they wear "white dresses with blue sashes." Clarissa in Mrs. Dalloway describes herself as having "a narrow pea-stick figure; a ridiculous little face, beaked like a bird's." Others mention only her "little pink face" or tell of her advancing "light, tall, very upright." Miss Pym in the same book is "button-faced." It is the same with places. Peter in recalling his quarrel with Clarissa recalls the place:

The fountain was in the middle of a little shrubbery, far from the house, with shrubs and trees all round it. There she came, even before the time, and they stood with the fountain between them, the spout (it was broken) dribbling water incessantly. How sights fix themselves upon the mind. For example, the vivid green moss.  

Mr. Ramsay in To the Lighthouse is remembered for his boots:

Remarkable boots they were too, Lily thought, looking down at them: sculptured; colossal; like everything that Mr. Ramsay wore, from his frayed tie to his half-buttoned waistcoat, his own indisputably. She could see them walking to his room of their own accord, expressive in his absence of pathos, surliness, ill-temper, charm.

With the exception of the interludes, detail grows even less in The Waves. The children in the opening of the book are telling what they see in the garden. Bernard notices a spider's web, Susan the shape of the leaves, Neville the brightness of the birds' eyes, Jinny the harsh, short hairs and drops of water on the stalks of plants—but no one here

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14 Woolf, Virginia, To the Lighthouse, pp. 228-29.
or elsewhere tells an entire scene. The appearance of people is likewise incomplete. Jinny says:

...my lips are too wide, and my eyes are too close together; I show my gums too much when I laugh. Susan's head, with its fell look, with its grass-green eyes which poets will love, Bernard said, because they fall upon close white stitching, put mine out; even Rhoda's face mooning, vacant, is completed, like those white petals she used to swim in her bowl.15

Her visual images give the effect of mobility rather than that of line. The essence of beauty is never found in repose or inanimation.

The novelist herself explains—

Thus if you talk of a beautiful woman you mean only something flying fast which for a second uses the eyes, lips, or cheeks of Fanny Elmer, for example, to glow through.16

Certainly nothing is static in these novels; they are moving pictures of light and color and water as the following exemplify:

A black shiver crossed the snow...17

But colour returns; runs up the stalks of the grass; blows out into tulip and crocuses; solidly stripes the tree trunks and fills the gauze of the air and the grasses and pools.18

...dark descends, pours over the outlines of houses and towers; bleak hillsides soften and fall in.19

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16 Woolf, Virginia, Jacob's Room, p. 196.
17 Ibid., p. 165.
18 Ibid., p. 278.
19 Woolf, Virginia, Mrs. Dalloway, p. 34.
The lights were rippling and running as if they were drops of silver water held firm in a wind.\textsuperscript{20}

I am rooted, but I flow. All gold, flowing that way, I say to this one, 'Come.' Rippling black, I say to that one, 'No.'\textsuperscript{21}

This mobility is probably what Mr. Mortimer refers to when he says of Virginia Woolf's writing "every word she uses is alive and pulling like a trout on a line."\textsuperscript{22}

After the visual, auditory images make the next appeal both in number and significance. As descriptions of actual sounds of persons, traffic, and nature they are similar to those in her first two novels. However, three very effective sounds echo through Jacob's Room and become motifs and symbols. Two of these—a volley of pistol shots and women beating carpets—seem to have some reference to death. One night Jacob had stayed out late at night to catch moths. Mrs. Flanders is alarmed to hear "a volley of pistol-shots suddenly in the depths of the wood."\textsuperscript{23}

A tree had fallen. Later at Cambridge, Jacob is recalling how to entice moths:

If you stand a lantern under a tree every insect in the forest creeps up to it...Ah, but what's that? A terrifying volley of pistol-shots rings out—cracks sharply; ripples spread—silence

\textsuperscript{20}Woolf, Virginia, \textit{To the Lighthouse}, p. 104.

\textsuperscript{21}Woolf, Virginia, \textit{The Waves}, p. 102.

\textsuperscript{22}Mortimer, Raymond, "Mrs. Woolf and Mr. Strachey," \textit{Bookman}, 68:629, February, 1929.

\textsuperscript{23}Woolf, Virginia, \textit{Jacob's Room}, p. 32.
laps smooth over sound. A tree—a tree has fallen, a sort of
death in the forest. After that, the wind in the trees sounds
melancholy.\textsuperscript{24}

Later when Jacob is fighting for his country the ships in the Piraeus
fire their guns. Far away in Scarborough Betty Flanders half asleep, is,
in some mysterious fashion, awakened by the reverberations:

"The guns?" said Betty Flanders, half asleep, getting out of
the bed and going to the window, which was decorated with a
fringe of dark leaves.

"Not at this distance," she thought. "It is the sea."\textsuperscript{25}

The second sound, that of the beating of carpets, is at first less clear
in its significance. One day a neighboring woman paused in the beating
of her mat against the wall while she watched Betty Flanders and her
young children, and then continued to beat the rug. Evidently Betty
stored the sound among her memories and it recurred one night, the same
night that the ships firing in the Piraeus awakened her. After deciding
that it was the sea, she heard

Again, far away, she heard the dull sound, as if nocturnal
women were beating great carpets. There was Morty lost, and
Seabrook dead; her sons fighting for their country. But were the
chickens safe? Was that someone moving downstairs? Rebecca
with the toothache? No. The nocturnal women were beating great
carpets. Her hens shifted slightly on their perches.\textsuperscript{26}

Evidently the watchful, curious neighbors somehow connected themselves
in her mind with the Fates. The sound of a carpet being beaten is

\textsuperscript{24} Woolf, Virginia, Jacob's Room, pp. 48-49.

\textsuperscript{25} Ibid., p. 300.

\textsuperscript{26} Ibid., pp. 300-01.
similar to that of a muffled gun or one fired at a distance. Nocturnal women undoubtedly refer to the Fates who were described as daughters of the Night. Atropos, who cut the thread when a man had to die, is sometimes represented without her sisters. This subtle and haunting auditory image illustrates the airy art of Virginia Woolf's use of allusion and also her conception of memory as a stream of recollections constantly "pressing against the portals of consciousness" and uniting with the present.

The third sound, the striking of the clock, is the most frequent one throughout the book. Fourteen times the clock or bells mark time for the living. The characters are living in a Bergsonian world where time is subjective or conceptual. Consciousness marks its duration or durations and the characters strive to keep the flow of psychological states continuous. However, objective Time intrudes by the ticking of the clock, by the recurrence of day and night, by the revolution of the seasons. Sandra hearing "time accumulating" asks herself, "What for? What for?" For Betty, the bells mingling with her son's voice "mixed life and death inextricably, exhilaratingly." The striking of the church clock prompts the question, "Did the strokes reach the furze

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27 Bergson, Henri, op. cit., p. 5.
28 Woolf, Virginia, Ibid., p. 275.
29 Ibid., p. 20.
bush, or did the thorn tree hear them?"30

Big Ben resounds in the next novel also mixing life and death. Clarissa pauses to its voice and waits for its message in suspense, a feeling, caused, she has been told, by her heart affected by influenza: "There! Out it boomed. First a warning musical; then the hour, irrevocable. The leaden circles dissolved in the air."31 Big Ben's voice strikes the half-hour during Peter's morning visit with Clarissa, strongly, indifferently, inconsiderately. Their communication is over:

As a cloud crosses the sun, silence falls on London; and falls on the mind. Effort ceases. Time flaps on the mast. There we stop; there we stand. Rigid, the skeleton of habit alone upholds the human frame.32

Then among the other city clocks that take up the half-hour after Big Ben, Peter catches the sound of St. Margaret's:

...and the sound of St. Margaret's glides into the recesses of the heart and buries itself in ring after ring of sound, like something alive which wants to confide itself, to disperse itself, to be, with a tremor of delight, at rest—like Clarissa herself... and an extraordinarily clear, yet puzzling recollection of her, as if this bell had come into the room years ago, where they sat at some moment of great intimacy, and had gone from one to the other and had left, like a bee with honey, laden with the moment... Then, as the sound of St. Margaret's languished, he thought, She has been ill, and the sound expressed languor and suffering. It was her heart, he remembered; and the sudden loudness of the final stroke tolled for death that surprised in the midst of life, Clarissa falling where she stood, in her drawing-room. No! No! he cried. She is not dead!33

30Woolf, Virginia, Ibid., p. 224.
31Woolf, Virginia, Mrs. Dalloway, p. 5.
32Ibid., pp. 73-74.
33Ibid., pp. 74-75.
To the Lighthouse retains the same general scheme but the sea and the lighthouse replace the clock as symbols. Just as the thought of going to visit the hoary, austere lighthouse across the bay and the vision of its light in the evening serve to mark external time of the single day in the first section of the book, the sound of the sea beats out the measure of earthly life. To Mrs. Ramsay occupied in helping James to cut pictures from a catalog the murmur of the voices of the men talking on the terrace, the shouts and sounds of the children playing cricket out of doors cease,

...so that the monotonous fall of the waves on the beach, which for the most part beat a measured and soothing tattoo to their thoughts and seemed consolingly to repeat over and over again as she sat with the children the words of some old cradle song, murmured by nature, "I am guarding you—I am your support," but at other times suddenly and unexpectedly, especially when her mind raised itself slightly from the task actually in hand, had no such kindly meaning, but like a ghostly roll of drums remorselessly beat the measure of life, made one think of the destruction of the island and its engulfment in the sea, and warned her whose day had slipped past in one quick doing after another that it was all ephemeral as a rainbow—this sound which had been obscured and concealed under the other sounds suddenly thundered hollow in her ears and made her look up with an impulse of terror.

As in Jacob's Room, other homely sounds, though not of memory, but sounds accompanying the gradual dilapidation of the empty house, tell of the death of its owners.

