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WOOLF'S OMNISCIENT POINT OF VIEW

by

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Abstract

There is a development in Virginia Woolf's omniscient point of view from its experimental stages in *Jacob's Room* to its complex form in *The Waves*. In *Jacob's Room* the components of Woolf's omniscient narrator—internality through externality, time and space, imagery—tend to remain separate entities instead of a blending of techniques into one technique. In *The Waves* Woolf is able to blend her three components as well as making them more complex with the addition of metaphors and androgyny. Even though the metaphors are somewhat stilted, they add cohesiveness and lyrical beauty to the novel.

Moreover, in *Jacob's Room* the narrator moves in and out of the characters' thoughts while also directing the movement of the novel through the use of time and space and imagery. As a result there is possibly some authorial interference. In *The Waves* the omniscient narrator sets the scene in the introductions to each of the novel's nine sections and then moves into and remains within the six selves of one mind. As in *Jacob's Room*, time and space and imagery are also used to direct movement but within the confines of the characters' minds.

Therefore, this thesis attempts to show the development in Woolf's style—the change in the omniscient-narrator technique from
that in *Jacob's Room* to that used in *The Waves*. In *Jacob's Room* the three components do not blend as they do in *The Waves*. Moreover, in the latter novel metaphors and androgyny heighten the technique.
Introduction

Chapter I

Virginia Woolf used a literary device—the omniscient narrator—in *Jacob's Room*, an early work published in 1922, and developed it into a complex point of view made up of complementary and almost inseparable parts in *The Waves*, published in 1931. Melvin Friedman adequately defines the technique, and his definition is particularly applicable to Woolf:

. . . . The reader ostensibly listens to no one; the story comes directly through the minds of the characters as it leaves its mark there. As a result, the tendency is almost wholly in the direction of scene, both inside the mind and externally with speech and action; and by the author by way of "stage direction" [Booth's "implied author" (to be discussed later)] or emerges through the thoughts and words of the characters themselves. 1

Friedman also differentiates between showing "internal states"—Woolf's method—and "normal omniscience." He says that "... the one [Woolf's] renders thoughts, perceptions, and feelings as they occur consecutively and in detail passing through the mind (scene), while the other summarizes and explains them after they have occurred (narrative). . . ." 2 Moreover, the components of Woolf's technique and that which gives unity to a method which allows for disunity since it is governed by the characters' minds are internality through externality, time and space, imagery, and the concept of androgyny.

Woolf's omniscient-narrator technique, although generally

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critically acclaimed, seems to have escaped much critical scrutiny, and the components of Woolf's omniscient narrator--internality through externality, time and space, imagery, and androgyny--have received little more. Therefore, it becomes necessary to examine the device in regards to Woolf's use of it at its source--*Jacob's Room*--and to trace the device to its literary acme in Woolf--*The Waves*--while being able to support some evaluations through the few critics who have chosen to examine the above two novels in relation to the omniscient narrator and its components. Although none of the above components is unique to Woolf or the omniscient narrator, it is the development of the blending of these components that is unique to Woolf.

More specifically, in *Jacob's Room* internality through externality is the omniscient narrator's delving into the internality of Jacob, the main character, through the externality of the other characters in the novel--i.e., their opinions/impressions of Jacob. At no time does the reader or the narrator get into the workings of Jacob. Mitchell Leaska states the following:

''... The novel attempts to convey the 'sudden vision' of Jacob; yet Jacob's social self is painstakingly built up, and his individual self is only suggested by the narrator's commentary. The reader knows Jacob from all his friends' points of view; he knows what the narrator's own impression of Jacob is; he never knows--and this is the one thing he should know--Jacob himself.''

Leaska, however, does not grasp what Woolf is trying to communicate--that we remain strangers to one another since one is viewed
externally, not internally, by others. Consequently, the reader is logically never allowed into Jacob's mind.

However, it should be noted that there is some authorial interference. Woolf cannot seem to remove completely her self from the novel. Joan Bennett says of Woolf:

The will to discover and record life as it feels to those who live it was the originating cause of Virginia Woolf's rejection of existing conventions. It was this primarily that impelled her to eliminate narration and comment. In Jacob's Room, however, certain needs arising out of her vision of the subject prevented her from achieving that purpose. She had yet to learn how to communicate all the facts that need to be known, how to mark the passage of time, how to indicate point of view, without speaking in her own person. . . .

In The Waves the internality of Bernard, one of the main characters, is shown by the omniscient narrator through the externality of six characters--three male, three female--through soliloquy, interior monologue, and stream of conscious. In other words, the six characters deliver soliloquies--single speeches from their point of view to the reader--but are actually doing so within their minds--interior monologue. The fact that their thoughts are governed by the process of association and time and space also fit these thoughts into the category of stream of conscious. Freedman and his discussion of Woolf's use of soliloquies, Naremore on Woolf's use of interior monologue, and Humphrey on Woolf's use of stream of conscious will be discussed in greater detail in subsequent chapters.

