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VIRGINIA WOOLF:

A STUDY IN STYLE

(TITLE)

BY

Gregory Lee Manifold

THESIS

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF

Master of Arts

IN THE GRADUATE SCHOOL, EASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY
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1982

YEAR

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Abstract

Virginia Woolf is one of the eminent stylists of the twentieth century. This paper, "Virginia Woolf: A Study in Style", is an exploration of the use of stylistic technique in Mrs. Woolf's two most outstanding novels, Mrs. Dalloway and To the Lighthouse. The basic assumption of the paper is that the meaning of a work, especially the works of Mrs. Woolf, is as accessible through the study of style as it is through the more traditional study of content. Taking its cue from the works of Norman Holland and his "reader-response" criticism, the paper details four techniques of style which provide insight into Mrs. Woolf's novels, and, through this means, the paper seeks to show how the two novels in question can be better understood.

In addition to opening sections in which the paper's perspective and the meaning of style are defined, the paper contains sections on contrast, repetition, metaphor, and sentence structure. In each of these sections, numerous passages are cited to illustrate the contention that these techniques are not mere handmaidens of content, but are, in fact, equally as revelatory of Mrs. Woolf's thought as are studies of character, plot, and setting. The section on contrast uses examples which place relatively unlike items together in a pattern which conveys a meaning different than that of the items taken singly. The repetition section cites examples which use similar words, descriptions, or

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parts of speech to move the reader rhythmically toward an overarching perspective. In the section on metaphor, the cited passages are examples of the way in which Mrs. Woolf gets beneath the surface of events to reveal their connections on the mythic and imagistic levels. This same burrowing technique is shown in the section on sentence structure in which the examples show a separation of parts of the sentence by intervening details which expand the meaning of the sentence. Each of these sections attempts to show Mrs. Woolf's concern with the connections which exist in a world made up of seemingly disparate parts.

The paper makes no apologies for the subjectivity of its tone, claiming, rather, that such subjectivity is the right and proper duty of the critic as he or she attempts to understand the meaning of a work and make it accessible to other readers. The numerous cited passages, however, allay any fear that the novels have not been carefully researched, for the paper is directed as much to the scholar who would delve deeply into Mrs. Woolf's works as it is to the reader who would read them only for the sheer pleasure of their beauty.

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Introduction

Virginia Woolf. The name itself is evocative. It calls forth images of London in the twenties, of the sparkling intellectuals of that day, of a woman walking into the river. It carries with it the singsong of Albee's play, "Who's afraid of Virginia Woolf, Virginia Woolf, Virginia Woolf?" It is the sea, the wave, a moth, a room of one's own. In the name are clustered critic, publisher, prose-poet, lyrical novelist. It is taut with the strain between an emancipated woman and a woman crushed by the enormity of world war. The name is a magnet drawing to itself other brilliant names: Bloomsbury, Hogarth, Eliot, Strachey, Forster, Sackville-West. The name Virginia Woolf strikes a multitude of chords which do not soon die away.

Why? Why is one's imagination given such free rein by a name? Why does one wish, on hearing the name of Mrs. Woolf, to sit back in an overstuffed chair, blow smoke into the parlor air, and survey the sweep of human life? Why are the threads which link Mrs. Woolf to the common and to the eternal woven of such sturdy stuff that to speak her name is to hear simultaneously the polite chatter of London and the breakers in Cornwall?

The answer is obvious. Mrs. Woolf was an author of outstanding, perhaps incomparable, ability. She took the novel and made it new. She observed society and delineated its multifarious connections. She used the English language

as a light to illumine, however briefly, particular details of the ocean's expanse and of the mind's intricate labyrinth. Her name echoes because she employed language as a means with which to snare elusive bits of truth and hold them glimmering before the human eye.

Truth, but in bits: this is the reason Mrs. Woolf's literature creates both agitation and calm. In going after truth in a piece of literature, one expects to witness greatness and power, vast figures filling the pages, human suffering or divine glory. There is dissatisfaction in the bits and pieces, in the moment, in the focus on shoes or a party or a needle moved through silk. To sit in a park or buy a necklace seems indolent, beyond the currents of truth. One is vaguely disturbed that one evening's meal occupies many pages while an entire world war is traversed in a single chapter. And yet, this is Mrs. Woolf's method: bits of truth. The gargantuan movements of human history are shaped as moments--devastations of war are wind through a rotting house--and the mundane events of the day are elevated to quintessential proportions--an old woman moves across her apartment and is the unsolved riddle of religion and love. There is a response to this sort of truth, but there is no awe at the might of it. One is, in fact, rather calm in its presence. "Yes, I know that woman." "Indeed you are right; the wind is suddenly chill tonight." Truth has been pointed out; but its name, its scope--these elude one's grasp.

It is in this manner that Mrs. Woolf is experienced.

One's expectations about truth are disappointed, while one's disdain for the common is converted to interest. How such a delicate balance is achieved is surely cause for study. Some place the locus of this balance in the characters--their nature, activities, and sympathies. Others locate the balance within a philosophic dialectic between male and female principles. Still others attribute Mrs. Woolf's achievements to the structure of the works themselves. All of these approaches certainly merit attention, for Mrs. Woolf's works permit numerous critiques. I, however, find the primary balance point to be style, for there the balance between particular and vast is displayed with a clarity which overshadows both character and philosophy. In her style Mrs. Woolf is luminous and accessible. Her characters are rendered in an arrangement of words; her philosophies, at least in the fiction, are gleaned from the interplay of linguistic constructs; and the structure of each novel is created through the particular arrangement of punctuation, phrase, and sentence.

Thus, I come to the definition of this inquiry: to explore the stylistic techniques which account for my distinctive response to Mrs. Woolf's fiction. In examining my own response, I shall hope to provide a touchstone whereby other readers might also test their responses to the evocative prose of Mrs. Woolf. My study is limited to the two novels in Mrs. Woolf's canon which I believe present her most signal contributions to English literature: _Mrs. Dalloway_ and _To the Lighthouse_. Following introductory sections on style,

subjectivity, and Mrs. Woolf's overall effect, I shall examine the four stylistic devices which comprise the foundation of Mrs. Woolf's work: contrast, repetition, metaphor, and sentence structure. In this manner I hope both to elucidate the remarkable appeal of these novels and to pay tribute to a woman who, in E. M. Forster's phrase, "pushed the light of the language a little further against the darkness."

I. Style

Style is too often placed in contradistinction to content. Into the latter category go character, plot, setting, and ideas, while in the former reside diction, sentence structure, and language itself. Dividing the two aspects forces a choice between the vibrancy of the author's thought and the mundane necessity of its capsulization into words and phrases. Content presents itself as substantial, a thing to be grasped. Style, on the other hand, assumes the shadowy position of arranging the ideas in pleasing order. The assumption is that content holds an absolute sway and employs the servile abilities of style to gain its ends.

This view leads to a devaluation of the importance of language as a conveyance for truth. Those who demarcate too severely between style and content are apt to believe that what is thought or felt is of far greater importance than the manner of expression. In its daily application, the distinction between content and style leads to the ubiquitous summation of many conversations: "You know what I mean." In literature, this demarcation can lead to a misguided inquiry into chimeras such as a psychological history of a character's unrecorded childhood. In both of these results, language takes a subordinate position: the method of expression is a necessary evil, endured only as a means of getting to the truth of the content.

Such a distinction between form and content is not, however, the position of this paper. What I wish to argue

is that style is as accurate a path to the truth of literature as is content. Literature is not, after all, history, nor is it psychological analysis, nor photography: it is a rendering of experience and thought into language. It is a choice of one word over another, of one sentence structure over another. It is active voice instead of passive, past instead of present, plural and not singular. Literature is built of questions, parentheses, images. Literature is the accumulation of an author's choices about how to use the language. These choices convey as much of the author's truth as is contained in the literary constructs of character, plot, and setting. Indeed, these stylistic choices may be the best gauges of the thought behind any particular work, for they are "real" entities with which are executed the diversity of an active imagination. Words and sentences, the basic components of style, are definitely substantial; like content, they are something to be grasped.

But words and sentences can be illusive realities. Our language is rife with multiple meanings, and the connotations of a particular word can be as richly textured as an oil painting. Thus, to understand style, and to employ it as a means to apprehend truth, one must be willing to examine several stylistic techniques within a single work. "Style is the _aggregate_ of frequencies of linguistic items . . . the result of more than one linguistic item."[1] Style "must be built up of observations made at various levels. Otherwise style merely turns into a sub-department of one of

the established steps of linguistic analysis."[2] Style is the conjunction of a number of observations which, taken together, point toward a pattern of authorial choices. A particular word, sentence, or construction "acquires part of its meaning and part of its unique character by resonating against [the] unwritten alternatives."[3] Resonance is the basic constituent of style--resonance against choices not taken and resonance against what cannot even be put into language. Counting active verbs or charting shifts in tense can be instructive. It is, however, the resonance of a passage, the way in which it echoes throughout a work and within human experience, that points most clearly toward the style.

It may be objected, of course, that resonance is hardly an analytic enough term to encompass the study of style. A more exacting definition calls style "the arrangement of words in a manner which at once best expresses the individuality of the author and the idea and intent in his mind."[4] But surely such a definition leads little further than does the term "resonance." One is hardly equipped to apprehend individuality or a mind's intent through the study of an arrangement of words unless, of course, the author has specifically charted this arrangement, word for word, to reveal his or her mind. And such a charting, on the whole, would not seem to lend itself to the creative impulse we call literature. The creative impulse is generally thought to be a subconscious activity, one more akin to the marvels

of conception than to the predictability of construction: the imagination of the author in play against the reality of the world, resulting in a new entity. A study of the arrangement of features provides adequate explanation of neither the individuality of the creator nor the intent of the mind.

Though complete explanation of the author's intent may not be feasible, the presence of that author can certainly be felt. It is felt in the choices made, not only of subject matter and philosophic inclination but also of words and sentence constructions. The words are more than the vehicle for the explication of content; they are a part of the content itself. The choice of one construction over another, the ordering of sentences, the resonance of one passage against another or against what is left out: these stylistic elements reflect the mind of the author with as much accuracy as do the elements traditionally associated with content--character, plot, setting.

It is through this avenue that I propose to explore the writing of Mrs. Woolf. Through an examination of the choice, order, and resonance evident in her prose, I will suggest the efficacy of style, set apart from content, knowing full well that such separation is not a final step in understanding the tremendous appeal of Mrs. Woolf's fiction.

II. Subjectivity

I do not intend to study style in a vacuum. I will remove it as much as possible from the elements of character and plot, but I do not wish to separate the style of Mrs. Woolf from my response to her prose. There are two reasons for taking this approach. First, of course, is that my emotional response to her writing is the _raison d'etre_ of this study. It would be improper, if not impossible, to attempt an examination of Mrs. Woolf's fiction without acknowledging my affinity for her views. It seems baldly obvious that to engage in the laborious process of dissecting a piece of literature requires that one find in that work a strong attraction. In some cases, respect for craftmanship is enough to generate a thorough study; in this case, however, my respect for Mrs. Woolf's craftsmanship is secondary to the response which her prose elicits. Such an ordering of priorities does not excuse shoddy scholarship. On the contrary, it focuses the aim of scholarship toward its rightful end: the illumination of literature for the greater appreciation of the reader. There are other aims in critical scholarship, of course, but they are not my concern in this paper.