...later in the summer ominous sounds like the measured blows of hammers dulled on felt, which, with their repeated shocks still further loosened the shawl and cracked the tea-cups. Now

\[34\]
Woolf, Virginia, To the Lighthouse, pp. 27-28.
and again some glass tinkled in the cupboard as if a giant voice had shrieked so loud in its agony that tumblers stood inside a cupboard, vibrated too. Then again silence fell; and then, night after night, and sometimes in plain mid-day when the roses were bright and light turned on the wall its shape clearly there seemed to drop into this silence, this indifference, this integrity, the thud of something falling.

(A shell exploded. Twenty or thirty young men were blown up in France, among them Andrew Ramsay, whose death, mercifully, was instantaneous.)

In The Waves sound images have increased in number and beauty but are used according to the same general plan as those in Jacob's Room and Mrs. Dalloway, symbolical motif images, and actual time sounds. The sound of the sea in the interludes, as in To the Lighthouse, measures earthly lives. Before dawn the waves sigh "like a sleeper whose breath comes and goes unconsciously." As the sun rises and progresses through the sky they fall with "muffled thuds," then drum on the shore "like turbaned warriors, like turbaned men with poisoned assegais who, whirling their arms on high advance upon the feeding flocks, the white sheep"; they become as regular and powerful as an "engine which sweeps its force out and in again"; they fall "like the thud of a great beast stamping," "like a wall falling," until in the evening their energies spent they roll back "sighing" and break "on the shore." For Louis there is the motif-image of the great beast stamping. "I hear something stamping, a great beast's foot is chained. It stamps, and stamps, and stamps."

The beast is on the beach. Together with its sound or preceding it is the sound of the sullen thud of the waves and finally we understand that

35 Woolf, Virginia, To the Lighthouse, pp. 200-201.
the beast is the ocean and the breaking of the waves is death. Not only the clock or bells, which do sound occasionally, but any sound of the external world may wrench a character from the timeless world of the mind back into the one governed by clocks. Susan complains, "But here bells ring; feet shuffle perpetually." Neville invites his beloved, "Meanwhile, let us abolish the ticking of time's clock with one blow."

And Bernard explains:

Yes, but suddenly one hears a clock tick. We who had been immersed in this world became aware of another. It is painful. It was Neville who changed our time. He who had been thinking with the unlimited time of the mind, which stretches in a flash from Shakespeare to ourselves, poked the fire and began to live by that other clock which marks the approach of a particular person. The wide and dignified sweep of his mind contracted. He became on the alert. I could feel him listening to sounds in the street. I noted how he touched a cushion. From the myriads of mankind and all time past he had chosen one person, one moment in particular...The folds of the curtain became still, statuesque; the paper-weight on the table hardened; the threads on the curtain sparkled; everything became definite, external, a scene in which I had no part I rose, therefore; I left him.

Sound in The Waves is frequently visible. At least thirty-four times words or sounds, generally words, are white, yellow, or red. Or they are fish, birds, stones, a steel-blue ring, flames, bubbles, a balloon, moths, or Roman roads. Some of these, particularly "steel-blue ring" and "bubbles" are repeated many times. Jinny sees conversation:

Words crowd and cluster and push forth one on top of another... They jostle and mount on each other's shoulders. The single and the solitary mate, tumble and become many. It does not matter

what I say. Crowding, like a fluttering bird, one sentence crosses the empty space between us. It settles on his lips... Similar conceptions, generally expressed in simile or metaphor, appear once each in To the Lighthouse and Mrs. Dalloway. It is the insane Septimus in the latter that makes the discovery that music is visible. They occur twice in Night and Day and about six times in Voyage Out. The examples in Voyage Out are as vivid as those in The Waves. Rachel is disturbed in her playing the piano and "The shape of the Bach fugue crashed to the ground." Later she plays again—

Up and up the steep spiral of a very late Beethoven sonata she climbed, like a person ascending a ruined staircase, energetically at first, then more laboriously advancing her feet with effort until she could go no higher and returned with a run to begin at the very bottom again.

Tactile images are less numerous than auditory in all four of these novels except in Mrs. Dalloway where they nearly equal in number the auditory. These tactile images, like the others, fall into two groups—those that are literal reports of actual, physical sensation and those that express the psychic or emotional in terms of physical sensation. The latter are, as in the other groups also, the more vivid. Since they are likewise, similes or metaphors, they belong in the discussion on figures of speech but will be discussed here on account of the tactile appeal involved.

38 Woolf, Virginia, Voyage Out, p. 57.
39 Ibid., p. 291.
Jacob's Room uses out of the three dozen tactile images only one vivid description of physical sensation and only four of emotional significance. The former is found in Jacob's account of jumping his horse at a hunt. Horse's and rider's bodies become one and together they thrill to the swoop and curve of motion through the air followed by the descending jolt. Among the second is Jacob's disillusionment in discovering Florinda's falseness to him. He sees her with another man:

It was as if a stone were ground to dust; as if white sparks flew from a livid whetstone, which was his spine; as if the switchback railway, having swooped to the depths, fell, fell, fell. This was in his face.

The spine is the seat of pain in Mrs. Dalloway, too. Clarissa's hatred of Miss Kilman caused Clarissa to "feel scraped, hurt in the spine." Peter demanding that Clarissa choose him rather than Dalloway felt "...that he was grinding against something physically hard; she was unyielding. She was like iron, like flint, rigid up the backbone." All the characters feel keenly. Clarissa hearing of the death of Septimus rehearses it in her own body. She feels on fire, she feels the up-rush of the ground as he fell and the piercing of the spikes through his body. Indeed, the one character that cannot feel is Septimus. The beginning of his mental breakdown, if not the cause of it, was his sudden

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41 Ibid., p. 158.
42 Woolf, Virginia, Mrs. Dalloway, p. 17.
43 Ibid., p. 97.
inability to feel. He could do accounts, he read his Dante, he could reason, but he could not feel. Love, sympathy, and dislike cause the expression of the most vivid tactile comparisons in *To the Lighthouse*. Lily Briscoe feels and analyzes while she is with William Bankes. Here the tactile is reinforced by the visual:

Suddenly, as if the movement of his hand had released it, the load of her accumulated impressions of him tilted up, and poured in a ponderous avalanche all she felt about him. That was one sensation. Then up rose in a fume the essence of his being. That was another. She felt herself transfixed by the intensity of her perception.  

It is his severity, his goodness, his lack of vanity, his devotion to science that she perceives on the one hand; and his bringing a valet to the seashore, his dislike for dogs on chairs, and his finickiness in eating that she perceives on the other. Mrs. Ramsay lavishes and spends herself to bring all within her vicinity into harmonious relationship, even in thought, with herself and with each other. When she succeeds there throbs—

through her, like the pulse in a spring which has expanded to its full width and now gently ceases to beat, the rapture of successful creation.  

It is not until *The Waves*, however, that each character is provided with a characteristic and recurring tactile image or figure. Here, too, Bernard explains the close relation of such sensation with the

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44 *Woolf, Virginia, To the Lighthouse*, p. 39.

psychic. He recalls in his manhood an experience from his childhood:

In the beginning, there was the nursery...Then Mrs. Constable raised the sponge above her head, squeezed it, and out shot, right, left, all down the spine, arrows of sensation. And so, as long as we draw breath, for the rest of time, if we knock against a chair, a table, or a woman, we are pierced with arrows of sensation—if we walk in a garden, if we drink this wine...I could implore them not to squeeze the sponge over that new body.  

Each character receives these arrows of sensation and each reacts, according to his or her temperament. As Bernard again explains:

But we were all different. The wax—the virginial wax that coats the spine melted in different patches for each of us...our white wax was streaked and stained by each of these differently.

Jinny is a flame. She describes her own sensations as those of burning, of touching others and their bodies bursting into flames, and the others feel the blaze of her laughter. Rhoda's is wetness. She is foam that whitens the ocean shore; she is the "nymph of the fountain always wet." Louis feels the weight of the world on his shoulders. His roots thread the depths of the earth; he is shaken by its tremors and pressed by its weight. Susan responds to the seasons' heat or cold, to the suckling of her child, to all things of nature. Warmth, particularly of water, is Bernard's. It reminds him of the flesh he wears. Neville, alone, seems to have no characteristic figure of the kind. He explains "Arrows of sensation strike from my spine, but without order."

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46 Woolf, Virginia, *The Waves*, p. 239.
Olfactory images remain negligible both in number and vividness in these four novels and gustatory images rank only slightly higher. In Jacob's Room are none worth recalling. In Mrs. Dalloway the descriptions of both Lady Bruton's and Clarissa's dinners are fairly detailed and appealing, but there is a sneer for Miss Kilman to whom the "pleasure of eating was almost the only pure pleasure left her." To the Lighthouse contains the memorable dish the "Boeuf en Dwayne" with "its confusion of savoury brown and yellow meats and its bay leaves and its wine, and thought." In The Waves Susan revels in hams, onions, fruits, and the making of bread. Neville describes a delicious dinner that dish by dish passes his palate

...in exquisite rotation of warmth, weight, sweet and bitter,... into my stomach...I feel quiet, gravity, control...Instinctively my palate now requires and anticipates sweetness and lightness, something sugared and evanescent; and cool wine, fitting glove-like over those finer nerves that seem to tremble from the roof of my mouth and make it spread (as I drink) into a domed cavern, green with vine leaves, musk-scented, purple with grapes.

Otherwise there is in most of the vivid passages contempt for the necessity of eating. The end of the book comes amidst the peelings and breadcrumbs of a finished meal. Bernard in summing up the story of his life admits that a part of it

...is the old brute, too, the savage, the hairy man who dabbles his fingers in ropes of entrails; and gobbles and belches; whose

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48 Woolf, Virginia, Mrs. Dalloway, p. 197.
49 Woolf, Virginia, To the Lighthouse, p. 151.
speech is guttural, visceral—well, he is here. He squats in me. Tonight he has been feasted on quails, salad, and sweetbread. He now holds a glass of fine old brandy in his paw. He brindles, purrs, and shoots warm thrills all down my spine as I sip.  