Unlike Jacob's Room, The Waves allows the reader into the mind
of the character under scrutiny. However, not until the novel's end does it become apparent that all six characters are one--Bernard. Therefore, internality through externality has progressed from a rather elementary technique into a complex usage and separation of a mind into parts in order to show the whole. Ralph Freedman accurately states the following:

... As she Woolf gradually refines an impersonal image of the self, interior monologues become more absorbed into the omniscient point of view whose vision is rendered in a formal perspective. This is Virginia Woolf's approach to poetry: the evolution of the self towards a depersonalized image. Its development culminates in The Waves, but its beginning is clearly reflected in Jacob's Room. ...5

Moreover, Woolf employs time and space--place--as a means of movement in both novels. In Jacob's Room, however, place is used more to indicate internality since its externality is used to reflect Jacob's internality, i.e., thoughts and moods. Time is used more in a broader sense to establish the universality of themes present in the novel--e.g., death. David Daiches says the following of time and space:

... There is no attempt here to preserve the firm outlines of chronological events; experience is broken down into a series of rapidly dissolving impressions which merge into one another but which are kept from complete dissolution by the meditative eye of the author, who keeps the flux of things constantly in sight, and preserves her own character sufficiently to be able to comment intermittently on the intangible nature of her subject. ...6

However, Daiches fails to consider Woolf as Wayne Booth more accurately does in terms of the "implied author" and his distance
from the work. Booth defines the "implied author" as one "who stands behind the scenes, whether as a stage manager, as puppeteer, or as an indifferent God, silently paring his fingernails..."[7] Booth adds that "the implied author (carrying the reader with him) may be more or less distant from the other characters. Again, the distance can be on any axis of value..."[8]

In The Waves the use of place is made even more useful to the author in that it serves not only the previously stated purposes but also as a means of association—a means of transporting a character back and forth in time as his or her associative processes dictate. This movement as a result of the process of association also heightens the concept of time and helps time to become a means of transportation in the novel as well as a reinforcement of theme.

Furthermore, imagery in Jacob's Room, although used to establish universality of theme, is also used to move characters and the reader from place to place. For example, an image in one time and space is often carried over into another. In The Waves, images, although used as in Jacob's Room, also universalize not only theme but character, namely Bernard and the character's dealings with the novel's themes--e.g., death. For example, according to Dorothy Brewster, "... the final image in The Waves is not down in the city, but of the wave rising, the wave of desire, of defiance of death."[9] Moreover, since Bernard directly addresses death--"Against you I will fling myself unvanquished and unyielding, 0 Death!"[10]--Brewster's point is well
taken, although overstated.

The above-mentioned universalization is further heightened by Woolf's concept of androgyny—that a personality is equal parts male and female regardless of the actual sex of the person. In Jacob's Room androgyny is not an issue. Although the reader sees Jacob through male and female viewpoints, Woolf is not here making a point of androgyny. However, in The Waves, where six characters—three male, three female—meld into one, Woolf is obviously making a point. Harvena Richter says the following:

In The Waves, Virginia Woolf takes the self of a single being ultimately represented by Bernard, and places it into six sections which personify, on a varying number of levels, the conscious and the unconscious selves and drives within the human personality. 11

Therefore, The Waves, in comparison to Jacob's Room, clearly shows the progression in Woolf's style from a much simpler form of omniscient narrator to a more complex form. The elements of Woolf's technique—internality through externality, time and space, imagery, and the concept of androgyny—change from separate elements in Jacob's Room to a blending and complementary use of these elements in The Waves.
The omniscient narrator in Jacob's Room moves in and out of characters and time and space in trying to show that "Nobody sees any one as he is, . . . they see a whole--they see all sorts of things--they see themselves. . . ."¹ In other words, one perceives and knows another's external state as a reflection of one's own internal state, or the external reflects the internal. The omniscient narrator captures this concept of internal and external by presenting the reader with scenes in which different combinations of movements inside and outside the minds of the characters are revealed. However, in order to emphasize as well as demonstrate internality through externality, the omniscient narrator deliberately stays out of the consciousness of Jacob Flanders, the main character. Thus it becomes clear that one judges another externally since Jacob's external is all that is presented and thereby never gets to know anyone except as a reflection of one's own internal state. Moreover, the latter idea is reinforced by the novel's other characters and their external perceptions of Jacob. Furthermore, although the book centers around Jacob, he remains a mystery, while the other characters are revealed. Occasionally the external reflects Jacob's internal state. However, he is still an enigma.