This point cannot be overly stressed, for it is on the basis of this admitted subjectivity of method, this focus on response, that some critics might dismiss the observations found herein. Their dismissal, however, would be based on

an assumption I dispute: the assumption of objectivity. This is the second reason for choosing the reader-response approach to scholarship: no work of literature can be evaluated completely objectively. Just as the author chooses one idea or one structure over another, so too does the reader pick out certain elements and overlook others. To deny that this is so is to undermine the good effects of criticism altogether. The reader can no more shed the presuppositions with which he or she assesses prose than the author can dismiss the presuppositions with which he or she writes it. For either reader or writer to make such an attempt is as foolish as it is hopeless. A healthy distance, an inquiring method, a careful analysis: these the critic is wise to adopt. But claims to an overarching objectivity must be dismissed for the futile wishes that they are.

These two reasons for adhering to the reader-response approach--emotional affinity and righteous subjectivity--have been ably defended by the work of Norman Holland. Writing in defense of a psychoanalytic criticism, Holland propounds ideas which merit attention in any sort of scholarship. He argues that "meaning is not a static set of relevancies, but a dynamic process of transforming one kind of relevancy. . . to another . . . ."[5] And this transformation is not only the act of the author while shaping his or her perceptions into language; it is also the work of the reader as he or she engages the work with

personal ideas and images. Literature is a vital entity to be confronted as one would another human being--with the casual interest one gives to a new face on the train or, more satisfactorily, with the commitment one has for a friend. In either case, prose is living, not a corpse laid out on the slab for objective inspection. As long as literature is read, "meaning is not a statement, but a process."[6] Like the subjectivity of criticism, this is a crucial point. Neither literature nor criticism is ever a final statement; rather it is a search for ideas, for patterns, for explanations. Both the author and the critic are getting at an experience from some peculiarly individual direction, and both are seeking an illumination of that experience. Even with a most adamant objectivity, the critic tries to make of the literary work a coherent whole, and he or she does this through finding the heart of the work, that which brings the entire piece into a unity. "Whatever their sect, literary critics find central or core ideas that permeate and inform the literary work--this is what we mean when we say literary works have 'organic unity.' Psychoanalytic critics find a core of fantasy; other kinds of critics find cores of social, biographical, political, philosophical, moral, or religious meaning."[7] This search for "organic unity" is the duty of the critic: to discover in the experience of literature the patterns which make it accessible. In the following section, I will summarize the patterns in Mrs. Woolf's fiction which generate my deepest response as a reader.

III. An Overview

Mrs. Woolf's literature is foremost an exploration of relationships: the relationship of one event to another, of one person to another, of one image to a second and to a third. Mrs. Woolf's style, like her content, constantly raises the question of what binds the world together. She states the question with great clarity: "And the supreme mystery which Kilman might say she had solved, or Peter might say he had solved, but Clarissa didn't believe either of them had the ghost of an idea of solving, was simply this: here was one room; there another. Did religion solve that, or love?"[8] One thing is over here, another over there: how does one account for their both being in the same world? In the exploration of this question lies much of the fascination of, for example, Mrs. Dalloway and To the Lighthouse.

It is not, however, primarily from the questions or the answers that Mrs. Woolf's greatest effects emanate. Her most profound effects spring from her search. As in all literature, it is the search which is most enduring and not the final conclusions. Mrs. Woolf's search follows old paths and new; she begins over and over again to get from one place to another; she travels over, under, and through events. Always she is searching for the relationship of disparate experience, for an explanation about the bonds of the world. The problem of relationship returns to Mrs. Woolf as Clarissa

Dalloway returns to Peter Walsh: ". . . she kept coming back like a sleeper jolting against him in a railway carriage; which was not being in love, of course; it was thinking of her, criticising her, starting again, after thirty years, trying to explain her." (D 115) If Mrs.Woolf fails to make any final statements about the way in which the world is bound together, still her readers come away with a sense of the bonds. "Through the open window the voice of the beauty of the world came murmuring, too softly to hear exactly what it said--but what mattered if the meaning were plain?"[9] Mrs. Woolf does not promise a complete description of the way the world works, nor does she even consider it an attainable possibility. What she achieves is "that half-heard melody, that intermittent music which the ear half catches but lets fall; a bark, a bleat; irregular, intermittent, yet somehow related; . . . which the ear strains to bring together and is always on the verge of harmonising, but they are never quite heard, never fully harmonised . . . ." (L 212) To catch this "half-heard melody," Mrs. Woolf takes two approaches. On the one hand, she unites disparate events and presents, through their conjunction, a broad view of the world. On the other hand, she burrows beneath the distinct moments of life and lays bare that which animates the inner life.

In uniting disparate experience, Mrs. Woolf catapults the reader from specific events toward a general perspective, a lofty perch from which momentarily to survey the sprawl of

human existence. The leap from specific to general is more instinctive than logical. It is like seating oneself in the car of a ferris wheel and being whisked to the apex. The ride is swift, the resultant view grand, and the return to earth sure. "But this morning everything seemed so extraordinarily quiet that a question like Nancy's--What does one send to the Lighthouse?--opened doors in one's mind that went banging and swinging to and fro and made one keep asking, in a stupefied gape, What does one send? What does one do? Why is one sitting here, after all?" (L 218) From the specific question of the moment springs the timeless question, "Why, after all?" The particulars of the moment point toward the mystery of "here was one room; there another." Mrs. Woolf constantly shifts her perspective, bringing the far close in and setting the near in a larger picture:

> And suddenly the meaning which, for no reason at all, as perhaps they are stepping out of the Tube or ringing a doorbell, descends on people, making them symbolical, making them representative, came upon them, and made them in the dusk standing, looking, the symbols of marriage, husband and wife. Then, after an instant, the symbolical outline which transcended the real figures sank down again, and they became, as they met them, Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay watching the children throwing catches. (L 110-111)

Ordinary life is not demeaned in Mrs. Woolf's fiction, since it is always through the ordinary that one gets to the mystery of existence. With Lily Briscoe one wants "to be on a level with ordinary experience, to feel simply that's a chair, that's a table, and yet at the same time, It's a miracle, it's an ecstasy." (L 300)

In other passages, Mrs. Woolf merges ordinary experience to create a vast panorama. She accumulates specifics so that they point beyond themselves. "First one thing, then another. So she built it up, first one thing and then another." (D 219) When she leaps from the specific to the general, Mrs. Woolf bids the reader simply follow, forgetting questions of logic. The merging effect, however, consciously shapes the particulars so that they guide rather than push the reader toward a changed perspective. For example, Mrs. Ramsay "brought together this and that and then this, and so made out of that miserable silliness and spite . . . something--this scene on the beach for example, this moment of friendship and liking-- which survived, after all these years complete, so that she dipped into it to re-fashion her memory of him, and there it stayed in the mind affecting one almost like a work of art." (L 239-240) This guide, this "something which survived," is not unlike the "meaning which descends on people": they both illuminate the connection between events and truth. But the effect of the merger approach is to show that perfectly common events, unlike in themselves, all point to a similar connection. The variety of events which are tied together may be startling, but Mrs. Woolf's shaping makes inescapable the awareness that a connection does, in fact, exist. Septimus Smith's observation summarizes the merging process: ". . . all of this, calm and reasonable as it was, made out of ordinary things as it was, was the truth now; beauty, that was the

truth now. Beauty was everywhere." (D 105) Mrs. Woolf could be describing her own shaping abilities in the following passage: "There might be lovers whose gift it was to choose out the elements of things and place them together and so, giving them a wholeness not theirs in life, make of some scene, or meeting of people (all now gone and separate), one of those globed compacted things over which thought lingers, and love plays." (L 286)

Mrs. Woolf's second approach to the exploration of relationships is a burrowing technique which takes the reader beneath the surface of events and reveals what moves in the inner world. Here Mrs. Woolf lays back the surface of things so as to reveal the bonds which exist beneath immediate sense perception. Behind the facade of actions and sounds is a rich world made up partly of the characters' history, partly of myth, and partly of the isolation inherent in the world. There is a wholeness in this burrowing and laying back: the very sweep and constancy of the inner world is a uniting force. That one cannot define the dimensions of this inner sweep does not render it unreal:

> 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. (L 192-193)

This world behind and between events is both simple--the singularity beneath the multiplicity of the world's toil--and complex--a lifetime existing between one moment and the next. There is a sense of observation rather than progression, an exploration of the currents of life without an alteration of their direction. The reader is made an observer of life, rolled by the tides or left floundering in the backwaters, surrounded by the wonders of the world but unable to enter them. There is an urgency to get beneath the surface of things in order to experience this rich world, yet there is uncertainty about what one will encounter there. The reader is compelled on a search, but the search has no certain end.

Mrs. Woolf raises the question of the relatedness of the world through two means. The first is to unite events which seem disparate and, thus, provide an elevated perspective from which to glimpse momentarily the patterns of human life. The second is to dive beneath the singular moments of daily life and reveal the sorts of mythic and historical currents which run between what seems isolated on the surface. In neither case does Mrs. Woolf make a final statement about the relationship of events. She suggests the discernible features and emphasizes the brief perspective which her techniques afford. The effect is of a tenuous hold on a substantial reality, rather like

describing objects as they appear in the fog. One is sure of their presence, but it is impossible to make out their exact outlines. The reader comes away from Mrs. Woolf's fiction convinced that life is connected but unable to state exactly what constitutes the relationship. The reader is troubled that things are inexact, yet he or she is also serene in the presence of the "half-heard melody" which continues to haunt one long after the book has been put away. Such a serene tenuousness is what Mrs. Woolf achieves in her reader, an achievement made most notably through her style.

IV. Contrast

In this analysis of Mrs. Woolf's fiction, the term "contrast" refers to the placement of relatively unlike items into a pattern which conveys a meaning different than that of the items taken singly. The resultant meaning has two thrusts. On the one hand, logic is disrupted by the dissimilarity of the items, while, on the other hand, a relationship is affirmed through the textual connection. When linked in the text, seemingly trivial events suggest a point of observation, an accumulation of data out of which has been constructed a temporary place to stand. From this vantage point the reader gains a sense of how the world is bound together. Great events and small are simply facets of some more vast experience; single moments are composed of contrasting images; every event is perceived from several points of view. Through the conjunction of unlike items, lateral nature is momentarily disrupted and a vision emerges of the symbolic and imaginative connections which keep surface events from flying into their myriad separate spheres.