The emotional and psychical activity of the characters in these novels demands not only images but also figures of speech for re-presenting their perceptions. *Jacob's Room* and *To the Lighthouse* use fewer, about three-fifths of the number in *Mrs. Dalloway* and about one-fourth the number in *The Waves*. Stated similes are used twice as often as either implied similes and in *Jacob's Room* twice as often as metaphors, but in the succeeding novels metaphors gain considerably in number. Virginia Woolf's preference for the cooler, analytic figure of the simile reveals not only her classic taste but also the careful art with which she writes despite the effect her books give of being thrown off spontaneously. Occasionally an epic simile evidences her debt to Homer. As her style gains sureness so her figures of speech gain in beauty and imaginativeness. Many of the stated similes in *Jacob's Room* lack emotional intensity because in them the resemblance of the two objects brought together is almost entirely external and obvious as, "the tobacco plant and the passion flower, over which the great moth spun, were white as china." Occasionally, in the same book, the writer descends to the trite: "The window shook, and Rebecca stole like a cat and wedged it."  

52 Woolf, Virginia, *Jacob's Room*, p. 91.
"The boy Curnow became as immobile as stone." The succeeding novels
make a considerable gain in vividness and originality. Possibly a dozen
such expressions as "hard as nails," "rub this in," "straight as a
dart," in each book have been well worn before she used them but their
proportion to the number of those that are fresh is insignificant. She
has the ability, too, to re-use a trite figure in an arresting manner
such as Neville's complaint of Percival's death caused by a preventable
accident: "We deserve then to be tripped by molehills. We are infinitely
abject, shuffling past with our eyes shut." It is noticeable that
almost invariably the use of an unpleasant or disgusting comparison occurs
when the human body in its physical processes is either tenor or vehicle.
Thus: "...the finger tips that drew in the paper slips were swollen as
sausages." "Damp cubes of pastry fell into mouths opened like tri-
angular bags." "Do her hair as she might, her forehead remained like
an egg, bald, white." "This talking is undressing an old woman whose

54 Woolf, Virginia, Jacob's Room, p. 89.
55 Woolf, Virginia, Mrs. Dalloway, p. 108
56 Woolf, Virginia, To the Lighthouse, p. 12.
57 Woolf, Virginia, The Waves, p. 221.
58 Ibid., p. 151.
61 Woolf, Virginia, Mrs. Dalloway, p. 195.
dress had seemed to be part of her, but now, as we talk she turns pinkish underneath, and has wrinkled thighs and sagging breasts."

Concreteness in both tenor and vehicle that was observed in her early novels remains. To the Lighthouse offers the single exception. There in the section "Time Passes" Time itself becomes sentient and with the Night, Beauty, and Solitude creates an allegory. Personification appears no place else in these novels.

Other figures—synechdoche, metonymy, hyperbole, oxymoron, and irony—are occasionally woven into the texture of metaphors and similes, adding force and vividness. Since, however, they are comparatively few and do not change the groupings pointed out or modify the conclusions reached, they have not been included in this study.

As a whole, the figures of speech, although vivid and interesting, lose when taken out of their context, particularly those that belong in the motif or symbol groups. The groupings of the figures that occur in the early novels are again used in the later books, namely: the group using fire or light as vehicle; one using animals, birds, or insects; one employing plant life; one drawing comparisons from objects that would appear particularly to a woman; and one, the largest, using as vehicles water or related objects.

The large use of fire in Night and Day suggested that it would be important in the succeeding novels. However, Jacob's Room employs

it only four times. There the lights of Cambridge burn "not only into the
night, but into the day," and the emanations of its Greek, its science,
and its philosophy, shine over "tumbling waves" and are a "haze on the
waters" of humanity. The twenty-six in Mrs. Dalloway assist in giving a
radiance and a glow to the book. Persons glow, kindle, and flame in
their intercommunications of thought and emotion. Flowers, too, burn;
words and laughter blaze. To the Lighthouse offers more striking though
not more numerous examples. There people, beauty, personality, love,
laughter, and the present ecstatic moment are flames or lights. Just as
light not losing its identity illumines without detaching or separating
objects, so Mrs. Ramsay at moments knows the thoughts and feelings of
others and holds them in her consciousness, not judging or separating,

...but at the moment her eyes were so clear that they seemed
to go round the table unveiling each of these people, and their
thoughts and their feelings, without effort like a light steal­
ing under water so that its ripples and the reeds in it and the
minnows balancing themselves, and the sudden silent trout are
all lit up hanging, trembling.63

The lighthouse itself, of course, sign of Mrs. Ramsay and symbol of un-
attained perfection, stands never out of the consciousness of the
characters. The number of similar comparisons drops considerably in
The Waves where fire is used occasionally to signify the soul, the brain,
and—as in Jacob's Room—civilization. It becomes, as it has been
already noted, a motif figure for Jinny.

63 Woolf, Virginia, To the Lighthouse, p. 160.
Jacob's Room employs the animal, insect, and bird figures or comparisons rarely and without much imagination. The other three novels each use between thirty and forty animal comparisons, on the whole adding only to the external pictorial effect. In Mrs. Dalloway bird comparisons are especially numerous. They add grace and beauty there also in To the Lighthouse where Mrs. Ramsay explains that—

The movement of the wings beating out, out, out—she could never describe it accurately enough to please herself—was one of the loveliest of all to her.64

This may explain the mysterious sentence that Rhoda in The Waves so frequently repeats, "The swallow dips her wing in dark pools."65 Two memorable similes, however, represent emotional activity. Mrs. Dalloway, herself bird-like in action and appearance, in talking with Peter, emotionally recollects her childhood and appraises her life:

She looked at Peter Walsh; her look, passing through all that time and that emotion, reached him doubtfully, settled on him tearfully; and rose and fluttered away, as a bird touches a branch and rises and flutters away.66

Mrs. Ramsay, listening to one of her servants, Marie, a Swiss girl, telling of the beauty of her native mountains, felt that—

...all had folded itself quietly about her, when the girl spoke, as, after a flight through the sunshine the wings of a

64 Woolf, Virginia, To the Lighthouse, p. 122.
66 Woolf, Virginia, Mrs. Dalloway, p. 64.
bird fold themselves quietly and the blue of its plumage changes from bright steel to soft purple.67

The other smaller groups of figures rarely add more than a decorative effect. Vehicles employing articles that a feminine eye would heed as a cracked bowl, apple parings, lace, linen, earrings, sugar-tongs, parasols, buttons and the like are few in Jacob's Room and To the Lighthouse; they number sixteen in Mrs. Dalloway and thirty-seven in The Waves where some of the comparisons are far-fetched, as Susan's observation:

When the lark peels high his ring of sound and it falls through the air like an apple paring, I stoop; I feed my baby.68

The largest and most significant group of figures throughout all the novels, including the early ones, is that which uses the ocean and related objects as comparisons. Even in Jacob's Room these remain, as in Voyage Out and Night and Day, fairly traditional in conception and although integral, only to the extent of supplying a faint undertone of meaning. Jacob's Room does not produce any particularly imaginative ones. Jacob's horse "goes up like a monster wave"69; he sees the Acropolis "like a large immobile wave with the yellow columns of the Parthenon firmly planted upon it."70 The boat vehicle, as in Night and Day, is common. Churches are ships and so is the world which is oared forward

67 Woolf, Virginia, To the Lighthouse, p. 45.
69 Woolf, Virginia, Jacob's Room, p. 168.
70 Ibid., p. 251.
by war maneuvers and commerce. Conversation is the oars that keep life moving around the Durrants' dinner table. Jacob's shabby slippers are "like boats burnt to the water's rim," a simile that becomes more significant in the light of the concluding words of the book. After Jacob's death in the war, his mother, cleaning the cupboard in his room, turns with the question, "What am I to do with these, Mr. Bonamy?" She held out a pair of Jacob's old shoes. The problem of communication ever uppermost in the consciousness of Virginia Woolf's characters and their love for silence combine in one lovely water comparison:

Simeon said nothing. Jacob remained standing. But intimacy—the room was full of it, still, deep, like a pool. Without need of movement or speech it rose softly and washed over everything, mollifying, kindling, and coating the mind with the lustre of pearl, so that if you talk of a light, of Cambridge burning, it's not languages only.

In Mrs. Dalloway the number of figures using water as a vehicle increases. London appears dipped in the ocean, submerged, with no resultant change in its normal activities except the giving to people and objects an unusual freshness and fluidity. The individual moves in a sea-like world. "Beauty, scent, colour," flow over Clarissa like a wave. The fresh morning air is "like the flap-kiss of a wave" to her. Later the warmed air "washes" over the Smiths. Wireless messages flash through the world above them on "waves" of "divine vitality." The sound

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71 Woolf, Virginia, Jacob's Room, p. 60.
72 Ibid., p. 303.
73 Ibid., p. 73.
of the clock "floods," "laps," and "breaks like the spray of an exhausted wave." The blue-green of the elm trees is that of a "hollow wave," and the leaves of the trees look as if they were "dipped in sea water."

Sparrows rise and fall in "jagged fountains." Cabs rush around "like water around the piers of a bridge" and passing cars leave "a slight ripple." Persons, too, are drenched with the atmosphere or turned into sea creatures. Rezia is a "lily, drowned under water." Septimus is a "drowned sailor;" Miss Parry is a "lighthouse marking some past stage on this adventurous long, long voyage." Lady Bradshaw, her will submerged in that of her husband's, has "gone under, water-logged." At Clarissa's party, the same lady "in grey and silver is balancing like a sea-lion at the edge of its tank, barking for invitations." Clarissa, herself, wearing "earrings and a silver-green mermaid's dress" is lolling on the waves. Lady Bruton is washed around by a "grey tide of service" which spreads "round the house in Brook Street a fine net where things lodged and were picked out accurately, instantly by grey-haired Perkins."