The narrator has several means of demonstrating internality and
externality. For example, the narrator may present the thoughts of a given character and then move outside of the character—e.g., to his immediate surroundings as seen by the narrator, the character himself, or another character. A second method used by the narrator is to allow the external to reflect the internal without penetrating the internal at all. When using this method, the narrator allows the scene to dissolve into chaos where the characters speak in non sequiturs. In other words, the characters are responding to their own internal states and not to the external comments/dialogue of the other characters. Moreover, in order to universalize the lack of understanding of one individual for another, the narrator employs a third method whereby he moves from a specific character(s) to that character's immediate surroundings to someplace farther away—e.g., Greece—thereby moving from the specific to the general.

With the realization that all people perceive subjectively according to Woolf, it becomes somewhat permissible for the omniscient narrator to react subjectively to the characters and situations. Since the narrator is, himself, a creation, he has a subjective background and as Wayne Booth calls him is a "second self" of the author. Booth says the following:

Even the novel in which no narrator is dramatized creates an implicit picture of an author who stands behind the scenes, whether as stage manager, as puppeteer, or as an indifferent God, silently paring his fingernails. This implied author is always distinct from the "real man"—whatever we may take him
to be—who creates a superior version of himself, a "second self" as he creates his work. . . . ²

However, Woolf interferes with her "second self," her omniscient narrator, the implied author, by speaking in her own voice. On occasions Woolf interprets and comments in regards to theme, the world, etc.

In Jacob's Room the ultimate expression of internality through externality occurs in the novel's last two chapters, where the omniscient narrator uses two of the three methods previously discussed in order to show internality through externality. The narrator moves either from a character's mind to his immediate surroundings or from a character's mind out to the world—i.e., Greece.

Chapter Thirteen takes place primarily in Hyde Park and includes most of the novel's characters either literally or in the thoughts of another character. As always, the chapter revolves around Jacob and, although digressions are made to other characters, returns to him. The chapter opens with a scene between Dick Bonamy, Jacob's friend, and Jacob. Bonamy has mistakenly identified Jacob's quiet mood as a result of his being in love with Clara Durrant, while Jacob's mood is a result of his being in love with a married woman, Sandra Wentworth Williams. The above scene demonstrates how one misjudges on the basis of externalities.

More importantly, in the next scene, the narrator moves to
Clara Durrant and her awareness of externality versus internality. Clara and Mr. Bowley, a friend, are walking Troy, his dog, in the park. Mr. Bowley carries on a rather mundane conversation about Clara's mother and her confidant Sir Edward Grey, Clara's ability to make tea, etc. This conversation is played against Clara's internal state: she is thinking about Jacob, whom she loves:

"Jacob! Jacob!" thought Clara; and kind Mr. Bowley, who was ever so good with old ladies, looked; stopped; wondered whether Elizabeth Clara's mother wasn't too harsh with her daughter; wondered about Bonamy, Jacob--which young fellow was it?--and jumped up directly Clara said she must exercise Troy. (p. 166)

Finally, Clara can tolerate no more. Her inner turmoil over Jacob and his not loving her can no longer stand the assault of Bowley's trivial comments. The internal is, in a sense, rebelling against not being understood--the external:

"This statue was erected by the women of England. . ." Clara read out with a foolish little laugh. "Oh, Mr. Bowley! Oh!" Gallop--gallop--gallop--a horse galloped past without a rider. The stirrups swung; the pebbles spurted.

"Oh, stop! Stop it, Mr. Bowley!" she cried, white, trembling, gripping his arm, utterly unconscious, the tears coming. (p. 167)

Thus, the narrator has played the internal against the external and demonstrated how the truth--the internal state--remains unknown to the external.

The narrator then moves back to Jacob and through Jacob to
Sandra Wentworth Williams, with whom he has had an affair in Greece, Betty Flanders, his mother, and other characters. More importantly, however, the omniscient narrator eventually moves out of Hyde Park to Scarborough and eventually to Greece. In moving to Greece, the narrator has made the final shift from the specific—e.g., Jacob and Bonamy—to the general—e.g., Greece, i.e., the world:

But the red light was on the columns of the Parthenon, and the Greek women... were as jolly as sand-martins in the heat, quarrelling, scolding, suckling their babies, until the ships in Piraeus fired their guns.

The sound spread itself flat, and then went tunnelling its way with fitful explosions among the channels of the islands.

Darkness drops like a knife over Greece.
(p. 175)

Then, in order to make clearer the relationship of the specific and the general, the internal and the external, the narrator reports the following:

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

"Not at this distance," she thought. "It is the sea."

Again, far away, she heard the dull sound, as if nocturnal women were beating great carpets...
(p. 175)

The narrator manages to tie Greece to Cornwall, the world at large,
and Betty Flanders' world.

In the last chapter the omniscient narrator demonstrates the emptiness of externality by describing Jacob's lifeless room and Bonamy's and Mrs. Flanders' reactions to it:

Bonamy crossed to the window. Pickford's van swung down the street. The omnibuses were locked together at Murdie's corner. . . . A harsh and unhappy voice cried something unintelligible and then suddenly all the leaves seemed to raise themselves.