The beauty of this juxtaposition of contrasting elements is that it is firmly rooted in ordinary events. The imaginative panorama is attainable only through the mundane moments of life. The visions of life's connectedness which Mrs. Woolf's fiction affords "include the recalcitrant facts of outward existence which retain their independence. [These facts] may be present in memory or be converted into symbols

intensely meaningful to an inner consciousness, but they also represent that substance of factual life which belongs in the province of the conscientious novelist. This duality of imagination and fact . . . became the source of her method, reconciling the novelist's need for a concrete world with the poet's heightened insights."[10] Both the mad internal monologues of Septimus Smith and the aesthetic musings of Lily Briscoe originate in perceptions of common events, and this is what allows the reader to assimilate the often complex connections which these and other characters make. Since the constant referent is ordinary experience, available to anyone, the connections which Mrs. Woolf draws permit imaginative leaps which might not otherwise be considered. Without this grounding in ordinary experience, the sense of life conveyed in a Woolf novel might seem dull or, at worst, would appear so tenuous as to be inconsequential. But because the observations which vivify both _Mrs. Dalloway_ and _To the Lighthouse_ are constructed of definite events, "First one thing and then another," the reader willingly follows Mrs. Woolf in her explorations. Instead of confusion over the ambiguity of her vision, the reader feels a sense of exhilaration that the disparities of common experience can be combined at all, especially into so luminous a sense as Mrs. Woolf achieves. The contrasts can be divided into three categories: the linking of unlike events, the linking of unlike images, and the linking of ordinary life with the inner life.

The juxtaposition of events in Mrs. Dalloway and To the Lighthouse links great and small into a single moment. Such a conjunction shows that no event is actually of any more importance than another. Take, for example, this sentence: "Sally always said she had French blood in her veins, an ancestor had been with Marie Antoinette, had his head cut off, left a ruby ring." (D 48) Joined into a single moment are ancestry, history, death, and a material legacy. The traditional value of a particular blood heritage is diluted by the recital of the legacy left to the descendants: a life is summarized in a ring. At the same time, because the items are joined without regard for importance, the ring assumes the same importance as the heritage and the association with the ill-fated Marie Antoinette. Through the linkage of items not usually considered of equal value, the sentence both devalues all items to that of the least important and equalizes all items in a pattern where no values are assigned. The reader senses that Sally Seton's French blood may not be a noble heritage, but he or she also wonders whether ancestry is, after all, any more important that a ruby ring. A similar effect is engendered by this sentence: "And Richard Dalloway strolled off as usual to have a look at the General's portrait, because he meant, whenever he had a moment of leisure, to write a history of Lady Bruton's family." (D 167) The dignity of the General and of an aristocratic family's history is linked with Richard Dalloway's stroll and the "moment of leisure" which he intends to devote

to his project of preservation. The value of Lady Bruton's history is made suspect by the nonchalance with which Dalloway approaches it; but, like the ruby ring, the casual manner of Richard Dalloway is made as important as an outstanding family's contributions. Traditional values do not hold their usual places, and the world is seen from a different perspective. This shifting perspective is also evident in Peter Walsh's plans "to poke about in the Bodleian, and get at the truth about one or two little matters that interested him." (D 239) In the Bodleian's vast accumulation of knowledge, Peter Walsh will"poke about" after "one or two little matters." The Bodleian and the entire spectrum of truth appear, on the one hand, as mere extensions of the little matters which interest him. On the other hand, Peter Walsh's search for "truth" elevates these little matters to a plane of importance. If traditional concepts of truth can be shed, Mrs. Woolf's contrasts show that truth is as accessible through little matters as it is through great questions.

Another kind of contrast is the merger of an event and a response into a single moment which makes its impact through the nature of the event and the contrasting response it elicits. The following sentence is an example: "All the same it irritated Andrew that Nancy should be a woman, and Nancy that Andrew should be a man, and they tied their shoes very neatly and drew the bows rather tight." (L 116) The sex of the two characters is a salient condition, pivotal to their developments. Yet their response is irritation. A fundamental

of human life is linked with a minor response, the effect being to diminish concern about such givens. One wonders what, after all, can be done about such fundamentals except to observe them, since irritation is the response which they create. Another example from To the Lighthouse echoes this same point: "At the recollection--how she had stood there, how the girl had said, 'At home the mountains are so beautiful,' and there was no hope, no hope whatever, she had a spasm of irritation . . . ." (L 45) Here irritation is paired with despair, "no hope, no hope whatever," but the effect is similar. Hopelessness is contrasted to irritation. The dominant condition in both sentences--the sex of Nancy and Andrew in the former, the lack of hope in the latter--remains unchanged because of the minor reaction linked to it. The major event is to be observed and not changed. And, indeed, this is a prominent part of the effect which Mrs. Woolf's vision creates: one is ultimately an observer of life. There are connections between things and there are responses which we make to the various events around us, but finally we are carried along by these as if in a current. While life is all of a piece by nature of its myriad connections--connections affirmed by the contrasts which Mrs. Woolf employs--both great and small events retain their isolation. The following passage, which links pathos and boots in a spirit similar to the earlier quoted sentences, summarizes this sense of isolation: "Thus occupied he seemed to her a figure of infinite pathos. He tied knots. He bought boots. There was no helping Mr. Ramsay on the journey he was going." (L 230)

A slightly different effect results from the juxtaposition of images in Mrs. Woolf's fiction. Whereas the contrast of events confounds the reader's sense of value, the pairing of unlike images tends to give a rounded sense to the ambiguity of life. The images lie like two ends of a seesaw, "balanced but not fused, for truth requires that the paradoxical nature of life be preserved."[11] The paired images are in their dissimilarity refreshing, for they are often oppositions and appear like two sides of a coin, each in need of the other for completion. Though strikingly different, together they form a balanced picture. In this example from _To the Lighthouse_, the two images serve to give a complete picture of the sea: "Waves were all round them, tossing and sinking, with a log wallowing down one wave; a gull riding on another." (L 284) The weight and clumsiness of the log are in sharp contrast to the grace of the gull, yet taken together they are complete. Even in a storm, which can drag ships down to the depths, the wave's crest and the spray remain light and graceful. The contrasts affirm that life is made up of opposite forces in a constant state of balancing. This sense of balance can be seen in another example: "Elizabeth guided her this way and that; guided her in her abstraction as if she had been a great child, an unwieldy battleship." (D 196) The images have a less natural association, yet their conjunction displays an entire picture of Elizabeth's task. In the innocence of the child and the bulk of the battleship are the tenderness and the determination required to guide Miss Kilman. The balance

between opposing forces is affirmed, and the ambiguity of Mrs. Woolf's vision is reiterated: every moment consists of a complex of contrasting forces.

Another use of imagistic contrast grows out of Mrs. Woolf's vision "that life is both transitory (ever changing) and whole (never changing)."[12] This type of contrast mixes images rich in permanence with those that evidence an ephemeral nature. "And all the time she was saying that the butter was not fresh one would be thinking of Greek temples, and how beauty had been with them in that stuffy little room." (L 291) Butter, a decidedly transitory substance, is linked with a Greek temple and beauty, two enduring entities in the human experience, to produce a total picture. In this sentence both the passing and the enduring are simply aspects of some more complete reality, one which somehow encompasses the ephemeral and the permanent with equal ease. This encompassing is not simply a luxury in Mrs. Woolf's fiction; it is necessary to convey the luminosity of her vision. If her fiction were distilled from its contrasts, it would become an attenuated philosophic statement, devoid of resonance in the reader. It would lack the rich harmony of notes played together, and it would lose its link to the common experiences which make it accessible. "She could have done it differently of course; the colour could have been thinned and faded; the shapes etherealised; that was how Paunceforte would have seen it. But then she did not see it like that. She saw the colour burning on a framework of steel; the light of a butterfly's

wing lying upon the arches of a cathedral." (L 75) The contrast of color flaming on a metal structure, the pairing of the minuscule wing and the vast cathedral arch, the perfect balance of fire and insect on one side and steel and arch on the other: these are the sorts of juxtapositions of images which convey a sense of the fullness of life.

A third kind of contrast employed by Mrs. Woolf links perfectly common activities with tumultuous undercurrents to create "a fragile skin stretched over chaos, the chaos of madness, death, and destruction."[13] Like the joining of contrasting events and images, this combination of surface and subsurface presents both a new perspective from which to view the entities of the contrast and an increased awareness of the relationships at play in the world. The proximity of destruction to the mundane affairs of life gives to these affairs a particularly transitory quality, but the destructive subsurface does not overpower the "fragile skin" of common life; it is contrasted with it and held in abeyance by the common qualities of daily living. In some cases this holding action is more pronounced than in others:

> The world by all means should have shared it, could Mr. Bankes have said why that woman pleased him so; why the sight of her reading a fairy tale to her boy had upon him precisely the same effect as the solution of a scientific problem, so that he rested in contemplation of it, and felt, as he felt when he had proved something absolute about the digestive system of plants, that barbarity was tamed, the reign of chaos subdued. (L 74)

The mother reading to her son and the "reign of chaos" are equal not only through their linguistic association, but also

through Mr. Bankes' perception that the common experience overwhelms the tumultuous one. There is a sense of victory. This holding action of commonality against chaos is not always victorious, however; it sometimes represents no more than simple coexistence. "No one had seen her step off her strip of board into the waters of annihilation. She remained a skimpy old maid, holding a paint-brush." (L 269) The sense of triumph is absent, yet the equality of the two elements is affirmed. Chaos is present, but the world of ordinary events continues. Merging the distinct entities creates a stand between them from which to gaze into both without fear of the chaos or disgust at the ordinary. The two contrasting elements work like the two teams in a tug-of-war, each providing an opposing tension and, thus, keeping the world in balance.

But this taut-rope image is not sufficient to encompass all of Mrs. Woolf's contrasts between chaos and ordinary life. An elucidating metaphor for this second type may be drawn from a city's battle against a flood. The citizens stand upon the dikes and watch millions of gallons of water inch their way upward. At one point the water breaks through and threatens to devastate whole neighborhoods, yet the citizens rush into the fray and fling their bags of sand into the breach in time to stave off, at least temporarily, their destruction. So it is with these other contrasts in Mrs. Woolf's fiction. Destruction is always threatening to break through the barriers of ordinary life and engulf it, but the common moment fills the break and allows life to go on. When death or chaos is

linked with the most mundane experience, the power of the tumultuous is awesome even as there is comfort in the temporary respite. "Oh! thought Clarissa, in the middle of my party, here's death, she thought." (D 279) Sometimes this frightened ease is achieved through the simple contrast of two words like "party" and "death." In other cases a whole battery of common moments is necessary to balance the effect of chaos: "And up came that wandering will-o'-the-wisp, that vagulous phosphorescence, old Mrs. Hilbery, stretching her hands to the blaze of his laughter (about the Duke and the Lady), which, as she heard it across the room, seemed to reassure her on a point which sometimes bothered her if she woke early in the morning and did not like to call her maid for a cup of tea; how it is certain we must die." (D 267) The comic picture of an old woman, the laughter, the bothersome point, the cup of tea, the maid, the Duke and the Lady, the reassurance: all of these mundane matters are needed to stem the intrusion of death. The balance of the contrast is assured by the lengthy recitation of life's ordinariness. Another technique which balances the power of death is to wall it up within the ordinary moment: "And her old Uncle William used to say a lady is known by her shoes and gloves. He had turned on his bed one morning in the middle of the War. He had said, 'I have had enough.' Gloves and shoes; she had a passion for gloves; but her own daughter, her Elizabeth, cared not a straw for either of them." (D 15) The resignation and the defeat of Mrs. Dalloway's uncle are wreathed about with her prattling thoughts about

gloves and shoes. Death hardly makes its presence known before it is excluded by the trifling concerns of the moment. But the reader cannot escape the awareness that finally one "has enough" of gloves and shoes and concerns of the moment. The contrast is effective because of the power which their association gives to each of the elements: destruction will triumph, but not yet.