As in the preceding books the identification of the person with the ocean is still rare, though it occurs a few times, notably when Elizabeth decides to become either a farmer or a doctor, the busy rush of the city street having stimulated "what lay slumberous, clumsy, and shy on the mind's sandy floor to break surface." Peter also has a sea-figure

74 Woolf, Virginia, Mrs. Dalloway, p. 208.
to describe his susceptibility. A moment of vision and "It was as if he were sucked up to some very high roof by that rush of emotion and the rest of him; like a white shell-sprinkled beach, left bare."  

A new water-figure is introduced in Mrs. Dalloway and is found recurring frequently in The Waves and assuming importance there in the interpretation of the kind of time that governs the world of the mind. Clarissa endeavors on this June morning, the day on which she is to give a party, to realize the ecstasy of the present moment and to hold it, ...

...as if to catch the falling drop, Clarissa (crossing to the dressing-table) plunged into the very heart of the moment, transfixed it, there—the moment of this June morning on which was the pressure of all the other mornings, seeing the glass, the dressing-table, and all the bottles afresh, collecting the whole of her at one point (as she looked into the glass), seeing the delicate pink face of the woman who was that very night to give a party; of Clarissa Dalloway; of herself.

Peter, too, feels that "Life itself, every moment of it, every drop of it, here, this instant, now, in the sun, in Regent's Park, was enough."  

Bernard in The Waves always uses this comparison to measure time. He explains it for us very clearly:

And time lets fall its drop. The drop that has formed on the roof of my soul falls. On the roof of my mind time, forming lets fall its drop...This drop falling has nothing to do with losing my youth. This drop falling is time tapering to a point. Time, which is a sunny pasture covered with a dancing light, time, which is widespread as a field at midday, becomes pendant. As a drop

75 Woolf, Virginia, Mrs. Dalloway, p. 230.
76 Ibid., p. 54.
77 Ibid., pp. 119-120.
falls from a glass heavy with some sediment, time falls. These are the true cycles, these are the true events.  

Jinny and Louis and later Bernard, too, describe themselves as drops either to emphasize the fullness of some emotional experience or to typify life itself.  

Fewer water-figures are used in To the Lighthouse than in Mrs. Dalloway, possibly because the placing of the subjective feelings of the characters against the actual sea background is felt in some subtle way to transmute them into each other. Whatever the reason for the comparative fewness, they are vivid and give a more sustained consciousness of the sea than do those in the preceding books. They follow the same pattern, however, as before, of representing the physical world as an ocean and finally the closer identification of persons and their emotions with water. There are no new uses. At the end of the book Lily Briscoe, who attains the meaning of the lighthouse by vision, says in reviewing her life:

She seemed to be standing up to the lips in some substance, to move and float and sink in it, yes, for these waters were unfathomably deep. Into them had spilled so many lives. The Ramsays'; the children's; and all sorts of waifs and strays of things besides. A washerwoman with her basket; a rook, a red-hot poker; the purples and grey-greens of flowers; some common feeling held the whole.  

80 Woolf, Virginia, To the Lighthouse, pp. 285-86.
The water-figures, as it is evident from the preceding explanations and illustrations, begin in *Jacob's Room* to supply a hesitating rhythm in the consciousness of the characters, a rhythm which tends to grow more regular in each succeeding book. *The Waves*, however, achieves, through its recurrent use of water images in the perfect awareness of the characters combined with the cycloidal succession of metaphorical interludes and the cadence of the sentences, a tide-like flow in the whole book, a perfectly co-ordinated rhythm.

Each of the six characters in this book feels, in a manner consistent with his personality, a kinship with the ocean. Whether or not they see themselves as waves, the author evidently intends us to so consider them. Bernard, her mouthpiece, announces their deaths at the end of the book with "The waves broke on the shore." 81 (Italics in the original.)

Neville, the sensitive, solitary critic, is the only character in the book who does not himself use the common metaphor identifying himself with the water. He calls himself an immeasurable net whose fibres pass imperceptibly beneath the world...and is almost indistinguishable from that which it surrounds. It lifts whales—huge leviathans and white jellies, what is amorphous and wandering...82

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82 Ibid., p. 214.
Bertie came to Neville who describes the effect of their meeting:

Like a long wave, like a roll of heavy waters he went over me, his devastating presence—dragging me open, laying bare the pebbles on the shore of my soul.83

Bernard has difficulty "because of his many selves" to imbue himself entirely in one fluid—this life."

Louis, who feels inferior to the others because of his Australian accent and the fact of his father's being a banker from Brisbane, unavailingly resists the flux and fluidity. He can and he will reduce the flux to order. He will restore things to what they were before they "broke on these stony beaches." He thinks of himself as a plant with its roots in the "depths of the world." The root feeling gives him the sense of continuity he seeks and finds in history. Nevertheless, he hears always "the sullen thud of the waves." Always he feels the current flowing, the sense of being carried with it and he perceives that passions lie hidden in the dark weeds growing at the bottom and he fears their rising and pounding us "with their waves." Finally death comes:

All the crudity, odds and ends...have been crushed like glass splinters into the blue, the red-fringed tide, which drawing into the shore, fertile with innumerable fish, breaks at our feet.84

Susan, symbol of maternity, and of the elemental passions of love and hate, is the earth. Eventually "security, possession, and familiarity" surfeit her with their natural happiness and she "feels the waves of her life tossed, broken, round me who am rooted."

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83 Woolf, Virginia, The Waves, p. 89.
84 Ibid., p. 231.
Rhoda, because she has no end in view, cannot make moments merge. Each instant of life is violent, separate, fearful. Life is a tiger emerging "heaving its dark crest from the sea." She herself is "like the foam that races over the beach." "The waves break. I am the foam that sweeps and fills the uttermost rims of rocks with whiteness. I am also a girl, here in this room." She finds a refuge in solitude and finally in suicide.

Jinny triumphs over time and over space "with rouge, with powder, with flimsy pocket-handkerchiefs." Introspection and analysis are foreign to her. She "cannot follow any word through its changes..." nor "any thought from present to past." The universe ripples and dances for her and she, in turn, ripples and flows and wavers "bringing in new tides of sensation" to others. She is many things, a "boat," "a limpet," "a streaming river plant," "a gull on the wave," and finally her body becomes "so fluid" that it forms "even at the touch of a finger into one full drop which fills itself, which quivers, which flashes, which falls in ecstasy."

Besides the number of motif, symbolic, and group figures of speech that correspond to those in the preceding novels, there are others in The Waves. Life is a train, a grindstone, blocks, a fisherman, a dream, and a tiger. These are varied, elaborated, and repeated into other less numerous groups. The bewildering variety is difficult to convey.

As the imagery and figures follow emotion so does the diction of these novels. The quiet, even stream of words and sentences in Voyage
Out like the rhythmic ebb and flow of the water over which the ship-load of characters pass seems effortless, instinctive, with something of the quiet simplicity that is the secret of Jane Austen's genius. The uncertainty of plan in Jacob's Room is reflected in the hesitating rhythm of the book as a whole. Narrative, direct communication, little essays by the novelist, and the new attempt at a stream-of-consciousness reporting do not combine. Mrs. Dalloway, despite parts that are very rhythmical, is not quite resolved. To the Lighthouse gains in force and evenness by dropping almost all direct communications between characters. Uncertainty entirely disappears in The Waves. Mrs. Woolf has finally formulated a pattern for the reporting of sensibility.

The repetition of words, phrases, and sentences contributes to the harmonic effect and is important in conveying the perceptions of the characters. The use of repetition is likewise a development beginning in Jacob's Room with the symbolic sounds that echo through the book and have already been described. The simile of Jacob's slippers early in the book and that final question of his mother about them at the end illustrate the novelist's ability to strike a chord of music and, long after the original chord has been forgotten, touch some note that recalls the magic of the first sound and rounds it out to perfection. Another variety of repetition is provided in Mrs. Dalloway where memory begins to play a more important part, where Clarissa and Peter constantly strive to unite the past with the present. The growing groups of figures of speech, too, provide repetition. Repetition seems naturally to belong with the
discontinuity, the irrelevancy of the flow of consciousness. The characters in To the Lighthouse introduce this type. Lily Briscoe, for example, constantly returns to the picture she is trying to paint. The Waves takes all the means provided and uses them so competently that the result is more like poetry than prose.

Before concluding the study of this group of novels it might be well to offer passages from them that parallel ideas contained in the first group in order to illustrate, as far as quotations out of their context can, the change or development in the use of images and figures. The choice of quotations is based on the similarity of central ideas rather than on the similarity of sense appeal, kinds of figures of speech, or figure-groups, since these last three have already been illustrated throughout this study.

Perfect communication of person with person, by which Virginia Woolf evidently means a person's entire understanding of or sympathy with his fellow human beings, which, when attained, will reveal the meaning of life, is the problem facing the characters in all the novels.

Rachel in Voyage Out introduces this problem and she and Terence discuss it using a few decorative images and figures of speech:

"What's so detestable in this country," she exclaimed, "is the blue—always blue sky and blue sea. It's like a curtain—all the things one wants are on the other side of that. I want to know what's going on behind it. I hate these divisions, don't you, Terence? One person all in the dark about another person. Now I liked the Dalloways," she continued, "and they're gone. I shall never see them again. Just by going on a ship we cut ourselves off entirely from the rest of the world. I want to see England there—London there—all sorts of people—"
why shouldn't one? why should one be shut up all by oneself in a room?  

Terence notices as she talks that her gaze goes far beyond him and he angrily accuses her of not really loving him, not really wanting him. Rachel is forced to agree internally with the charge.

It seemed to her now that what he was saying was perfectly true, and that she wanted many more things than the love of one human being—the sea, the sky. She turned again and looked at the distant blue, which was so smooth and serene where the sky met the sea; she could not possibly want only one human being.

Terence suggests that they break their engagement. They decide, however, that separation would be intolerable. Their decision reinforced by physical embrace soothes them and seems also to solve the problem. But the moment of certainty is fleeting; the feeling of union is soon lost again.