"Jacob! Jacob!" cried Bonamy, standing by the window. The leaves sank down again.

"Such confusion everywhere!" exclaimed Betty Flanders, bursting open the bedroom door. Bonamy turned away from the window.

"What am I to do with these, Mr. Bonamy?"

She held out a pair of Jacob's old shoes.

(p. 176)

In other words, Bonamy and Mrs. Flanders have entered Jacob's room, most likely a metaphor for Jacob's mind, and yet both Bonamy and Mrs. Flanders cannot or do not understand who and what Jacob is/was. Bonamy even looks out at the world as Jacob has done and then in at Jacob's room--his mind--but does not comprehend. Mrs. Flanders merely sees the confusion in the room--Jacob's mind--as epitomized by Jacob's old shoes and Mrs. Flanders' terrible predicament--what to do with them.

The narrator's third method of showing internality and externality is his refraining from delving into the characters'
internal states and merely reporting their conversations, their speeches as they occur. Thus, the reported scene dissolves into chaos since each character is concerned with his own internality and only the externality of the other characters and situation. Moreover, these reactions when verbalized appear to be non sequiturs. The following is a good example:

"You don't remember Elizabeth as I do," said Mrs. Solvin, "dancing Highland reels at Banchorie. Clara lacks her mother's spirit. Clara is a little pale."

"What different people one sees here!" said Miss Eliot.

"Happily we are not governed by the evening papers," said Mr. Solvin.

"I never read them," said Miss Eliot. "I know nothing about politics," she added.

"The piano is in tune," said Clara, passing them, "but we may have to ask some one to move it for us." (pp. 85-86)

However, it is difficult for Woolf to operate through the omniscient narrator, implied author, in this early work. As a result Woolf's own voice occasionally comments on theme, etc. The above interference becomes obvious when one regards the narrator in terms of Booth's "implied author," the author's "second self." Booth explains [see quote, p. 10] that even the undramatized narrator has a character of his own—"as stage manager, as puppeteer, or as an indifferent God, silently paring his fingernails," and is the
author's "second self." The narrator in *Jacob's Room* is not
dramatized, that is, is not one of the novel's developed characters
and does not take a direct part in the story's action. Rather, the
narrator is a stage manager and a god-figure who moves in and out
of the characters' minds and lives as previously discussed. More-
over, he observe and reports the facts—whether a character's
thoughts or the details of a specific scene—objectively and without
commentary. Thus the narrator's personality is defined: he is an
omniscient and objective god-figure. Therefore, it would be out of
caracter for the narrator to make personal comments that would
lower his god-figure position to something less, something mortal,
something concerned with such things as the problems of daily com-
munication—e.g., letters. For example, the narrator supposedly
asks the following:

... Am I doomed all my days to write letters,
send voices, which fall upon the tea table, fade
upon the passage, making appointments, while life
dwindles, to come to dine? (p. 93)

The quotation cited above implies a subjective personality
unlike the narrator's, who not only observes but interprets on a
personal level. Thus in the example passage cited, the omniscient
narrator, the author's second self, has been pushed aside, and
another voice is heard.

In conclusion, the concept of internality through externality
is demonstrated by the omniscient narrator, who moves in and out of the characters' minds and time and space. Through this movement the idea that one can never really know another individual is conveyed. More specifically, it is conveyed through Jacob, whom no one has understood. However, on occasion, Woolf comments in her own person—interferes with the omniscient narrator—and interprets themes. Generally, though, the omniscient-narrator technique works well, and the concept of internality through externality is conveyed.
In *Jacob’s Room*, the omniscient narrator moves easily in and out of the characters and establishes internality and externality, as previously discussed, by using symbols and images that allow the narrator to move in and out of time and space. Moreover, this use of imagery and time and space also helps to universalize theme besides giving the novel organization.

Robert Humphrey discusses the problems involved in dealing with the internal—the mind—as opposed to the external—scene:

... If an author wishes to create a character by presenting that character’s mind to the reader, then the work in which this is done has per se as its setting the character’s mind. It has as its time of taking place the range of the character’s memories and fancies in time; it has as its place of action wherever the characters’ minds wish to go in fancy or memory; and it has as its action whatever remembered, perceived or imagined event the characters happen to focus on. In brief, the writer commits himself to dealing faithfully with what he conceives to be the chaos and accident of consciousness—unpatterned, undisciplined, and unclear.

Humphrey goes on to list seven methods an author may use in order to establish unity in this "accident of consciousness":

1. Unities (time, place, character, and action)
2. Leitmotif
3. Previously established literary patterns (burlesques)
4. Symbolic structures
5. Formal scenic arrangements
6. Natural cyclical schemes (seasons, tides, etc.)
7. Theoretical cyclical schemes (musical structures, cycles of history, etc.)
Although Woolf uses many of the techniques, the most often and most significantly used are characterization, namely Jacob's; images that allow for movement through time and space; recurring images that universalize theme and tie the general/external to the specific/internal; time and space, themselves.