There are cases, however, when the contrasts are weighted in favor of destruction, just as earler examples pointed out how the chaotic and the common sometimes maintain a draw. In these cases the ordinary moment appears as what might have been were it not for the victory of destruction. "Really it was a miracle thinking of the war, and thousands of poor chaps, with all their lives before them, shovelled together, already half forgotten; it was a miracle." (D 174) The lyricism of "all their lives before them" in contrast to the graphic "shovelled together" is like soaring into the air only to be yanked rudely to earth by a rope. The contrast does not so much temper the distinct elements and emphasize their equality as it shapes them into a stark scene which emphasizes the enormity of the destructive triumph. While the triumph in this sort of contrast is not always of death over life, the completeness of the victory remains the focus. In the following passage the breeze which the children hope will not come is contrasted to and obliterated by the image of the final sentence:

> He had forced them to come. In their anger they hoped that the breeze would never rise, that he might be

> thwarted in every possible way, since he had forced them to come against their wills.
>
> All the way down to the beach they had lagged behind together, though he bade them 'Walk up, walk up,' without speaking. Their heads were bent down, their heads were pressed down by some remorseless gale. (L 243)

The two kinds of wind, the first a symbol of the moment, the second of some powerful destruction, combine in this passage to create a picture of defeat: not only is their desire for Mr. Ramsay's thwarting never to materialize, but the children themselves are thwarted by the "remorseless gale" of their father. The logical twist of the contrast serves to increase the scope of the emotional destruction visited upon the children.

V. Repetition

The term "repetition" refers to the unification of items, not usually dissimilar, into a scene which presents a panorama of human life. The separate parts of the repetition act as steps of a ladder which traverse with comparative ease the distance between the surface life and the overarching perspective. Unlike the logical dissonance of contrast, the technique of repetition establishes a harmony through its use of similar words, descriptions, or parts of speech. Contrasts are sometimes imbedded within the repetition, but the emphasis is on the resonance between items. The repetition carries a passage toward its goal, lifting instead of dragging the reader to a new perspective. The rhythms of similarity allow for a gentler, less strident vision, one which endures through its echoes rather than through its discord. Mrs. Woolf defines the effect of repetition in this sentence from To the Lighthouse: "For in the rough and tumble of daily life, with all those children about, all those visitors, one had constantly a sense of repetition--of one thing falling where another had fallen, and so setting up an echo which chimed in the air and made it full of vibrations." (L 295) On these vibrations one is able to float above daily life and gain a brief vision of the patterns which animate it and, in so doing, capture a sense of the relationships at play in the world.

The distinctions to be made among the types of Mrs. Woolf's repetitions are fine, not glaring, their similarities

more pronounced than their differences. Yet each of the three types has a distinct focus: the series creates a general picture; repetition of a word or phrase produces a rhythm; and repetition of a particular part of speech focuses on movement. Each type contains elements of the others, and their distinctions are somewhat arbitrary, to be sure, for the overall effect of each repetition is the same: through rhythmic pattern, movement toward an overarching perspective.

The series wields a fascinating power. From a few isolated details, the merest fraction of the total features ascribable to an event, a picture emerges which gives a total impression. What is striking about the details which make up this picture, especially in Mrs. Woolf's writing, is their subjectivity. Their overall impression is vividly textured, yet, taken separately, the details are limited if not inconsequential. It is only as they are combined that they have power. And even in combination, the fluidity of the details remains paramount. "Certainty and stability played little part in Woolf's sense of herself, and it was on her sense of herself that she predicated the new form of the novel: shifting, subjective, unassertive of its moral stance, it would impose no rigid thirty-two chapters on experience, but would let the emphasis fall where it might."[14] From the picture created by the series emerges a sense of the reality which Mrs. Woolf describes, even though the exact dimensions of that reality may not be clear. This description of a moment in London is a good example:

> Such fools we are, she thought, crossing Victoria Street. For Heaven only knows why one loves it so, how one sees it so, making it up, building it round one, tumbling it, creating it every moment afresh; but the veriest frumps, the most dejected of miseries sitting on the doorsteps (drink their downfall) do the same; can't be dealt with, she felt positive, by Acts of Parliament for that very reason: they love life. In people's eyes, in the swing, tramp, and trudge; in the bellow and the uproar; the carriages, motor cars, omnibuses, vans, sandwich men shuffling and swinging; brass bands; barrel organs; in the triumph and the jingle and the strange high singing of some aeroplane overhead was what whe loved; life; London; this moment of June. (D 5)

All manner of details are drawn into a single picture of London, their variety being perfectly suited to convey the salient feature of both London and life: diversity. What London essentially is cannot be distilled from the series of details accumulated in this passage, what with frumps sitting shoulder to shoulder with Acts of Parliament and sandwich men shuffling beneath the melodious aeroplane: the emphasis does not fall on a particular, distinguishing detail. The sense of life is the focus. Neither London nor life is this or that; each is a series of details and impressions shaped together, from which will be discovered the emphasis appropriate to personal experience.

A similar example underscores the necessity for the reader to make personal judgments: "Bond Street fascinated her; Bond Street early in the morning in the season; its flags flying; its shops; no splash; no glitter; one roll of tweed in the shop where her father had bought his suits for fifty years; a few pearls; salmon on an iceblock." (D 15) The fascination of Bond Street is shown through a motley series of details:

a tailor's shop, a few jewels, a few flags in the air, and some fish. From these one must fill in the spaces to create the fascinating quality which the street holds for Mrs. Dalloway; without the reader's entry into the series, the impression falls flat, for Bond Street must be alive with detail, both seen and felt, in order to be fascinating. ". . . Fluid, explorative, tentative, trying to mold itself sinuously to the shifting currents of emotion, [the prose] demands a reader's participation to fill in the gaps, to follow poetic leaps."[15] As the series works its wonders, achieved with a few sketchy lines, the reader enters the description and fills out the picture through personal experience.

This same process functions in a series of qualities other than physical details. In the following example, the mixture of qualities Clarissa Dalloway ascribes to love and religion, as personified in Miss Kilman, gives a taste of her disgust at these traditionally positive virtues: "The cruelest things in the world, she thought, seeing them clumsy, hot, domineering, hypocritical, eavesdropping, jealous, infinitely cruel and unscrupulous, dressed in a mackintosh coat, on the landing; love and religion." (D 191) The use of a series establishes a pattern which the reader can continue to embellish from personal experience, infusing such personal qualities into entities normally considered in an entirely different light. Likewise, in this description of Septimus Smith, a series of images is used to delineate the scope of Septimus' perception of himself, and the reader is enticed into adding still more

contrasting pictures: "So they returned to the most exalted of mankind; the criminal who faced his judges; the victim exposed on the heights; the fugitive; the drowned sailor; the poet of the immortal ode; the Lord who had gone from life to death . . . ." (D 146-147) This conglomeration of images woven into a series aptly captures his variety of identities. The madness of Septimus Smith is striking because the series ties together varied perspectives and opens the way for the addition of other, equally contrasting views from the reader's own experience. The efficacy of the series is not only in its ability to create a full picture from a minimal number of details, but also in its creation of a pattern which encourages the reader's participation.

The repetition of a specific word or phrase, which is, of course, also a series, sets a similar pattern in motion--in this case, a rhythm which moves toward an elevated perspective through its sheer musical character. Like a melody or an insistent drum beat, a word's repetition emphasizes the flow of language and echoes the repetitive nature of the world. That experience can be shaped into rhythm is one of the especial contributions of Mrs. Woolf, and her use of it is extensive in both _Mrs. Dalloway_ and _To the Lighthouse_. Here follow just a few examples:

> It was all dry: all withered: all spent. (L 224)

> A little stir, a little crinkling, a little tapping built up something on the table there, where she sat sewing. (D 214)

> She was just beginning, just moving, just descending. (L 164)

> It was the life, it was the power of it, it was the tremendous humour, she knew, that made him slap his thighs. (L 179)

The reader is cajoled into the moment by the enticing rhythm of repeated words and phrases. The beauties of the rhythm reveal the extent to which repetition contributes to Mrs. Woolf's sense of the relationships present in the world. To duplicate an item does more than merely lend force to the original; it also implies the possibility of an infinite number of duplications: if more than once, then on and on. Even more forcefully than the series, the rhythmic repetitions compel the reader to continue the pattern--if not consciously, then subconsciously, adding additional moments of experience until the rhythm fades. Mrs. Woolf's rhythms and the subconscious additions lead to a momentary view of the interlaced nature of all experience. Until the rhythm fades, one thing leads to another and to another, _ad infinitum_. The specific word or phrase, not the nature of the moment, ties these repeated moments together. Once the rhythm is established, it is not important what is linked, only that one thing after another can be tied together. This bonding of relatively mundane activities hints at the bonding which exists among all events. The repetitions need not involve a broad scope in order to convey these connections, as evidenced by this example: "Anyhow she must settle for herself; judge for herself, he thought, padding about the room in his socks, smoothing out his dress-shirt, for he

might go to Clarissa's party, or he might go to one of the Halls, or he might settle in and read an absorbing book written by a man he used to know at Oxford." (D 239) Mrs. Woolf names three possibilities, the reader can continue the rhythm, thinking what else Peter Walsh "might" do, and the effect is of a variety of choices. If such is true for one man on one evening in London, why not the same for other persons and for life itself; once the rhythm is begun, its beat carries far beyond the specific moment.

In some cases the repeated word itself adds a tone to the rhythm. It might be the specificity of the adjective in the following example: "They would, she thought, going on again, however long they lived, come back to this night; this moon; this wind; this house: and to her too." (L 170) Or it might be the ambiguous sense of the pronoun in this sentence: "There was in Lily a thread of something; a flare of something; something of her own which Mrs. Ramsay liked very much indeed, but no man would, she feared." (L157) In the first case, the focus of the rhythm is on detail, while in the second example the focus is on qualitites which escape description. The repetition provides the vehicle for extending what the specific word implies.