It was long before they moved, and when they moved it was with great reluctance. They stood together in front of the looking-glass, and with a brush tried to make themselves look as if they had been feeling nothing all the morning, neither pain nor happiness. But it chilled them to see themselves in the glass, for instead of being vast and indivisible they were really very small and separate, the size of the glass leaving a large space for the reflection of other things.

Turning to the transitional novel, Jacob's Room, one finds Mrs. Flanders and Jacob writing letters to each other, but neither mother nor

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85 Woolf, Virginia, Voyage Out, p. 302.
86 ibid., p. 302.
87 ibid., p. 303.
son reveals self or touches the other. While Jacob reads a letter from his mother, the novelist philosophizes on letters as a means of communication. Although the central discovery remains the same as the one Rachel and Terence made, the expression demands more vivid use of figures of speech:

Life would split asunder without them. "Come to tea, come to dinner, what's the truth of the story? have you heard the news? life in the capital is gay; the Russian dancers..." These are our stays and props. These lace our days together and make of life a perfect globe. And yet, and yet...when we go to dinner, when pressing finger-tips we hope to meet somewhere soon, a doubt insinuates itself; is this the way to spend our days? the rare, the limited, so soon dealt out to us—drinking tea? dining out? And the notes accumulate. And the telephones ring. And everywhere we go wires and tubes surround us to carry the voices that try to penetrate before the last card is dealt and the days are over. "Try to penetrate," for as we lift the cup, shake the hand, express the hope, something whispers, Is this all? Can I never know, share, be certain? Am I doomed all my days to write letters, send voices, which fall upon the tea-table, fade upon the passage, making appointments, while life dwindles, to come and dine? Yet letters are venerable; and the telephone valiant, for the journey is a lonely one, and if bound together by notes and telephones we went in company, perhaps—who knows?—we might talk by the way.

Well, people have tried. Byron wrote letters. So did Cowper. For centuries the writing-desk has contained sheets fit precisely for the communication of friends. Masters of language, poets of long ages, have turned from the sheet that endures to the sheet that perishes, pushing aside the tea-tray, drawing close to the fire (for letters are written when the dark presses round a bright red cave), and addressed themselves to the task of reaching, touching, penetrating the individual heart. Were it possible! But words have been used too often; touched and turned, and left exposed to the dust of the street. The words we seek hang close to the tree. We come at dawn and find them sweet beneath the leaf. 88

Lily Briscoe in To the Lighthouse spends years endeavoring to discover the secret of Mrs. Ramsay's attractiveness. Her thoughts on

88 Woolf, Virginia, Jacob's Room, pp. 155-56.
the subject are reported in more figurative language:

Sitting on the floor with her arms round Mrs. Ramsay's knees, close as she could get, smiling to think that Mrs. Ramsay would never know the reason of that pressure, she imagined how in the chambers of the mind and heart of the woman who was, physically, touching her, were stood, like the treasures in the tombs of kings, tablets bearing sacred inscriptions, which if one could spell them out, would teach one everything, but they would never be offered openly, never made public. What art was there, known to love or cunning, by which one pressed through into those secret chambers? What device for becoming, like waters poured into one jar, inextricably the same, one with the object one adored. Could the body achieve, or the mind, subtly mingling in the intricate passages of the brain? or the heart? Could loving, as people called it, make her and Mrs. Ramsay one? for it was not knowledge but unity that she desired, not inscriptions on tablets, nothing that could be written in any language known to men, but intimacy herself, which is knowledge, she had thought, leaning her head on Mrs. Ramsay's knee.

Nothing happened. Nothing! Nothing! as she leant her head against Mrs. Ramsay's knee. And yet, she knew knowledge and wisdom were stored up in Mrs. Ramsay's heart. How, then, she had asked herself, did one know one thing or another thing about people, sealed as they were? Only like a bee, drawn by some sweetness or sharpness in the air intangible to touch or taste, one haunted the dome-shaped hive, ranged the wastes of the air over the countries of the world alone, and then haunted the hives with their murmurings and their stirrings; the hives, which were people. Mrs. Ramsay rose, Lily rose. Mrs. Ramsay went. For days there hung about her, as after a dream some subtle change is felt in the person one has dreamt of, more vividly than anything she said, the sound of murmuring and, as she sat in the wicker arm-chair in the drawing-room window she wore, to Lily's eyes, an august shape; the shape of a dome.89

The six characters in The Waves toward the end of their lives come together for a dinner. During the evening, individuality seems to merge into perfect understanding; they are disembodied and the walls of

89 Woolf, Virginia, To the Lighthouse, pp. 78-80.
their minds become transparent. But the moment of understanding is as brief and inconclusive for them as it was for Terence and Rachel in the first novel. Each one in *The Waves* describes the disillusionment in a manner not comparable to that of the similar revelation in *Voyage Out*, in more poetic language than in *Jacob's Room* and as poetic but more compressed, more lyrical than in *To the Lighthouse*. Louis, who had been immersed indistinguishably with the others in the ocean of life for a moment describes the return of individuality:

> We have sacrificed the embrace among the ferns, and love, love, love by the lake, standing, like conspirators who have drawn apart to share some secret, by the urn. But now look, as we stand here, a ripple breaks on the horizon. The net is raised higher and higher. It comes to the top of the water. The water is broken by silver, by quivering little fish. Now leaping, now lashing, they are laid on shore. Life tumbles its catch upon the grass. There are figures coming towards us. Are they men or are they women? They still wear the ambiguous draperies of the flowing tide in which they have been immersed.

Rhoda, who fears and flees communication, finds the revelation horrible:

> They are only men, only women. Wonder and awe change as they put off the draperies of the flowing tide. Pity returns, as they emerge into the moonlight, like the relics of an army, our representatives, going every night (here or in Greece) to battle, and coming back every night with their wounds, their ravaged faces. Now light falls on them again. They have faces. They become Susan and Bernard, Jinny and Neville, people we know. Now what a shrinkage takes place! Now what shrivelling, what an humiliation? The old shivers run through me, hatred and terror, as I feel myself grappled to one spot by these hooks they cast on us; these greetings, recognitions, pluckings of the fingers and searchings of the eyes.

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Louis again speaks, pointing out some compensation in the painful quest. At least it makes life exciting if not lucid;

Illusion returns as they approach down the avenue. Rippling, and questioning begin. "That do I think of you—what do you think of me? Who are you? Who am I?—that quivers again its uneasy air over us, and the pulse quickens and the eye brightens and all the insanity of personal existence without which life would fall flat and die, begins again. They are on us. The southern sun flickers over this urn; we push off in to the tide of the violent and cruel sea. Lord help us to act our parts as we greet them returning—Susan and Bernard, Neville and Jinny." 92

Jinny cryptically remarks, "After our fire, there is nothing left to put in lockets." 93 Susan states her conclusion, "Still I gape like a young bird, unsatisfied, for something that has escaped me." 94

The rapture in perfect communication achieved for a moment might, the characters in these novels think, be preserved forever in death. To those who fear communication and reject life, the thought of death is desirable as final escape into perpetual solitude. The following parallel passages on death from the various novels are quoted as reinforcements to the conclusions drawn from those on communication in regard to the use of images and figures of speech.

Terence finds Rachel's death in Voyage Out the fulfillment of the complete union they had desired. He is with her when she dies:

The light being dim, it was impossible to see any change in her face. An immense feeling of peace came over Terence, so

93 Ibid., p. 233.
94 Ibid., p. 233.
that he had no wish to move or to speak. The terrible torture and unreality of the last days were over, and he had come out now into perfect certainty and peace. His mind began to work more naturally again and with great ease. The longer he sat there the more profoundly was he conscious of the peace invading every corner of his soul. Once he held his breath and listened acutely; she was still breathing; he went on thinking for some time; they seemed to be thinking together; he seemed to be Rachel as well as himself; and then he listened again; no, she had ceased to breathe. So much the better—this was death. It was nothing; it was to cease to breathe. It was happiness, it was perfect happiness. They had now what they had always wanted to have, the union which had been impossible while they lived. Unconscious whether he thought the words or spoke them aloud, he said, "No two people have ever been so happy as we have been. No one has ever loved as we have loved."

It seemed to him that their complete union and happiness filled the room with rings eddying more and more widely. He had no wish in the world left unfulfilled. They possessed what could never be taken from them.

In *Mrs. Dalloway*, a novel still transitional in style, Clarissa Dalloway learns during her party of the death of Septimus Smith. The account of her thoughts on his suicide mingle with her perception of the sights and persons about her and the memories of her own socially ambitious and socially successful life. An increase over the preceding quotation in figures of speech and their more close integration may be noticed in the passages:

A young man had killed himself... She had once thrown a shilling into the Serpentine, never anything more. But he had flung it away. They went on living (she would have to go back; the rooms were still crowded; people kept on coming). They (all day she had been thinking of Bourton, of Peter, of Sally), they would grow old. A thing there was that mattered; a thing, wreathed about with chatter, defaced, obscured in her own life, let drop every day in corruption, lies, chatter. This he had preserved.

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95 Woolf, Virginia, *Voyage Out*, pp. 353-54.
Death was defiance. Death was an attempt to communicate; people feeling the impossibility of reaching the centre which, mystically, evaded them; closeness drew apart; rupture faded, one was alone. There was an embrace in death.

Then (she had felt it only this morning) there was the terror; the overwhelming incapacity, one’s parents giving it into one’s hands, this life, to be lived to the end, to be walked with serenity; there was in the depths of her heart an awful fear. Even now, quite often if Richard had not been there reading the Times, so she could crouch like a bird and gradually revive, send roaring up that immeasurable delight, rubbing stick to stick, one thing with another, she must have perished. But that young man had killed himself.

The clock began striking. The young man had killed himself; but she did not pity him; with the clock striking the hour, one, two, three, she did not pity him, with all this going on. There! the old lady had put out her light! The whole house was dark now with this going on, she repeated, and the words came to her, Fear no more the heat of the sun. She must go back to them. But what an extraordinary night! She felt somehow very like him—the young man who had killed himself. She felt glad that he had done it; thrown it away. The clock was striking. The leaden circles dissolved in the air. He made her feel the beauty; made her feel the fun. But she must go back. She must assemble. She must find Sally and Peter. And she came in from the little room.