*Jacob's Room* progresses through approximately twenty-six years of the life of a young man—Jacob Flanders. Since the novel is centered around a single character and the perceptions of him by the novel's other characters, Woolf has imposed a certain amount of organization on the book. Moreover, since the omniscient narrator seemingly stays out of Jacob's mind while delving into the other characters' minds, the narrator can impose order by moving back to Jacob and away from and out of the other characters' minds. The narrator is then dealing with externalities as opposed to dis-organized internalities, the characters' minds.

Furthermore, in regards to space and characterization, Woolf uses Jacob to move the book from the specific—a given character, incident—to the general—the world at large. Woolf manages this movement through Jacob's travels to and from Scarborough, Cambridge, the Scilly Isles, London, Paris, Italy, and Greece. Furthermore, through Jacob, Woolf establishes the connection between time and space in that Jacob is interested in the past as represented by the eighteenth century, Shakespeare, Virgil, *et al.*, most of which
he pursues, studies, or incurs in his travels. Moreover, since the novel's various themes progress in each place—space—mentioned, universality is added both in time and space.

Images also allow the omniscient narrator to move through time and space and thereby the internal and the external. For example, Mrs. Flanders, in remembering Mr. Floyd, once the local pastor, remembers the letter he sent declaring his love for her. His letter in turn reminds her of the one that she wrote in return and the time and space in which she wrote it. The omniscient narrator then uses Mrs. Flanders' letter to project into the future:

But the letter which Mr. Floyd found on the table when he got up early next morning did not begin "I am much surprised," and it was such a motherly, respectful, inconsequent, regretful letter that he kept it for many years; long after his marriage with Miss Wimbush, of Andover; long after he had left the village. . . . first to Sheffield, where he met Miss Wimbush, who was on a visit to her uncle, then to Hackney—then to Maresfield House, of which he became the principal, and finally, becoming editor of a well-known series of Ecclesiastical Biographies, he returned to Hampstead with his wife and daughter, and is often to be seen feeding the ducks at Leg of Mutton Pond. As for Mrs. Flanders' letter—when he looked for it the other day he could not find it, and did not like to ask his wife whether she had put it away. Meeting Jacob in Picadilly lately, he recognized him after three seconds. But Jacob had grown such a fine young man that Mr. Floyd did not like to stop him in the street. (p. 21)

The scene has moved from Scarborough to London and through the life of Mr. Floyd in one paragraph simply because of one letter. It
should also be noted that Woolf uses the letter to tie up the movement through time and space as well as to initiate it.

Moving from the letter image example to the item that helps not only to organize the novel but also to universalize theme—i.e., that no one ever really knows anyone else—are the images that recur. There are two categories in the recurring image. The first is the category that includes such things as colors, butterflies, pipes, etc. These images recur throughout the novel with no other apparent reason than to offer organization, to indicate universality in that these items do recur whether in Scarborough or Greece, and, on occasion, to help to move the reader through time and space. The other and more important category deals with those recurring images that not only organize, help make the novel move, and universalize theme, but that explain theme. These images are a globe, dome, looking-glass, waves, and letters, the latter to be discussed as an example to show how the recurring images are used as a technique.

As previously shown, Woolf uses letters to project the novel and reader through time and space and to offer organization and universality. However, the letters are also a part of a theme—that no one can ever truly know another person since one perceives only the external and not the internal. In Chapter Eight the omniscient narrator discusses letters:

21
Let us consider letters—how they come at breakfast, and at night, with their yellow stamps and their green stamps, immortalized by the postmark—for to see one's own envelope on another's table is to realize how soon deeds sever and become alien. Then at last the power of the mind to quit the body is manifest, and perhaps we fear or hate or wish annihilated this phantom of ourselves, lying on the table. Still, there are letters that merely say how dinner's at seven; others ordering coal; making appointments. The hand in them is scarcely perceptible, let alone the voice or the scowl. Ah, but when the post knocks and the letter comes always the miracle seems repeated—speech attempted. Venerable are letters, infinitely brave, forlorn, and lost. (pp. 92-93)

The external—the letter—remains an attempt at revealing the internal—"speech attempted." It should also be noted that the omniscient narrator later illustrates how letters do not reveal the internal self and may simply reveal that "dinner's at seven." The illustration is accomplished when Jacob visits Greece. The narrator shows the reader what is actually occurring in Greece and at the same time lets the reader know that Jacob's letters home reveal nothing of importance that is occurring. The narrator says that, "Jacob had nothing to hide from his mother. It was only that he could make no sense himself of his extraordinary excitement, and as for writing it down—" Unfortunately, those who receive and/or read the letters do not comprehend that what they are reading is superficial: "'Jacob's letters are so like him,' said Mrs. Jarvis folding the sheet." (p. 131)
The omniscient narrator continues in regards to letters:

Life would split asunder without them. "Come to tea, come to dinner, what's the truth of the story? have you heard the news? life in the capitol is gay; the Russian dancers ...." .... And the notes accumulate, and the telephones ring. And everywhere we go wires and tubes surround us to carry the voices that try to penetrate before the last card is dealt and the days are over ....