Repetition has another purpose in the prose of Mrs. Woolf besides suggesting a broad picture from sketchy details and enticing the reader into participation in a rhythmic pattern. That purpose is transition. Repetition "serves not only to intensify the language and to beat out a rhythm but

also to move the reader from one thing to another without any feeling of intervening space."[16] While this purpose may seem at odds with that of involving the reader in the creation of a total picture, it is not radically dissimilar. Repeated parts of speech lift the reader from consideration of a single case to observation of several cases as well as shift the point of view from one case to another. In the first sense, this sort of repetition functions like the series, into which form it is usually arranged, but in the second sense, the effect of the repetition is to create a mirror in which a second moment is likened to an earlier one through the _device_ of repetition and not through specifically repeated words. Neither the total picture nor the rhythm is as important in such a sense as is the link between two moments. A short example will illustrate this: "She was off like a bird, bullet, or arrow, impelled by what desire, shot by whom, at what directed, who could say?" (L 84) The three nouns of the simile are mirrored by the three participial phrases, and the two images are thus tied together. The effect of this connection is to move the reader from one form of the comparison to another. In a more complex usage, this kind of repetition moves the reader from one point of view to another: "You were given a sharp, acute, uncomfortable grain--the actual meeting; horribly painful as often as not; yet in absence, in the most unlikely places, it would flower out, open, shed its scent, let you touch, taste, look about you, get the whole feel of it and understanding, after years of

lying lost." (D 232) The verbs showing the unfolding of the meeting--"flower out, open, shed"--are mirrored by the verbs showing the response of the character--"touch, taste, look about"--and the repetition of the series form draws the two into a relationship: one emerges from the other. Such a relationship seems perfectly obvious, of course, but in the fiction of Mrs. Woolf--where all moments are fluid and where statements about relationships are tentative--such a mirroring effect is quite noticeable. In the following lengthy example, the extensive series of verbs, attached first to one character and then to another, effectively ties the two together, even though they have little in common and are, under most circumstances, rather unrelated.

> He heard her quick step above; heard her voice cheerful, then low; looked at the mats, tea-caddies, glass shades; waited quite impatiently; looked forward eagerly to the walk home; determined to carry her bag; then heard her come out; shut a door; say they must keep the windows open and the doors shut, ask at the house for anything they wanted (she must be talking to a child) when suddenly, in she came, stood for a moment silent (as if she had been pretending up there, and for a moment let herself be now), stood quite motionless for a moment against a picture of Queen Vicotria wearing the blue ribbon of the Garter . . . . (L 24-25)

The clause "then heard her come out" is the transition between Charles Tansley and Mrs. Ramsay; it is the shift from one side of the mirror to the other. Attributed to each is a long list of actions, and, in sharing that verbal attribute, the two characters are linked through their human penchant for activity. It is the repetitive form which unites them, for the other persons alluded to in the sentence, those for

whom there are no verbs, are not a part of the connection: only through repetition do the separate entities fuse.

VI. Metaphor

A metaphor, in the broad sense in which it is employed in this paper, is the likening of one item to another. Its principal use in Mrs. Woolf's fiction is to get beneath the surface of daily experience in order to illuminate the inner life. Used in this manner, metaphor is a means whereby the relationships of isolated events can be shown through the mythic, personal, and natural associations which these separate events have with one another. The metaphor is not, for Mrs. Woolf, a symbol pointing to the meaning of a thing. She herself wrote, "I can't imagine symbolism except in a vague, generalized way, whether it's right or wrong, I don't know; but directly I'm told what a thing means it becomes hateful to me."[17] Metaphor is a technique of illumination and not a final statement; it is an attempt to relate one item to another by way of the rich world hidden beneath the facade of verifiable data. The link between metaphor and the mundane world can be likened to Lily Briscoe's process of painting: ". . . her mind kept throwing up from its depths, scenes, and names, and sayings, and memories and ideas, like a fountain spurting over that glaring, hideously difficult white space, while she modelled it with greens and blues." (L 238) The mind shapes the inner world into color, and metaphor is the technique which brings this inner life into awareness. The "memories and ideas" which constitute this wealth of subterranean life are the most animating

features of Mrs. Woolf's vision. "When life sank down for a moment, the range of experience seemed limitless. And to everybody there was always this sense of unlimited resources, she supposed; one after another, she, Lily, Augustus Carmichael, must feel, our apparitions, the things you know us by, are simply childish. Beneath it is all dark, it is all spreading, it is unfathomably deep; but now and again we rise to the surface and that is what you see us by." (L 96) Metaphor enters this world by exploring the myriad ways in which one thing is like another. Contrast and repetition hint at these connections by tying various disparate experiences into a whole, but metaphor gets at these connections by showing the inner darkness. Metaphor, too, is a process of hinting and implication, for the subsurface world is not accessible to concise description. But the results of metaphor come as close as Mrs. Woolf is able to delineating the "unfathomably deep" world of experience. The most conspicuous categories of metaphor employed in _Mrs. Dalloway_ and _To the Lighthouse_ are three: human activity, natural phenomena and mythic images.

One of the persistent metaphors which Mrs. Woolf draws from human activities is that of the military. The intent of such an image is certainly not praise of the military mind--the intensely pacifist Mrs. Woolf is usually ironic in her use of the military metaphor. Instead, it is a likening of the process of life to doing battle, acquitting oneself admirably against pernicious odds. In _A Room of One's Own_ Mrs. Woolf puts it this way: "Life for both sexes--and I

looked at them, shouldering their way along the pavement--is arduous, difficult, a perpetual struggle. It calls for gigantic courage and strength."[18] The military metaphors illuminate this sense of struggle, dredging up from the depths of human experience the acrid smell of conflict and applying it in most unexpected places. A quiet drawing room conversation is likened to war, and one is suddenly aware that much more is at work than seems evident on the surface: "'Well, and what's happened to you?' she said. So before a battle begins, the horses paw the ground; toss their heads; the light shines on their flanks; their necks curve. So Peter Walsh and Clarissa, sitting side by side on the blue sofa, challenged each other. His powers chafed and tossed in him." (D 66) The sensuality of the horses, their impatience to begin, the restraint by which they are tempered, the impending destruction: these metaphoric images reveal a more profound relationship between the two characters than their positions on the blue sofa can possibly convey. Or again, the change of subject in a dinner conversation takes on a pronounced sense of defeat through the use of the military metaphor: ". . . she was laughed at, fire-encircled, and forced to veil her crest, dismount her batteries, and only retaliate by displaying the raillery and ridicule of the table to Mr. Bankes as an example of what one suffered if one attacked the prejudices of the British Public." (L 156) In both cases, the metaphor does not "mean" that annihilation is imminent--the conversations do lead on to sensible conclusions--

but it does hint at the submerged forces at work in the seemingly mundane moment. The battle imagery is a way to get beneath the surface and link ordinary events to the struggle which animates the inner life. In the following example, the military image shows the victory of the inner life against the chaos of the daily struggle: ". . . and, taking Mrs. Dalloway's parasol, handled it like a sacred weapon which a Goddess, having acquitted herself honourably in the field of battle, sheds, and placed it in the unbrella stand." (D 43-44) The image of the struggle serves always to link various moments to some widely spread chaos, whether it be in personal relationships or in the affairs of the mundane world.

Mrs. Woolf uses other human activities as metaphorical images, of course. They, too, function as modifying agents, changing the moment through tone and subject matter. In the following example, describing the same moment as the umbrella passage above, the metaphor is religious and the tone is serene. The sense is of peace and safety.

> The hall of the house was cool as a vault. Mrs. Dalloway raised her hand to her eyes, and, as the maid shut the door to, and she heard the swish of Lucy's skirts, she felt like a nun who has left the world and feels fold round her the familiar veils and the response to old devotions. The cook whistled in the kitchen. She heard the click of the typewriter. It was her life, and, bending her head over the hall table, she bowed beneath the influence, felt blessed and purified . . . . (D 42)

The cloister metaphor burrows beneath Mrs. Dalloway's arrival home and sketches the unspoken comfort which the place offers her. The tone is more important than the details of the metaphor, for, though Clarissa does not call her home a

nunnery, the image allows that sense to permeate the moment. The following example also evidences the permeant effect of the metaphor, this one applied to Mr. Ramsay's sense of mastery over ideas: "He read, she thought, as if he were guiding something, or wheedling a large flock of sheep, or pushing his way up and up a single narrow path; and sometimes he went fast and straight, and broke his way through the bramble, and sometimes it seemed a branch struck at him, a bramble blinded him, but he was not going to let himself be beaten by that; on he went, tossing over page after page." (L 283) Mr. Ramsay is reading a book, a simple act, yet the sentence implies that he marshals his intellectual powers against any idea the way an explorer conquers the object of his explorations. To describe the way he reads a book would merely require words like "fast" or "carefully," but the metaphor permits a description which not only encompasses the activity but also includes the forces which animate Mr. Ramsay himself. Through the image, a resonant chord is struck which links Mr. Ramsay to a determination incommensurate with his literary endeavor.

A final example of activity metaphors is possibly the most sublime and arresting passage in either Mrs. Dalloway or To the Lighthouse. A moment in the midst of an evening meal is expanded to include the entire aesthetic process of merging and shaping. One beat in time disengages from the next and luxuriates in the multitude of "memories and ideas" which cause the subtle shift of conversation. No fewer than six different images animate this passage, each flowing into

the next with such ease that the change is scarcely noticeable. The whole of Mrs. Ramsay--indeed the whole of Mrs. Woolf--is indicated in this elegant metaphor. If one can read this passage without being drawn into the currents of the inner life, then no technique which Mrs. Woolf could muster can convey to that reader the sense of her vision. Not only is this extended metaphor the supreme example of Mrs. Woolf's ability to permeate the moment with the reality of the inner life, it is also her most lyrical observation on the relationships which animate the world.

> Raising her eyebrows at the discrepancy--that was what she was thinking, this was what she was doing--ladling out soup--she felt, more and more strongly, outside that eddy; or as if a shade had fallen, and, robbed of colour, she saw things truly. The room (she looked round it) was very shabby. There was no beauty anywhere. She forebore to look at Mr. Tansley. Nothing seemed to have merged. They all sat separate. And the whole of the effort of merging and flowing and creating rested on her. Again she felt, as a fact without hostility, the sterility of men, for if she did not do it nobody would do it, and so, giving herself the little shake that one gives a watch that has stopped, the old familiar pulse began beating, as the watch begins ticking--one, two, three, one, two, three. And so on and so on, she repeated, listening to it, sheltering and fostering the still feeble pulse as one might guard a weak flame with a newspaper. And so then, she concluded, addressing herself by bending silently in his direction to William Bankes--poor man! who had no wife, and no children and dined alone in lodgings except for tonight; and in pity for him, life being now strong enough to bear her on again, she began all this business, as a sailor not without weariness sees the wind fill his sail and yet hardly wants to be off again and thinks how, had the ship sunk, he would have whirled round and round and found rest on the floor of the sea. (L 126-127)

A second category of metaphors comes from the world of nature. Whereas the images drawn from human activities link one sort of human life to another, the natural metaphors

present events in terms of impersonal forces devoid of consciousness. This evocation of impersonality arouses both awe at the grandeur of nature and fear at its power. "All of Virginia Woolf's fiction attempts to indicate a universal, timeless sense of life which may be called truth or reality. Very often this truth is expressed through descriptions of nature--vast perspectives where we sense a beautiful but impersonal force that is destructive to individuals but seems to live in all things."[19] Familiarity with the patterns of nature--its regenerative and destructive power--permits this connection between human activity and the natural perspective: like nature, human life is both beautiful and destructive. What is missed in simple description of an event becomes obvious when the natural images are invoked. "For the whole world seemed to have dissolved in this early morning hour into a pool of thought, a deep basin of reality, and one could almost fancy that had Mr. Carmichael spoken, for instance, a little tear would have rent the surface of the pool. And then? Something would emerge. A hand would be shoved up, a blade would be flashed." (L 266-267) The nature image allows a rending of the fabric of human experience in order that a richer reality might flash through.