Each of the six characters in The Waves expresses his thoughts on Percival’s death. Percival is their ideal of unattainable perfection. To Rhoda death is desirable because it offers solitude. She walks down Oxford Street, buys stockings in a store, goes to a music hall and listens to a program, and then rides in an omnibus bound for Greenwich.

What she sees and hears mingle with the up-rush of thoughts and emotions stimulated by the news of Percival’s death. Again images, figures of speech, in compressed, poetic expression make Rhoda’s monologue something quite unlike the report of Terence’s thoughts in Voyage Out and

96 Woolf, Virginia, Mrs. Dalloway, pp. 230–34.
more vivid and more resolved than the expression of Mrs. Dalloway's.

From the six pages that Rhoda uses to convey her ideas the following selections are offered:

On the bare ground I will pick violets and bind them together and offer them to Percival, something given him by me. Look now at what Percival has given me. Look at the street now that Percival is dead. The houses are lightly founded to be puffed over by a breath of air. Reckless and random the cars race and roar and hunt us to death like bloodhounds. I am alone in a hostile world. The human face is hideous. This is to my liking. I want publicity and violence and to be dashed like a stone on the rocks. I like factory chimneys and cranes and lorries. I like the passing of face and face and face, deformed, indifferent. I am sick of prettiness; I am sick of privacy. I ride rough waters and shall sink with no one to save me.

"like" and "like" and "like"—but what is the thing that lies beneath the semblance of the thing? Now that lightning has gashed the tree and the flowering branch has fallen and Percival, by his death, has made me this gift, let me see the thing. There is a square; there is an oblong. The players take the square and place it upon the oblong. They place it very accurately; they make a perfect dwelling-place. Very little is left outside. The structure is now visible; what is inchoate is here stated; we are not so various or so mean; we have made oblongs and stood them upon squares. This is our triumph; this is our consolation.

The sweetness of this content overflowing runs down the walls of my mind, and liberates understanding. Wander no more, I say; this is the end. The oblong has been set upon the square, the spiral is on top. We have been hauled over the shingle, down to the sea.

These then are the flowers that grow among the rough grasses of the field which the cows trample, wind-bitten, almost deformed, without fruit or blossom. These are what I bring, torn up by the roots from the pavement of Oxford Street, my penny bunch, my penny bunch of violets. Now from the window of the tram I see masts among chimneys; there is the river; there are ships that sail to India. I will walk by the river. I will pace this embankment, where an old man reads a newspaper in a glass shelter. I will pace this terrace and watch the ships bowling down the tide. A woman walks on deck, with a dog barking round her. Her skirts are blown; her hair is blown; they are going out to sea; they are leaving us; they are vanishing this summer evening. Now I
will relinquish; now I will let loose. Now I will at last free the checked, the jerked back desire to be spent, to be consumed. We will gallop together over desert hills where the swallow dips her wings in dark pools and the pillars stand entire. Into the wave that dashes upon the shore, into the wave that flings its white foam to the uttermost corners of the earth I throw my violets, my offering to Percival.97

The use, then, of images and figures of speech in this middle group of novels has gone far beyond the reportorial or decorative employment and beyond the faint integration discernible in the first group of novels. Images and figures have embodied themselves, particularly in The Waves, into text and meaning beyond hope of division. The number of either figures or images used is of less significance than the amount of narrative and direct communication between characters concurrently employed. Dropping narrative and omitting direct communication have increased the vividness of imagery and figures. In regard to the kinds of figures, despite the increase in the number of metaphors in The Waves, an increase demanded by the greater spontaneity there in the flow of perception, stated similes still outnumber any other group of figures and this fact reinforces the earlier conclusion that their use proves the careful, cultivated art with which Virginia Woolf wrote. But the fact that the images still appeal mostly to the sense of sight and hearing is now seen to have an additional significance beyond the one stated previously, namely that such appeals show a normal, average reaction to sense impressions. Before stating this new conclusion it is necessary to review what Virginia Woolf has done to character in these novels.

97 Woolf, Virginia, The Waves, pp. 159-164.
The novelist is evidently interested in making character more and more abstract in order to make it more intense. Her characters are the embodiments of the inner force of life, and the demands of the animal nature of man—of hunger, thirst, or sex—show her no solution to the problem of expressing humanity. She is less concerned with exhibiting a character than life itself. Proof of this statement is implicit in the effort, previously mentioned, in *Jacob's Room* to describe the functional relationship of each person with every other in the universe, the creation of Clarissa Dalloway in the next novel as a type of the side of human nature which loves and accepts life and of Septimus Smith as her obverse which hates and rejects life, in the third novel the portrayal of the beautiful Mrs. Ramsay as a source of emotional certainty and almost a pattern for life, and finally the creation of the six characters in *The Waves* who merge, like ocean waves, into each other and who do not know themselves whether they are one or distinct. Without being mystical, Virginia Woolf is unconcerned with the animal needs of man. Therefore to assist in the abstraction of character it is necessary to emphasize the more intellectual, visual and auditory appeals. The same reason probably impels the novelist to make the visual images mobile rather than static. For the same reason the gustatory images, if vivid at all, are generally unpleasant. Likewise the figures of speech employing the human body in its physical processes as tenor or vehicle are rarely employed and, if outstanding, are also disgusting.

Life is a "luminous halo" of all the past, surrounding and joining the present in the midst of which each individual flame burns with
the ecstasy of the present moment or with the achievement of momentary perfect communication as flame mingles with flame. The use of figures of speech drawn from fire or light harmonizes perfectly with Virginia Woolf's viewpoint of life, but she uses it less than the ocean or water as illustrative figure. Life in its continual flow and flux is made, with the aid of the water figures, into a sea whose vari-colored surface is never the same. Used more decoratively in the transitional novels, water figures, in the succeeding novels, increase in number and variety, expressing sensibility, communication, subjective and objective time, life and death, and finally enter the awareness of the characters themselves, give pattern to the arrangement of the book, and transmit cadence to its verbal expression.

Sounds in their symbolical and figurative employment effectively remind the characters that death is equally a reality with life and remorselessly wrenches them from their subjective life of ecstatic nows and their pursuit of perfect communication and returns them to the world of objective Time. Tactile images, too, particularly when combined into figures of speech assist in illuminating the relationship of each person with every other, of illustrating the rapturous acceptance of life and the joy of successful communication.

In all of these the use grows in number, variety, and effectiveness as the style of this group of novels becomes more sure. Compression, hardness, and aptness in the images become in *The Waves* like imagist poetry. The use of light and darkness in the rhythmic succession of
nights and days continues to be used, as it was begun in *Voyage Out*, as a device for the passage of time, but no two novels employ it in the same manner. The pictorial completeness of *Voyage Out* and *Night and Day* begins to disappear in *Jacob's Room* and has been entirely replaced with impressionism by *The Waves*. *The Waves* employs images and figures in a variety and brilliance that can hardly be compared with the use in *Jacob's Room* and is utterly unlike that in the first group of novels. They have become equivalents, in this last novel, less for ideas than for a vision of life which bewilders and blinds by its dazzling splendour.
CHAPTER III

THE YEARS

_The Years_ (1937) is the story of the members of three inter-related English families from 1880 to the present day. The only thread which links the experiences of the many diverse characters belonging to or connected with them is time itself. Colonel Abel Pargiter and his wife Rose, who is dying at the opening of the book, and their children—Della, Eleanor, Milly, Edward, Morris, Martin, and Rose, whose ages when we first meet them range from twenty-two years to about five,—belong to the first family introduced. Mrs. Pargiter soon dies, to the relief of her husband and the older children. Colonel Pargiter makes money in an unspecified profession and keeps a mistress; Della dabbles in politics and marries an Irishman; Eleanor keeps house for her father and oversees property belonging to her; Milly marries; Morris marries and practices law; Edward teaches at Oxford; Martin enters the Army and goes to India and Africa; Rose becomes a militant politician. Mrs. Pargiter's cousin is married to a Professor Malone at Oxford. They have one daughter, Kitty. The Malones entertain the Fripps from America; Kitty reads history with Miss Craddock, has tea with the Robsons, and feels mildly unhappy with her mother. Edward Pargiter loves Kitty who, however, refuses his offer of marriage and accepts that of Lord Lasewade. Colonel Pargiter's brother, Sir Digby, prominent in politics, heads the third family in
the book. He has a wife, Eugenie, with whom, it is hinted, the
Colonel has had an affair, three sons, whom we never meet, and two
daughters, Maggie and Sara. Sir Digby and Lady Pargiter die within
a year of each other, the first about 1907. Maggie and Sara, who is
slightly deformed, live together in genteel poverty, until Maggie's
marriage to a Frenchman, Rene. Members of these three families meet
and visit each other through the book. Morris's children, North and
Peggy, grow up; Colonel Pargiter dies; the Armistice is signed. In
the final chapter all the main characters who are still alive meet at
Delia's for a party where they wonder about Time's enigmas and Life's
problems—youth and age, mutability and permanence, truth and illusion,
communication and silence, life and death. They do not, as did none
of their predecessors in the other novels, find the answers to the
questions.

The stream-of-consciousness method as used in the middle group
of novels is much modified in The Years. Characters communicate
directly with each other as well as express the flow of sensations
and perception. There are long stretches of narrative. There is
less discontinuity and irrelevancy. There is little psychic excite-
ment. The style has the surety and serenity that distinguishes
Voyage Out, the haunting suggestiveness that marks Jacob's Room,
and a delicate precision distilled from the radiance of The Waves.