(p. 93)

The narrator is lamenting the failure to communicate—that people spend their lives sending notes and talking on the phone and end up writing or saying nothing, as previously explained.

Time and space in themselves are used to universalize theme and the concept of internality and externality, to organize the novel, and to move the novel. As already stated, Jacob is interested in the past and is a tie to it. This interest and tie are expressed through Jacob's love of Virgil, Shakespeare, the eighteenth century, et al. References are made throughout the novel to those items listed above. However, there are times when the narrator tries to draw all the centuries together. For example, in presenting a London street scene, the narrator tries to establish that certain aspects of the scene have occurred through the centuries:

.... But what century have we reached? Has this procession from the Surrey side to the Strand gone on for ever? That old man has been crossing the Bridge these six hundred years, with the rabble of little boys at his heels, for he is drunk, or blind with misery, and tied round with old clouts of clothing such as pilgrims might have worn. He shuffles on. No one stands still. It seems as if
we marched to the sound of music; perhaps the wind and the river; perhaps these same drums and trumpets --the ecstasy and hubbub of the soul. . . . (p. 113)

The narrator continues with this passage and is able to move to a character in the story by moving with the old man through time and space:

... Why even the unhappy laugh, and the policeman, far from judging the drunk man, surveys him humorously, and the little boys scamper back again, and the clerk from Somerset House has nothing but tolerance for him, and the man who is reading half a page of Lothair at the bookstall muses charitably, with his eyes off the print, and the girl hesitates at the crossing and turns on him the bright yet vague glance of the young.

Bright yet vague. She is perhaps twenty-two. She is shabby. She crosses the road. . . . She hesitates, and makes off in the direction of Temple Bar. She walks fast, and yet anything distracts her. Now she seems to see, and now notice nothing. (p. 113)

The last paragraph ends Chapter Nine. Chapter Ten continues to follow the young lady, whom the reader discovers to be Miss Fanny Elmer, a woman who soon becomes involved with Jacob. Thus the reader sees how the external can come closer to the internal, become involved with it. However, the outcome is always the same--no understanding of the internal.

Place is also used to express internality through externality in that place often reflects Jacob's internal state--his moods, thoughts. An obvious example is the street scene prior to Jacob's seduction of Florinda:

24
The night is not a tumultuous black ocean in which you sink or sail as a star. As a matter of fact it was a wet November night. The lamps of Soho made large greasy spots of light upon the pavement. The by-streets were dark enough to shelter man or women leaning against the doorways. One detached herself as Jacob and Florinda approached.

"She's dropped her glove," said Florinda.

Jacob, pressing forward, gave it her.

Effusively she thanked him; retraced her steps; dropped her glove again. But why? For whom?

Meanwhile, where had the other woman got to? And the man? (p. 81)

The sexual nature of the above selection is obvious and reflects Jacob's reaction to the seduction of Florinda—its futility but inevitability.

On a lesser plane, the omniscient narrator uses minor items to move through and indicate time and space. For example, the narrator says the following concerning a scene in Scarborough:

... As for the bee, having sucked its fill of honey, it visited the teasle and thence made a straight line to Mrs. Pascoe's patch, once more directing the tourists' gaze to the old woman's print dress and white apron, for she had come to the door of the cottage and was standing there. (p. 53)

The bee directs the reader, the narrator, and the story's characters to the time and place required for the next scene.

In establishing internality through externality and demonstrating that one never knows another individual, the narrator delves
into various characters' minds. In doing so Woolf needs a means of organization since her narrator is dealing with a relatively disorganized entity—the mind. Moreover, Woolf needs/wants to universalize theme. Therefore, Woolf uses images that not only allow for movement but are also a means of movement, of organization, of universalization. Therefore, the omniscient narrator, in moving the reader through the novel, uses images that carry the reader through time and space. In order to give the novel a more unified structure, the narrator repeats images such as the globe, letters, etc. These recurring images also help to universalize theme since they are often themes in themselves and are repeated throughout several settings and times in the novel. Furthermore, time and space, themselves, are used in terms of literature in order to indicate the universality of a given theme, whether in Cicero, Shakespeare, or a later work. Space—place—is also used in that Jacob, the central character, moves from place to place—from Scarborough to Greece and back to London, with other stops in between. Thus, Jacob, himself, serves as a means of organization and movement.
In *The Waves* the internality of Bernard, one of the main characters, is revealed by the omniscient narrator through the externality of six characters—three male, three female—through soliloquy, interior monologue, and stream of consciousness. Unlike *Jacob's Room*, *The Waves* allows the reader into the mind of the character under scrutiny. However, not until the end of the novel does it become apparent that all six characters are one—Bernard. Therefore, internality through externality has progressed from a rather elementary technique into a complex usage and separation of a mind into parts in order to show the whole. Moreover, since the parts are equally male and female, another aspect is added to the technique—androgyny. However, there is some artificiality in the technique: the metaphors found in the characters' streams of consciousness seem forced and stilted, not spontaneous as one might expect to discover within a mind that is thinking spontaneously and being recorded spontaneously. This artificiality will be discussed in Chapter V.