These natural images are often brief and are sometimes most conspicuous through the various natural occurrences which they combine in a single image. The association with nature has one impact, and the unusual combination has another. Through this concise unity, familiarity with the occurrences

is united with disquiet at the contrast: the "surface pool" is torn and something flashes through. "Then, for that moment, she had seen an illumination; a match burning in a crocus; an inner meaning almost expressed." (D 47) The flower is a peaceful image, while the flame burning within it is startling. Both the crocus and the match are momentary, reflecting the transitory nature of the illumination, while their combination grounds this illumination in a reality beyond daily experience. Another example of this wedding of metaphor and contrast is this sentence: "Forgetfulness in people might wound, their ingratitude corrode, but this voice, pouring endlessly, year in year out, would take whatever it might be; this vow; this van; this life; this procession, would wrap them all about and carry them on, as in the rough stream of a glacier the ice holds a splinter of bone, a blue petal, some oak trees, and rolls them on." (D 209-210) The glacier by itself is distant, albeit impressive, but the bone, the petal, and the trees give the metaphor the immediacy which ordinary experience alone can achieve. A third example of the efficacy of the contrast embedded in a nature metaphor is a passage whose hallmark is fulidity. A shred of poetry assumes four different identities, each drawn from the natural world and each distinctively coloring the metaphor.

> And she waited a little, knitting, wondering, and slowly those words they had said at dinner, "the China rose is all abloom and buzzing with the honey bee," began <u>washing</u> from side to side of her mind rhythmically, and as they washed, words, like little shaded <u>lights</u>, one red, one blue, one yellow, lit up in the dark of her mind, and seemed leaving their perches up there to <u>fly</u>

> across and across, or to cry out and to be echoes; so she turned and felt on the table beside her for a book. (L 178, emphasis mine)

Water, light, movement, and sound control the image, and each gives an additional connection from which to grasp the effect of the quotation on Mrs. Ramsay. The fluidity of the transition from one entity into another mirrors the ease with which the thoughts move through her mind. In the working contrast of unlike experience lies the strength of the metaphor.

While some metaphors are short and imbedded with contrasts, other natural images provide a more extensive basis for comparisons. The sea is one such image. In the constancy and tumult of the sea lies one of Mrs. Woolf's chief metaphors for the "beautiful, primitive, and often dangerous unity beneath ordinary life."[20] To the Lighthouse exists surrounded by the sea, and Mrs. Dalloway, despite its London setting, abounds in metaphors drawn from the perpetual action of the sea. Much of the vision of these two novels stems from the connection between human life and the sea; the uses of sea imagery might, in fact, constitute an entirely separate study. For the purposes of this paper, however, three examples will suffice to exhibit the way in which the sea metaphor penetrates mundane experience and reveals the inner life.

The beauty of the sea metaphor is that it contains both companionship and enmity; it consoles and frightens; it buoys and sinks. Reference to the sea contains the possibility of either extreme. In some cases the consolation is emphasized:

". . . she filled the room she entered, and felt often as she stood hesitating one moment on the threshold of her drawing-room, an exquisite suspense, such as might stay a diver before plunging while the sea darkens and brightens beneath him, and the waves which threaten to break, but only gently split their surface, roll and conceal and encrust as they just turn over the weeds with pearl." (D 44) The emphasis falls on the gentle action of the waves, and, with the threat of the darkening sea suspended, there is harmony between the drawing-room and the metaphor. The words of the image arouse no anxiety; rather they tend to lull one with their rhythm: "gently," "roll and conceal and encrust," "weeds with pearl." The destructive power of "darkens" and "threaten to break" is obviated by the more placid qualities inherent in the sea. An example from the opposite extreme shows how the emphasis of the metaphor can be placed on the destructive elements of the sea: "It was his power, his gift, suddenly to shed all superfluities, to shrink and diminish so that he looked barer and felt sparer, even physically, yet lost none of his intensity of mind, and so to stand on his little ledge facing the dark of human ignorance, how we know nothing and the sea eats away the ground we stand on--that was his fate, his gift." (L 68-69) The erosive power of the sea sounds a harmonic to the shedding which Mr. Ramsay undergoes as he faces the "dark of human ignorance." In this image there is no comfort, no gentle lapping of the waves: all is disintegration. Like the metaphor which describes Mrs. Dalloway's entrance into

her drawing-room, this image deepens the effect of the moment by focusing on one quality of the sea at the exclusion of another. Mrs. Woolf's use of the sea is not always so simple, however, her metaphor only echoing and deepening the event. In the following example, the emphasis of the image is on the engulfing character of the sea, while the event itself is an inconsequential moment after lunch. The contrast of event and metaphor changes the moment instead of simply deepening it. "Goodness knows he didn't want to go buying necklaces with Hugh. But there are tides in the body. Morning meets afternoon. Borne like a frail shallop on deep, deep floods, Lady Bruton's great-grandfather and his memoir and his campaigns in North America were whelmed and sunk. And Millicent Bruton too. She went under." (D 171-172) To compare the indolence of early afternoon with drowning in the sea recognizes a destructive power which underlies even the most mundane of activities. The effect is not, of course, strident; it is a hint, an implication. But the metaphor tips the balance, and the moment is transformed into an illumination of the inner life. Because of the image, it is impossible to experience the ordinary activity from a single perspective.

Extended metaphors are another kind of nature image found in Mrs. Woolf's fiction. These are vast panoramas only tangentially connected to the event from which they stem. They gush forth from the subterranean world and engulf everything in their lavish imagery, sweeping away the ordinary in a profusion of metaphoric detail. Richly connotative,

explicit, complex, these images dwarf the mundane like a tidal wave. They divert attention from human concerns and reveal the grandeur and sweep of the world. The specific event which engenders such an extended metaphor is important only in that it provides the "tear in the surface pool" through which this vision is observed. The metaphor does not so much explain the moment as elevate it, consume it, burn away everything in it except some essential core--which may be nothing except its capacity to generate the image. There is no strict symbolism--each part of the metaphor equal to some part of the moment; instead, the meaning of many events is simply their power to open life to these august illuminations. Here is an example of such an extended metaphor from To the Lighthouse:

> . . . and in the middle a yellow and purple dish of fruit. What had she done with it, Mrs. Ramsay wondered, for Rose's arrangement of the grapes and pears, of the horny pink-lined shell, of the bananas, made her think of a trophy fetched from the bottom of the sea, of Neptune's banquet, of the bunch that hangs with vine leaves over the shoulder of Bacchus (in some picture), among the leopard skins and the torches lolloping red and gold . . . . Thus brought up suddenly into the light it seemed possessed of great size and depth, was like a world in which one could take one's staff and climb the hills, she thought, and go down into the valleys, and to her pleasure (for it brought them into sympathy momentarily) she saw that Augustus too feasted his eyes on the same plate of fruit, plunged in, broke off a bloom there, a tassel here, and returned, after feasting, to his hive. That was his way of looking, different from hers. But looking together united them. (L 146)

A world tantalizing in its variety and color surges through an ordinary still life on the dinner table. The detail and scope of the image are nearly exhausting, yet it is with

hesitation that one leaves this metaphor: it is as awesome as it is tiring. When the metaphor is finished and daily life resumed, there is both relief and sadness. It is as though one has been standing in the midst of a magnificent thunderstorm and is now compelled to come inside; while glad to be warm and dry, one would almost sacrifice these commodities of safety for the awesome beauty of the storm.

From Mrs. Dalloway comes another example of the extended metaphor:

> A puff of wind (in spite of the heat, there was quite a wind) blew a thin black veil over the sun and over the Strand. The faces faded; the omnibuses suddenly lost their glow. For although the clouds were of mountainous white so that one could fancy hacking hard chips off with a hatchet, with broad golden slopes, lawns of celestial pleasure gardens, on their flanks, and had all the appearance of settled habitations assembled for the conference of gods above the world, there was a perpetual movement among them. Signs were interchanged, when, as if to fulfil some scheme arranged already, now a summit dwindled, now a whole block of pyramidal size which had kept its station inalterably advanced into the midst or gravely led the procession to fresh anchorage. Fixed though they seemed at their posts, at rest in perfect unanimity, nothing could be fresher, freer, more sensitive superficially than the snow-white or gold-kindled surface; to change, to go, to dismantle the solemn assemblage was immediately possible; and in spite of the grave fixity, the accumulated robustness and solidity, now they struck light to the earth, now darkness.
>
> Calmly and competently, Elizabeth Dalloway mounted the Westminster omnibus. (D 210-211)

Beyond the bus exists a world both natural and metaphorical, a world unaware of human life. Momentarily the ordinary is lost in the impersonality, the majesty of that world, and then life returns to the mundane affairs which are its substance. In those affairs, however, remains an enduring sense of the immensities which undergird frail existence.

Not unlike the extended metaphors are the images of mythic proportions. They, too, are grand in their scale, and their effect is like opening every window and door during the onslaught of a tornado. They relentlessly impinge against the moment, swamping it with the bulk of their dimensions, with their impersonality, their destructiveness. They transform an inconspicuous and common event into an occasion of timeless conflict: chaos and ruin strive against the feeble breath of human life. These primordial images link mythic descriptions of the world's history to the mundane moments of human life and, in so doing, reveal not only the fragility of the human enterprise, dwarfed in comparison to such massive figures, but also the place which ordinary life has in the endurance of these images. Though their destruction seems complete, yet generation after generation remain to recollect and renew their power. The metaphor continues to be wreathed about with the common life, ultimate destruction is stayed, and the clock ticks on. This example from To the Lighthouse shows this link between the common and the mythic:

> Only now, as he grew older, and sat staring at his father in an impotent rage, it was not him, that old man reading, whom he wanted to kill, but it was the thing that descended on him--without his knowing it perhaps: that fierce sudden black-winged harpy, with its talons and its beak all cold and hard, that struck and struck at you (he could feel the beak on his bare legs, where it had struck when he was a child) and then made off, and there he was again, an old man, very sad, reading his book. (L 273-274)

In one way or another the "old man, very sad" returns to balance the metaphor, to seal the gash which permitted its

entrance into the affairs of life. The sense of chaos lingers, but the outcome of the battle remains undecided.