Examination of the images reveals that Mrs. Woolf uses about
four hundred more than she did in The Waves and twice as many as in
Voyage Out, but comparisons in numbers are not of much significance.
since the actual appeal to the reader in The Years is about the same as in Voyage Out and less than in The Waves. In The Years, as in the others, she chooses the visual, then the auditory, and last, the tactile, to make her most numerous and most vivid effects.

The use of color, on the whole, is reportorial rather than decorative in effect. Red and yellow are still favorites and objects continue to be prefixed with their color when named, such as "red hair," "red hands," "red villas", "red flowers," "reddish-brown book," "yellow boxes," "yellow leaves," "yellow curtains," "yellow frocks," "yellow bus," "green moss," "green dresses," "green chairs," "blue books," "blue china," "blue lamps," and "blue sky." The exceptions occur when the character speaking is in a dreamy state of mind, as North is, when tired and half-asleep, at Delia's party, he watches Maggie putting flowers into water:

Through his half-open eyes he saw hands holding flowers—thin hands, fine hands; but hands that belonged to no one. And were they flowers the hands held? Or mountains? Blue mountains with violet shadows? Then petals fell. Pink, yellow, white, with violet shadows, the petals fell. They fall and fall and cover all, he murmured. And there was the stem of a wine-glass; the rim of a plate; and a bowl of water. The hands went on picking up flower after flower; that was a white rose; that was a yellow rose; that was a rose with violet valleys in its petals. There they hung, many folded, many coloured, drooping over the rim of the bowl. And petals fell. There they lay, violet and yellow, little shallops, boats on a river.¹

Or again when Sara speaks. Sara, who probably escaped from The Waves,

uses poetry for all her communications. She is telling North about her presenting a letter of introduction to a man in a newspaper office where she is applying for a position:

"But I had a talisman, a glowing gem, a lucent emerald"—she picked up an envelope that lay on the floor—"a letter of introduction. And I said to the flunkey in peach-blossom trousers, 'Admit me, sirrah,' and he led me along corridors piled with purple till I came to a door, a mahogany door, and knocked; and a voice said, 'Enter.' And what did I find?" She paused. "A stout man with red cheeks. On his table three orchids in a vase. Pressed into your hand, I thought, as the car crunches the gravel by your wife at parting."2

Occasionally a bit of description glows with color. Eleanor looks from the window of Delia's house after the party:

The sky was a faint blue; the roofs were tinged purple against the blue; the chimneys were a pure brick red. An air of ethereal calm and simplicity lay over everything.3

Diurnal contrast of light and darkness appears in the descriptions that open the sections devoted to the years 1907, 1910, 1911, 1913, 1914, 1917, and the present day. There is much contrast of ordinary objects in black and white as:

"And now Crosby with flakes of snow falling on her black bonnet, climbed into the four-wheeler, holding cover in her arms."4

—the whole of the vast space was completely white. Nobody seemed to have crossed the snow there; everything was white. The grass was white; the trees were white; the railings were white; the only marks in the whole vista were the rooks, sitting huddled black on the tree tops.5

3Ibid., p. 433-434.
4Ibid., p. 217.
Silver is vividly used, particularly in the figures of speech:

Arrows of silver rain crossed the dark trees in the garden.6

The blades of the cactus were sharp silver.7

—the liquid call of an owl going from tree to tree, looping them with silver.8

The road was beaten to a metallic silver.9

Eleanor's....silver-washed dark eyes...10

But in these the vivid never goes beyond the decorative. Any identification of the person with the image, or its use to express feeling other than the aesthetic is notably absent. Neither do the introductory descriptions bear any symbolic relationship to the story of their section as similar ones do in To the Lighthouse and The Waves.

What has been observed of the number and use of the visual images likewise applies to the auditory. There are the sounds of London traffic, of people's voices talking and laughing, of doors slamming, people moving about, the rain falling, pigeons cooing, of music, and fainter sounds, too, such as of trees rustling and moths tapping. But these are all conventional. As in Mrs. Dalloway and Jacob's Room, the clocks mark time for the characters with their ripples and rings of rough sound. But the interruption that so

6Woolf, Virginia, The Years, p. 60.
7Ibid., p. 136.
8Ibid., p. 212.
9Ibid., p. 248.
10Ibid., p. 328.
appalled the characters in the earlier novels in their intense effort not to let the objective time of actuality stop the subjective flow of reality hardly startles the characters in *The Years*. They are living, particularly the young, as people normally do, for the future. Kitty Malone detests the dismal sound of the bells at Oxford but not because she resents their interruption to the ecstasy of the present. She is actually eager for the morrow when she will have her lesson with Miss Craddock and tea with the Robsons and perhaps in the more distant future will see America with the Friggs. Edward loves the sound of the Oxford bells, for they mark the hours for study, which he enjoys. Occasionally the clock does, however, strike in the haunting and suggestive manner of the middle group of novels. Such is the sound of the clocks in the scene where Lady Pargiter and Maggie, returned from a party late at night, stop in Sara's room to tell her about it. The girls persuade their mother to show them how she used to dance when she was young and then to tell them the story of how one night at a party she found a little note folded in her bouquet. In the midst of their gaiety the sound of the clock breaks:

Since the Abbey was so near, the sound of the hour filled the room; softly, tumultuously, as if it were a flurry of soft sighs hurrying one on top of another, yet concealing something hard. Lady Pargiter counted. It was very late. "I'll tell you the true story one of these days," she said..."}

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The moment of intimacy was shattered. Death claimed Lady Pargiter before Maggie and Sara ever heard the true story. Another suggestive sound that recalls the symbolic groups in the preceding novels is found in the description of the night air-raid over London. Maggie, Sara, Rene, and Nicholas seek the shelter of the cellar one evening during dinner-hour when an air-raid is on. Nicholas times the guns and interprets for the others as each boom resounds the progress of the enemy planes through the English defenses, over Hampstead, over the Embankment, on top of their house. After they have returned to the dining-room, Maggie says:

"Listen!...I thought I heard the guns again...." They listened. The guns were still firing, but far away in the distance. There was a sound like the breaking of waves on a shore far away. "They're only killing other people." said Kenny savagely.\(^{12}\)

The lack of emotional intensity in *The Years* calls for few vivid tactile images. There is the record of perception of heat and cold and of ordinary physical contact with others. The more vivid involve figures of speech and are reminiscent of passages in the middle group of novels. Eleanor is shocked at a cynical comment from Peggy:

A knife seemed to slice her skin, leaving a ripple of unpleasant sensation; but what was solid in her body it did not touch, she realised after a moment.\(^{13}\)

Delia praises Peggy:

There, said Peggy, that's pleasure. The nerve down her spine seemed to tingle as the praise reached her father.

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\(^{12}\) *Toole, Virginia, The Years*, p. 293.

Each emotion touched a different nerve. A sneer rasped the thigh; pleasure thrilled the spine; and also affected the sight. The stars had softened; they quivered. Her father brushed her shoulder as he dropped his hand; but neither of them spoke.14

One new figure that makes a tactile appeal, however, and is somewhat significant to the book as a whole likens the body to some kind of delicate machine that adjusts itself by a shifting of internal weights to changing exterior atmosphere or conditions. Martin looks up at St. Paul's:

All the weights in his body seemed to shift. He had a curious sense of something moving in his body in harmony with the building; it righted itself; it came to a full stop. It was exciting—this change of proportion.15

A little later, while he is having lunch with Sara, the waiter tries to cheat Martin out of some change. The incident angers Martin so that as he repasses St. Paul's, to his regret, he has lost the power to feel:

the queer thrill of some correspondence between his own body and the stone.16

This change of weights seems to be the secret of communication with persons also. Toward the end of the book when characters, some of whom have not met for years, come together again, North and Kenny talk and Maggie looks on:

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15Ibid., p. 227.
16Ibid., p. 233.
And as they talked about Africa their faces changed, as if some twitch had been given to the fine network under the skin and the weights fell into different sockets. A thrill ran through her as if the weights in her own body had changed, too.\footnote{Woolf, Virginia, The Years, p. 348.}

The figures of speech, with comparatively few exceptions, are also only decorative. In kinds and groupings they resemble those of the other novels. More than one-half are stated similes. About half of the two hundred odd figures in the book, fall in the groups: water, light, animal, plant, and domestic vehicles. The comparisons drawn from the ocean which were so largely used in the other novels have almost vanished in The Years. The largest group in the last novel is that employing animals, insects, or birds as comparisons for people. These animal likenesses in The Years on the whole are repulsive. Neither this group nor any other in the book holds any secondary meaning beyond the obvious comparison intended. They are not trite; they are clever, occasionally far-fetched as, "The moon is a polished dish-cover,"\footnote{Ibid., p. 353.} and a few recall those more pregnant ones in the preceding novels such as: "The long story that Patrick was telling her kept breaking up the surface of her mind like oars dipping into water. Nothing could settle."\footnote{Ibid., p. 133.} Sara, sleepless, is trying to act thought:

Then against her will something in her hardened. It was impossible to act thought. She became something; a root; lying sunk in the earth; veins seemed to thread the cold mass; the tree put forth branches; the branches had leaves.\footnote{Ibid., p. 133.}
The repetition that contributes much to the development of style in the four preceding novels is also evident here. It occurs in the selection of details that are subsequently developed by a parallel set not entirely a repetition. It occurs in the continual reference to the past that the characters make to each other and to themselves in their effort to find out what composes a life, what is solid, what is true in life. Nicholas at Delia's party stops to talk with Eleanor. He is distracted by the entrance of a lady and Eleanor, watching him, feels that the incident has happened before:

And suddenly it seemed to Eleanor that it had all happened before. So a girl had come in that night in the restaurant; had stood, vibrating, in the door. She knew exactly what he was going to say. He had said it before, in the restaurant. He is going to say, she is like a ball on the top of a fishmonger's fountain. As she thought it, he said it. Does everything then come over again a little differently? she thought. If so, is there a pattern; a theme, recurring, like music; half-remembered, half-foreseen?...a gigantic pattern, momentarily perceptible? The thought gave her extreme pleasure; that there was a pattern. But who makes it? Her mind slipped. She could not finish her thought.20

Everything does happen over again in The Years. Everything these many characters do or say seems echoes from a multitude of dinner-parties or from scores of late-Victorian drawing-rooms.