*The Waves* is divided into nine sections, all of which are introduced by the omniscient narrator. These introductions are separated from the body of the chapters since they are written in
italics and are spaced apart from the rest. From the introductions one moves directly to the characters and their thoughts. There are no obvious transitions. Moreover, the introductions set the scene in that they establish the characters' ages and circumstances or moods. For example, Chapter One deals with the characters during their preschool days. The introduction begins "The sun had not yet risen." The narrator then continues to describe the sun as it rises above the ocean's horizon. Life begins. In the last chapter, the narrator writes, "Now the sun had sunk" (p. 340). The characters have progressed from childhood to old age. Life is ending.

As previously stated, there are no obvious transitions between the introductions and the body of the chapters and the characters:

The light struck upon the trees in the garden, making one leaf transparent and then another. One bird chirped high up; there was a pause; another chirped lower down. The sun sharpened the walls of the house, and rested like the tip of a fan upon a white blind and made a blue fingerprint of shadow under the leaf by the bedroom window. The blind stirred slightly, but all within was dim and unsubstantial. The birds sang their blank melody outside.

"I see a ring," said Bernard, "hanging above me. It quivers and hangs in a loop of light." (pp. 179-180)

Once into the characters it becomes apparent that they--Rhoda, Susan, Jinny, Neville, Louis, and Bernard--are not actually speaking aloud to one another but rather, "... the characters merely soliloquize to themselves in the presence of each other." Ralph
Freedman praises Woolf's technique:

... Her voice is that of the soliloquist acting as the omniscient author of conventional fiction. It describes the act of cognition in which awareness unites with objects and other selves, or separates from them, to create a world of imagery that directs the flow of the novel.3

Moreover, these soliloquies are direct quotations of actual thought, interior monologues. James Naremore comments in regards to interior monologue and Woolf:

... If the quality of the previous fiction was primarily determined by Virginia Woolf's ever-present voice, here there seems to be an attempt to limit that voice's function by building the novel around a series of direct quotations. The method has been defined as sustained interior monologue. ...4

The following is an example of soliloquy and interior monologue. Stream of consciousness, as discussed in Chapter II, is also apparent in viewing the character's process of association. Bernard is supposedly addressing Susan:

"I saw you go," said Bernard. "As you passed the door of the tool-house I heard you cry, 'I am unhappy.' I put down my knife. I was making boats out of firewood with Neville. And my hair is untidy, because when Mrs. Constable told me to brush it there was a fly in a web, and I asked, 'Shall I let the fly be eaten?' So I am late always. My hair is unbrushed and these chips of wood stick in it. When I heard you cry I followed you, and saw you put down your handkerchief, screwed up, with its rage, with its hate, knotted in it. But soon that will cease. Our bodies are close now. You hear me breathe. You see the
beetle too carrying off a leaf on its back. It runs this way, then that way, so that even your desire while you watch the beetle, to possess one single thing (it is Louis now) must waver, . . . and then words, moving darkly, in the depths of your mind will break up this knot of hardness. . . ." (pp. 184-85)

Another, and perhaps more obvious, example of soliloquy—single speeches from the characters' points of view to the reader—interior monologue—direct quotations of thought—and stream of consciousness—thought, itself—is the following excerpt from Rhoda's thoughts (she supposedly speaks aloud, but to no one):

"As I fold up my frock and my chemise," said Rhoda, "so I put off my hopeless desire to be Susan, to be Jinny. But I will stretch my toes so that they touch the rail at the end of the bed; I will assure myself, touching the rail, of something hard. Now I cannot sink; cannot altogether fall through the thin sheet now. Now I spread my thin body on this frail mattress and hang suspended. I am above the earth now. I am no longer upright, to be knocked against and damaged. . . ." (p. 193)

By the end of the novel, it becomes apparent that the six characters are actually one—Bernard. Harvena Richter comments in regards to the characters' being part of a single mind:

In The Waves, Virginia Woolf takes the self of a single being, ultimately represented by Bernard and slices it into six sections which personify, on a varying number of levels, the conscious and the unconscious selves and drives within the human personality.