Even the most awesome of the mythic metaphors is bound securely to a daily event. Peter Walsh meets an old woman at the Regent's Park Tube station, listens briefly to her shrill song and gives her a coin. But this ephemeral moment is the occasion for an image rich in primeval associations.

> Through all ages--when pavement was grass, when it was swamp, through the age of tusk and mammoth, through the age of silent sunrise, the battered woman--for she wore a skirt--with her right hand exposed, her left clutching at her side, stood singing of love--love which has lasted a million years, she sang, love which prevails, and millions of years ago, her lover, who had been dead these centuries, had walked, she crooned, with her in May; but in the course of ages, long as summer days, and flaming, she remembered, with nothing but red asters, he had gone; death's enormous sickle had swept those tremendous hills, and when at last she laid her hoary and immensely aged head on the earth, now become a mere cinder of ice, she implored the Gods to lay by her side a bunch of purple heather, there on her high burial place which the last rays of the last sun caressed; for then the pageant of the universe would be over. (D 122-123)

"Age of tusk and mammoth," "dead these centuries," "death's enormous sickle": phrase after phrase invokes the origins of the human race and its constant struggle to endure. One by one the images mount into an awesome flood which carries the woman, Peter Walsh, human life itself toward "the last rays of the last sun." The shrill woman acts as a tap through which flows the mythic history of the race, plunging the beggar woman to insignificance even while it surrounds her with the deepest significance humans have imagined. In the following example, even nature is linked to this mythic flood:

> Listening (had there been any one to listen) from the upper rooms of the empty house only gigantic chaos streaked with lightning could have been heard tumbling and tossing, as the winds and waves disported themselves like amorphous bulks of leviathans whose brows are pierced by no light of reason, and mounted one on top of another, and lunged and plunged in the darkness or the daylight (for night and day, month and year ran shapelessly together) in idiot games, until it seemed as if the universe were battling and tumbling, in brute confusion and wanton lust aimlessly by itself. (L 202-203)

In ascribing to nature the irrational impulses of our own mythic struggles, the metaphor doubles its force and aligns both nature and history against the empty house and against time. Like all the mythic metaphors, this one contains a prominent element of destruction and the annihilation of the frail construct of civilization, tempered only by the moments of ordinary life which allow this vision to emerge. Without such an anchor as the common moment, one approaches the figure "made of sky and branches" and "risen from the troubled sea" (D 86) and wishes with the "solitary traveller" of Peter Walsh's dream, ". . . let me walk straight on to this great figure, who will, with a toss of her head, mount me on her streamers and let me blow to nothingness with the rest." (D 87) The enduring effect of Mrs. Woolf's mythic metaphors is that they permit the experience of mounting the streamers, but grant the gift of returning to earth.

VII. Sentence Structure

There is a marvelous passage in To the Lighthouse which captures the essence of Mrs. Woolf's commitment to the proper shaping of sentences:

> "Let us all go!" she cried, moving on, as if all those riders and horses had filled her with childlike exultation and made her forget her pity.
>
> "Let's go," he said, repeating her words, clicking them out, however, with a self-consciousness that made her wince. "Let us go to the circus." No. He could not say it right. He could not feel it right. (L 21)

Because Charles Tansley "could not say it right," it was obvious to Mrs. Ramsay that he also "could not feel it right." The crux of the matter of sentences--and of style--is that how a thought is expressed is, in great measure, the mirror of what is felt. Hence, the structure of sentences is important because sentences do more than merely shape ideas; they convey content as well. The construction of a sentence may be more revelatory of a thought than the facts which compress the sentence. Only as an author is able to establish a sentence in harmony with his or her own thought can that author make full use of the ideas to be conveyed. Mrs. Woolf credits Jane Austen, alone of the early nineteenth century women writers, with devising "a perfectly natural, shapely sentence proper for her own use."[21] And so, too, has Mrs. Woolf done: her sentence resonates with her thought. In sentence after sentence echo the urgency and uncertainty which characterize Mrs. Woolf's exploration of reality, even though she varies the form of the sentence as her purposes

change. Two major purposes which her sentences serve are the reflection of mood and the revelation of the inner life. Both purposes employ a sentence which modifies an expected construction and allows the reader a perspective not normally taken.

Length of sentences is one of the primary elements used by Mrs. Woolf to reflect mood. She fashions exceptionally long sentences which linger one and one, or she shapes phrases and clauses which coruscate with the brevity of sparks. Both long and short sentences serve to mirror the mood of a character or to intensify a description. Of the lengthy variety, the following is an excellent example, wherein the "magnificence" of Hugh Whitbread is stretched by the length of the sentence until it seems little more than a thin veneer:

> A magnificent figure he cut too, pausing for a moment (as the sound of the half hour died away) to look critically, magisterially, at socks and shoes; impeccable, substantial, as if he beheld the world from a certain eminence, and dressed to match; but realised the obligations which size, wealth, health, entail, and observed punctiliously even when not absolutely necessary, little courtesies, old-fashioned ceremonies which gave a quality to his manner, something to imitate, something to remember him by, for he would never lunch, for example, with Lady Bruton, whom he had known these twenty years, without bringing her in his outstretched hand a bunch of carnations and asking Miss Brush, Lady Bruton's secretary, after her brother in South Africa, which, for some reason, Miss Brush, deficient though she was in every attribute of female charm, so much resented that she said "Thank you, he's doing very well in South Africa," when, for half a dozen years, he had been doing badly in Portsmouth. (D 156-157)

The sentence begins with a magnificent figure, runs on for an entire paragraph, prodding at the substance of this figure, and ends with resentment and deceit. Begun "from a certain

eminence," it finishes "doing badly in Portsmouth." The impeccable manner of Hugh Whitbread is examined in detail until its facade is simply punctured by Miss Brush's curt comment. In enclosing this description within the confines of a single sentence, Mrs. Woolf creates a total picture: the figure at a distance and the man near at hand. Conjunction of the two presents a sense of shallowness.

An example of the use of brief sentences, in this case to intensify a mood, comes from To the Lighthouse. The disquiet engendered in Lily Briscoe by her inability to merge vision with execution in painting is reflected in the sentences which, themselves, do not merge.

> The disproportion there seemed to upset some harmony in her own mind. She felt an obscure distress. It was confirmed when she turned to her picture. She had been wasting her morning. For whatever reason she could not schieve the razor edge of balance between two opposite forces; Mr. Ramsay and the picture; which was necessary. There was something perhaps wrong with the design? Was it, she wondered, that the line of the wall wanted breaking, was it that the mass of the trees was too heavy? She smiled ironically; for had she not thought, when she began, that she had solved her problem? (L 286-287)

A fact, a feeling, an image: bits and pieces accumulate in separate fragments, and Lily's distress emerges through the rhythm of the passage as well as through the meaning of the words. The mood of the sentences is as hesitant as are Lily's thoughts. These choppy sentences do not allow distance and contemplation of the character's dilemma; rather, the "obscure distress" is doubled by both the structure and the idea. Through the construction of the sentences themselves, Mrs. Woolf

rejects omniscience and leaves the reader alone with the dischord of the moment.

Another technique used to convey mood through sentence structure is a form of repetition. The sentence begins, moves a bit, begins again, moves forward a little further, perhaps starts a third time, and finally comes to its conclusion. Like a series of false starts, a repeated word takes the sentence back to the point of origin so often that one wonders whether, in fact, the conclusion will ever be reached. When the climax is finally attained, its effect has been altered by the several attempts to reach it. In the following example, the effect of the false starts--and the digressions which accompany them--is to patronize the importance of the final statement. "But then, Mrs. Ramsay, though instantly taking his side against all the silly Giddingses in the world, then, she thought, intimating by a little pressure on his arm that he walked up hill too fast for her, and she must stop for a moment to see whether those were fresh molehills on the bank, then, she thought, stooping down to look, a great mind like his must be different in every was from ours." (L 107-108, emphasis mine) In repeating the subject and verb and separating them from the object, the sentence considerably diminishes the impact of Mrs. Ramsay's actual thought. The distractions which intervene and necessitate recommencement of the thought allow ample time for consideration of whether it is the thought or the distractions which are more important. The words themselves indicate that a "great mind"

is above and beyond the simple concerns which occupy most of humanity. But the structure of the sentence places the focus on the intervening material, and, by sheer volume, this material assumes the weight of importance. The sentence does not, of course, discount the value of Mr. Ramsay's mind; what it does is to say one thing through the words and another through the structure. While the two assertions are not antithetical, they are at least a paradox, skillfully linked within the bounds of a single sentence. Since neither element of the paradox--that which is stated in words and that which is implied in structure--is openly denied, they appear to coexist in Mrs. Woolf's vision, and one invests importance in both Mr. Ramsay's "great mind" and Mrs. Ramsay's digressions. With this sort of balanced coexistence is the effect achieved.

The repetitive, false starts can also strengthen the meaning of the words by reflecting in the structure the thought stated in the sentence. In this example from Mrs. Dalloway the thought has to do with the problem of "knowing people," and the sentence is structured so that its subject is repeated three times before this thought is mentioned. The subject is stated but the verb is withheld: the construction echoes the "dissatisfaction" which Clarissa's theory purports to explain.

> Clarissa once, going on top of an omnibus with him somewhere, Clarissa superficially at least, so easily moved, now in despair, now in the best of spirits, all aquiver in those days and such good company, spotting queer little scenes, names, people from the top of a bus, for they used to explore London and bring back bags full of treasures from the Caledonian market--Clarissa had theory in those days--they had heaps

> of theories, always theories, as young people have. It was to explain the feeling they had of dissatisfaction; not knowing people; not being known. (D 231)

The descriptions of Clarissa seem like attempts to explain a person. The accumulated details are like spokes emanating from the hub, which is Clarissa, and Peter Walsh travels out one, then returns to the name and travels out another. What he is saying is fairly straightforward, and the words in the sentence express no apparent dissatisfaction; but the structure itself mirrors the very problem which is the object of the theory. In the suspension of the statement of the main thought and in the periodic return to the name, Clarissa seems as unknown to Peter as do the people who generated their dissatisfaction. Not only does Mrs. Woolf give the objective statement about the difficulty of knowing people, but she also creates the experience, through the sentence construction, of an incomplete knowledge of Clarissa. Structure and content are mirror images of a single thought.

Mrs. Woolf's most arresting structural technique, one which reflects the scope of her vision more fully than either sentence length of repetition, is the separation of grammatical elements which are usually linked. Subject and verb, verb and object, even two elements of a series are interrupted by modifying material, and a distance is created between them. This distance is like a surgical maneuver: a cut is made between what ought to be linked in order to reveal what lies beneath. The parts of the sentence are laid apart in order to make clear that something deeper lies beneath

both actor and action, that, in fact, the steady progression of events unfolding in the expected order hides the more serpentine currents of the inner life which undergird the surface. These currents are composed of many experiences: history, detail, symbolism, trivia, intent; in short, the same events which constitute the mundane world, except that beneath the surfact they are intensified, stretched, confused. They are more chaotic, less delineated from one another, unspoken, undefined. They remain in constant surge regardless of the pattern of the ordinary world, and it is on their backs that daily life rides, like waves upon the ocean depths.