The preceding chapter offered parallel passages from the novels of the first and second groups on the subjects of communication and death in order to show the contribution which imagery and figures of the speech made to the later novels. To show how The Years deals

with the same subjects the following passages are copied. Peggy, Eleanor's niece, and representative of the "lost generation" ponders on the problem of communication and the mystery of life on her way with Eleanor to Delia's party:

She was alone with Eleanor in the cab. And they were passing houses. Where does she begin, and where do I end? she thought...On they drove. They were two living people, driving across London; two sparks of life enclosed in two separate bodies and those sparks of life enclosed in two separate bodies are at this moment, she thought, driving past a picture palace. But what is this moment; and what are we? The puzzle was too difficult for her to solve it. She sighed.

Later, at the party, Eleanor, who is over seventy years old, falls asleep for a few moments. She awakens and meditates on the same subject:

She half opened her eyes. But where was she? In what room? In which of the innumerable rooms? Always there were rooms; always there were people. Always from the beginning of time...She shut her hands on the coins she was holding, and again she was suffused with a feeling of happiness. Was it because this had survived—this keen sensation (she was waking up) and the other thing, the solid object—she saw an ink-corroded walrus—had vanished? She opened her eyes wide. Here she was; alive; in this room, with living people.

There must be another life, she thought, sinking back into her chair, exasperated. Not in dreams; but here and now, in this room, with living people. She felt as if she were standing on the edge of a precipice with her hair blown back; she was about to grasp something that just evaded her. There must be another life, here and now, she repeated. This is too short, too broken. We know nothing, even about ourselves. We're only just beginning, she thought, to understand, here and there. She

hollowed her hands in her lap, just as Rose had hollowed hers around her ears. She held her hands hollowed; she felt that she wanted to enclose the present moment; to make it stay; to fill it fuller and fuller, with the past, the present and the future, until it shone, whole, bright, deep with understanding.

...It's useless, she thought, opening her hands. It must drop. It must fall. And then? she thought. For her too there would be the endless night; the endless dark. She looked ahead of her as though she saw opening in front of her a very long dark tunnel. But, thinking of the dark, something baffled her; in fact it was growing light. The blinds were white.

There is little reference to death in The Years. Eleanor ponders over the discrepancy of what is said of Sir Digby in the newspaper obituaries and what he really was. The funeral services of Rose Pargiter receive fuller treatment. It is reported as seen by Delia who is chiefly concerned with her own effort to feel sad and her awareness of the lack of sincerity in her father's mourning:

It was an uncertain day, with passing shadows and darting rays of bright sunshine. The funeral started at a walking pace. Delia, getting into the second carriage with Milly and Edward, noticed that the houses opposite had their blinds drawn in sympathy, but a servant peeped. The others, she noticed, did not seem to see her; they were thinking of their mother. When they got into the main road the pace quickened, for the drive to the cemetery was a long one. Through the slit of the blind, Delia noticed dogs playing; a beggar singing; men raising their hats as the hearse passed them...

At last they reached the cemetery. As she took her place in the little group behind the coffin and walked up to the church, she was relieved to find that she was overcome by some generalized and solemn emotion. People stood up on both sides of the church and she felt their eyes on her. Then the service began. A clergyman, a cousin, read it. The first words struck out with a rush of extraordinary beauty. Delia, standing behind

her father, noticed how he braced himself and squared his shoulders.

"I am the resurrection and the life."

Pent up as she had been all these days in the half-lit house which smelt of flowers, the outspoken words filled her with glory. This she could feel genuinely; this was something that she said herself. But then, as Cousin James went on reading, something slipped. The sense was blurred. She could not follow with her reason. Then in the midst of the argument came another burst of familiar beauty. "And fade away suddenly like the grass, in the morning it is green, and groweth up; but in the evening it is cut down, dried up, and withered."

She could feel the beauty of that. Again it was like music; but then Cousin James seemed to hurry, as if he did not altogether believe what he was saying. He seemed to pass from the known to the unknown; from what he believed to what he did not believe; even his voice altered. He looked starched and ironed like his robes. But what did he mean by what he was saying? She gave it up, either one understood or one did not understand, she thought. Her mind wandered.

She looked up. She saw Norris and Eleanor side by side; their faces were blurred; their noses were red; the tears were running down them. As for her father he was so stiff and so rigid that she had a convulsive desire to laugh aloud. Nobody can feel like that, she thought. He's overdoing it. None of us feel anything at all, she thought. We're all pretending.  

The Years, then, is a blend of the methods that distinguish Mrs. Woolf's preceding novels. It depends on imagery and figures of speech in conveying ideas to about the same extent that Voyage Out and Night and Day do. It differs from these two novels in its inclusion of the stream-of-consciousness reporting method which it manages to combine with direct communication of characters and narration more smoothly than Jacob's Room achieves. The Years is less

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23Woolf, Virginia, The Years, pp. 84-87.
exciting than *The Waves* in its effect, although the problems facing
the characters are the same in both books, partly because in *The Years*
there is more narration, but also because the imagery and figures of
speech are not integrated. They remain decorative.
The novelist's method is dependent primarily on the point-of-view from which he studies and presents life. The introduction to this study outlined some of the shifts in viewpoint of philosophy that have affected the outlook, directly or indirectly, of some of the twentieth century novelists, Virginia Woolf in particular.

Virginia Woolf apparently saw life as homogeneous matter in which individuals remain isolated in tragic loneliness in the very midst of the flux of which they are part. In her search for Mrs. Brown, who, she said, is "the spirit we live by—life itself," she endeavored to reproduce not characters but humanity, life itself. *Voyage Out* is less an attempt at this reproduction than a statement of her aims through Terence Hewet, a would-be novelist. Virginia Woolf's own words about another novelist are true of herself in this case. She said of George Meredith:

> The first novel is always apt to be an unguarded one, where the author displays his gifts without knowing how to dispose of them to the best advantage.\(^1\)

*Night and Day* does not advance her objective. In fact, she perversely exemplifies in it what she herself had derided the Edwardian novelists for—characters against environment. This novel, therefore, in its

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structure and plan is a curious anomaly among the other novels. By the time of Jacob's Room, however, she had begun to see a way to catch the elusive "Mrs. Brown". Discarding possessions, plot, character in action, and direct narrative, she there portrays people by their sensibility and explores consciousness in an effort to catch the state of being. She uses vivid images to reveal the sensations or perceptions of her characters and figures of speech to show their emotional attitudes and the variety of their experiences. True, there are images and figures of speech in the first novels, but there they are largely decorative and their groupings only suggest symbolism. In Jacob's Room and Mrs. Dalloway, the transitional novels, both images and figures of speech begin to be more nearly integrated and more closely identified with the emotions of the characters. Symbolism becomes more pronounced. Finally, images and figures of speech increase in number and significance in To the Lighthouse and more so in The Waves, until, narrative having been reduced to the utmost minimum and direct communication between characters abandoned, they raise the stream-of-consciousness reporting in the last novel to lyricism.

Not characters, but human nature is Mrs. Woolf's subject—so her characters turn themselves into symbols of life. Clarissa Dalloway typifies the side of character that loves and accepts life; Septimus Smith, her obverse, the side that hates life, fears it, and finally rejects it. They are not two persons, but one. That the characters are not intended to be individuals is more evident by the
time of The Waves, where the six persons there hardly seem separate
either to themselves or to the reader and finally do, by means of
the figurative language of the book, merge and mingle as the waves in
the ocean of life. To express this two-fold aspect of life the groups
of fire-figures and water-figures, reinforced by the corresponding
images, emphasize, without rising to mysticism, what is super-sensual
in experience rather than sensual. They express sensibility, the
effort toward communication of personality, and seek a pattern for
life and the meaning of death.

Love in this world of pure sensibility, means not a romantic
passion, but the impelling force within each person to share the
imaginative vision of others or to enter into perfect communication
with them. The peculiar excitement of these novels, especially in the
middle group, comes from this never-ending search for communication.
To express this idea, Virginia Woolf employs besides various water,
fire, and tactile appeals the double time figures, the time of sub-
jective states that is relative and true and the objective time which
interrupts and is ordered.

Characters in these novels often observe that an individual life
constitutes a pattern which in various ways and with only superficial
changes revolves around itself. Memory is always pouring into the
present moment. The ever recurring past makes persons live at two
different times at the same moment. This recurrence is expressed
through the repetition of ideas, words, images, and figures, and even
in the rhythm of the sentences. Though characters discern the pattern they find no significance in it—no answers to the questions of life—no hope of understanding others when they cannot understand themselves. Images and figures do not explain life; they merely provide another way of looking at it. The weariness that the unrewarded search has produced begins to be evident in *The Years*, where ecstatic moments are fewer and the exploration of consciousness is abandoned for long stretches of narrative. Images and figures of speech return to the nearly decorative. The novelist has turned backwards in her method. Yet *The Years* does not betray the hesitancy of the transitional novels. It is invested with subtle charm born of and, in special instances, reminiscent of the art developed in *The Waves*. She has said once more and said it well that the mystery of man's existence is the most real thing about him.

This study was to show the part played by imagery and figures of speech in the changing technique of Virginia Woolf's novels. That part is most significant in her second period of writing, called the stream-of-consciousness method. In the novels belonging to that phase Mrs. Woolf analyzes life under the sway of an illumination that is almost a mystic state. She skillfully uses the elements of fire and water as comparisons to express the mystery of human life and a multitude of other objects to explicate the results of her exploration into sensibility. She integrates vivid imagery and figures of speech into the consciousness of her characters and repeats them as motifs and
symbols throughout the books. Her genius happily unites impressionism and imagism with the classical forms and word symbols of the past. The whole unites, especially in *The Waves*, into a vision of life that is complex, subtle, and poetic.
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