The material which interrupts the sentence and which gushes the inner life onto the plain of ordinary experience can be as simple as the historical background which has led to a particular moment. This sort of interruption shows rather straightforwardly that even the simplest action is unalterably tied both to the past and to innumerable other actions. The historical data which become visible when the sentence is opened impart a sense of continuity, of one event growing out of others, of an unspoken relationship between the separate moments of life. This historical information is not necessarily conscious; in fact, it is rarely so. It is simply a representative view of all that has gone into fashioning the present moment. "He would give her, she was so simple, so impulsive, only twenty-four, without friends in England, who had left Italy for his sake, a piece of bone [i.e., his arm]." (D 22-23) The intervening

material allows the offer of his arm to be more poignant, its simplicity a rich counterpoint to the complexity and deprivations of her life. Without the additional material, the action would seem flat and without consequence; with it the moment is rounded and the disparities between past losses and present conditions are obvious. In another example, the historical details at the end of the sentence serve to reiterate the tenuousness of the comradeship described in the passage: "Nevertheless her inquiry, 'how's Clarissa?' was known by women infallibly, to be a signal from a well-wisher, from an almost silent companion, whose utterances (half a dozen perhaps in the course of a lifetime) signified recognition of some feminine comradeship which went beneath masculine lunch parties and united Lady Bruton and Mrs. Dalloway, who seldom met, and appeared when they did meet indifferent and even hostile, in a singular bond." (D 160-161) If the facts about their meetings were not allowed to surface through this interruption, the clause "united Lady Bruton and Mrs. Dalloway in a singular bond" would be too strong and would imply a fuller connection than in fact exists. The structuring of the additional material puts the bond in proper perspective.

A second kind of interruption is activity. When placed between two elements of a sentence, it emphasizes the disjointedness of thought. In a sense, it functions in opposition to the historical material which deepens the present moment. The intervening actions interject unrelated elements

into a complete thought and imply the place which random activity has in the development of a moment. "She belonged to a different age, but being so entire, so complete, would always stand up on the horizon, stone-white, eminent, like a lighthouse marking some past stage on this adventurous, long, long voyage, this interminable (he felt for a copper to buy a paper and read about Surrey and Yorkshire--he had held out that copper millions of times. Surrey was all out once more)--this interminable life." (D 247) This sentence reflects Mrs. Woolf's vision: to interrupt "this interminable life" with the purchase of a newspaper. The sentence structure mingles the trivial with the important and links them as equals. In the following example, this structural link unites the private world of Peter Walsh and the public life of London, not accidentally through the ambulance which rushes Septimus Smith to the hospital: "And yet, thought Peter Walsh, as the ambulance turned the corner though the light high bell could be heard down the next street and still farther as it crossed the Tottenham Court Road, chiming constantly, it is the privilege of loneliness; in privacy one may do as one chooses." (D 229-230) The thinker and his thought about privacy are interrupted by the communal sounds of the city. The structure of the sentence does not make these two actions parallel events, as though they coexist in the same world, separate and equal; rather, the structure unites the two into one moment and makes each the necessary completion of the other.

Metaphor is another form of interruption which Mrs. Woolf employs in her sentences. The metaphor, even more than the historical material or the activities, comes from the inner life, drawing, as it does, on the timeless currents of myth and memory. The metaphor confronts one with an experience which is decidedly different from daily life and seems to spring more directly from the intermingled depths of relationships. The effect of the intervening metaphor, however, is similar to the earlier categories: it splits the ordinary and allows the inner life to wash across the scene. In the following example, the metaphor of the cat, lazily reflecting the branches and clouds, is juxtaposed to the preparations for a shopping trip:

> And, with her basket and her parasol, there she was again, ten minutes later, giving out a sense of being ready, of being equipped for a jaunt, which, however, she must interrupt for a moment, as they passed the tennis lawn, to ask Mr. Carmichael, who was basking with his yellow cat's eyes afar, so that like a cat's they seemed to reflect the branches moving or the clouds passing, but to give no inkling of any inner thoughts or emotion whatsoever, if he wanted anything. (L 18-19)

The metaphor envelopes the scene, then is drawn off by the concerns of the shopping trip. Mrs. Woolf could have chosen to place the metaphor after the completion of the main sentence: "to ask Mr. Carmichael if he wanted anything." Placing it as an interruption, however, fuses it with the moment, upholds the ordinarienss of the shopping trip, both contains and is contained within the mundane affairs of life. Its contrast with these mundane affairs evidences the contrasts

characteristic of relationships, and, because such contrasts are paramount in Mrs. Woolf's vision, a structure which allows for interruption is her most natural choice. A second example echoes the way in which structure interacts with content: "At every moment Nature signified by some laughing hint like that gold spot which went round the wall-there, there, there--her determination to show, by brandishing her plumes, shaking her tresses, flinging her mantle this way and that, beautifully, always beautifully, and standing close up to breathe through her hollowed hands Shakespeare's words, her meaning." (D 211-212) "Her determination to show her meaning" has been broken by the intervening metaphor, which could as well have been placed after the entire clause. To set such a lengthy image between the "determination" and the "meaning" implies that no matter how much determination is in Nature, her meaning will not be obvious. It will be imbedded in events which are inner and metaphoric, and will take a visionary eye to comprehend. A few images have been allowed to spring from the inner life before the gash is covered: the full picture has not been seen.

Another technique of separation which Mrs. Woolf employs with consummate skill, and which is similar to interruption, is the placement of modifying material between elements of the sentence. The distinction between modification and interruption is a subtle one in which the purpose differs more than the form. The focus of the modification is on preparation. The subject is separated from the verb by an

accumulation of emotional, historical, or metaphoric detail which prepares the reader for the action which the subject is to take. Unlike an interruption, the modification does not disrupt the flow of the action: less an arbitrary cut between two elements, it is more like a breath drawn before speaking. It creates that moment "when solidity suddenly vanished, and such vast spaces lay between them . . . ." (L 147) In this space between actor and action is presented the immensity of the inner life, separated from the diffraction of the ordinary world "as the waves shape themselves symmetrically from the cliff top, but to the swimmer among them are divided by steep gulfs, and foaming crests." (L 235) In presenting the inner life stretching toward the distance, the modification anticipates the sharp angularities of fact and action.

> His eyes, glazed with emotion, defiant with tragic intensity, met theirs for a second, and trembled on the verge of recognition; <u>but then</u>, raising his hand, half-way to his face as if to avert, to brush off, in an agony of peevish shame, their normal gaze, as if he begged them to withhold for a moment what he knew to be inevitable, as if he impressed upon them his own child-like resentment of interruption, yet even in the moment of discovery was not to be routed utterly, but was determined to hold fast to something of this delicious emotion, this impure rhapsody of which he was ashamed, but in which he revelled--<u>he turned abruptly</u>, slammed his private door on them; and, Lily Briscoe and Mr. Bankes, looking uneasily up into the sky, observed that the flock of starlings which Jasper had routed with his gun had settled on the tops of the elm tree. (L 41-42, emphasis mine)

Without the mass of detail from the currents of the inner life, the abrupt turn would be truncated, cut off from its source. In fidelity to the vision of Mrs. Woolf, the modification relates Mr. Ramsay's turn to a wealth of unspoken causes,

without which the action appears merely petulant. The abruptness of Mr. Ramsay's action is carried beyond its immediate form into the emotions which animate and sustain it. The sustaining nature of the modifying material is also shown in this example:

> . . . so that the monotonous fall of the waves on the beach, which for the most part beat a measured and soothing tattoo to her 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. (L 27-28)

Had the waves "suddenly thundered" without the modification of the murmuring song and the drum roll, the effect of Mrs. Ramsay's terror would have been nil. It is only because one is able to participate in the meanings which the sea has for her, that Mrs. Ramsay's "impulse of terror" can be related to the monotony of waves breaking on the beach, for in themselves waves do not possess the capacity for inflicting terror. Only when they are perceived in particular ways and related to other, more inner experience can they command such a response. Once linked to the serpentine currents of the inner life, the sea, or any other entity, commands a range of response inexplicable in the mundane world.

In the construction of her sentences, Mrs. Woolf produces a view of these serpentine currents. She makes a space between one element and another in order to reveal the truth which so often remains hidden. This truth is that life is made up of bits and pieces which flow together and then apart, which move now in one current and now in another, which are as vast as the sea and as particular as the cost of the evening paper. And the truth of life is not some distillation of all of these bits and pieces, as though they could all be averaged together in some huge equation and forced to yield an "answer." The truth is, in fact, the overwhelming collection of all these fragments. By breaking open the sentence, Mrs. Woolf shows a bit of what goes on beneath the surface, a hint of salt spray which promises the presence of an ocean. The totality is never to be seen. But her sentence structures--as well as the contrasts, repetitions, and metaphors--are a reminder that whether recognized or not, the deepest truth seethes constantly beneath the most mundane as well as the most sublime moments of life. That Mrs. Woolf creates even so fragmentary a view of this truth is indeed a grace.

Notes

[1]Nils Erik Enkvist, "On Defining Style," in Contemporary Essays on Style, ed. Glen A. Love and Michael Payne (Glenview, Illinois, 1969), p. 120.

[2]Enkvist, p. 120.

[3]Richard Ohmann, "Literature as Sentences," in Contemporary Essays on Style, ed. Glen A. Love and Michael Payne (Glenview, Illinois, 1969), p. 151.

[4]C. Hugh Holman, A Handbook to Literature (Indianapolis, 1972), p. 514.

[5]Norman N. Holland, The Dynamics of Literary Response (New York, 1975), p. 28.

[6]Holland, p. 27.

[7]Holland, p. 31.

[8]Virginia Woolf, Mrs. Dalloway, Harvest paperback HB 81 (New York, copyright 1925), p. 193. The letter "D" followed by the page number, which will appear henceforth in the parentheses, will refer to this edition.

[9]Virginia Woolf, To the Lighthouse, Harvest paperback HB 82 (New York, copyright 1927), p. 213. The letter "L" followed by the page number, which will appear henceforth in parentheses, will refer to this edition.

[10]Ralph Freedman, The Lyrical Novel: Studies in Hermann Hesse, Andre Gide, and Virginia Woolf (Princeton, 1963), pp. 200-201.

[11]Nancy Topping Bazin, Virginia Woolf and the Androgynous Vision (New Brunswick, New Jersey, 1973), p. 23.

[12]Bazin, p. 21.

[13]Phyllis Rose, Woman of Letters: A Life of Virginia Woolf (New York, 1978), p. 132.

[14]Rose, p. 100.

[15]Rose, p. 92.

[16]James Naremore, The World Without a Self (New Haven and London, 1973), p. 122.

[17]Quoted in Jane Novak, *The Razor Edge of Balance* (Coral Gables, Florida, 1975), p. 140, n. 23.

[18]Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own*, Harvest paperback H 020 (New York, copyright 1929), p. 35.

[19]Naremore, p. 105.

[20]Naremore, p. 23.

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