The "six sections" are Rhoda, Susan, Jinny, Neville, Louis, and
Bernard. Thus, by combining soliloquy, interior monologue, stream of consciousness, and the idea of one personality divided into six parts, Woolf has greatly improved upon the omniscient-narrator technique in Jacob's Room. Instead of directing the novel as discussed in Chapter II, the omniscient narrator in The Waves lets the characters' minds direct the novel. In other words, it is Bernard's stream of consciousness, his process of association as revealed in the previously mentioned techniques that moves the book. This movement will be discussed in greater detail in the following chapter, which is concerned with time and space, images and metaphors, the means by which the stream of consciousness is ordered.

Moreover, Bernard, himself, reveals that the six characters are only one. In Chapter Nine, the last section of the book, Bernard's voice is the only one heard. Addressing an individual sitting next to him in a cafe, he is explaining to his companion the "meaning of my [Bernard's] life" (p. 344). In revealing his life, he also reveals that he is many selves—six, to be exact. Moreover, Bernard explains how he may observe his own experience through another self. For example, Bernard recalls a childhood incident in which he comforted Susan:

"That I observed even in the midst of my anguish when twisting her pocket handkerchief, Susan cried, "I hate; I love." "A worthless
servant," I observed, "laughs upstairs in the attic, and that little piece of dramatisation shows how incompletely we are merged in our own experiences." (pp. 348-49)

Thus Bernard equates Susan's experience with his own, and yet remains outside the experience—"incompletely merged" in it; he comments to Susan on an unrelated topic—a servant's laugh.

Bernard continues to establish in section nine that he is many people:

"... There are many rooms—many Bernards. There was the charming, but weak; the strong, but supercilious; the brilliant, but remorseless; the very good fellow, but, I make no doubt, the awful bore; the sympathetic but cold; the shabby, but—go into the next room—the foppish, worldly, and too well dressed. What I was to myself was different; was none of these." (p. 357)

Bernard continues:

"... In persuading her [Rhoda, not to commit suicide] I was also persuading my own soul. For this is not one life; nor do I always know if I am man or woman, Bernard or Neville, Louis, Susan, Jinny or Rhoda—so strange is our contact with one another." (p. 372)

Androgyny is reflected in Bernard's not knowing whether or not he is man or woman.

Bernard continues to question who he is:

"... And now I ask, 'Who am I?' I have been talking of Bernard, Neville, Jinny, Susan, Rhoda and Louis. Am I all of them? Am I one and distinct? I do not know. We sat here together. But now Percival [a friend] is dead, and Rhoda
is dead; we are divided; we are not here. Yet I cannot find any obstacles separating us. There is no division between me and them. . . ."
(p. 377)

In considering who he is, Bernard also considers who he might have been:

"Thus when I come to shape here at this table between my hands the story of my life and set it before you as a complete thing, I have to recall things gone far, gone deep, sunk into this life or that and become part of it, . . . those old half-articulate ghosts . . . who put out their phantom fingers and clutch at me as I try to escape--shadows of people one might have been; unborn selves." (p. 377)

Finally, Bernard rejoices in a new-found solitude; he is one with himself and no longer has to change for others; he is old:

"Let me now raise my song of glory. Heaven be praised for solitude. Let me be alone. Let me cast and throw away this veil of being, this cloud that changes with the least breath, night and day, and all night and all day. While I sat here I have been changing. I have watched the sky change. I have seen clouds cover the stars, then free the stars, then cover the stars again. Now I look at their changing no more. Now no one sees me and I change no more. Heaven be praised for solitude that has removed the pressure of the eye, the solicitation of the body, and all need of lies and phrases." (p. 381)

Thus Bernard reveals to his table-companion and the reader that he is many selves--male and female. Specifically he says that he is Jinny, Susan, Rhoda, Neville, Louis, and Bernard. In including both male and female sexes in the make-up of his personality, Bernard
establishes his personality as being androgynous—equal parts male and female. As a result, we have an androgynous whole made up of six selves.

Thus, the omniscient-narrator technique has progressed from that used in Jacob's Room and discussed in Chapters II and III to the complicated technique used in The Waves. In The Waves, the omniscient narrator introduces each chapter and sets the scene. Then he moves directly into the mind of Bernard as broken into six selves. These selves reveal themselves through soliloquy, interior monologue, and stream of consciousness. Moreover, the character under scrutiny is androgynous. In Jacob's Room the omniscient narrator directs all action and selects whose thoughts will be revealed. The narrator chooses not to reveal the main character's, Jacob's. Similarly both novels use imagery and time and space to move from character to character, but in The Waves this movement is complicated by the fact that the whole novel takes place within a mind that is divided into six selves. Therefore, recurring images as well as metaphors are used to impose order on the stream of consciousness. These metaphors are somewhat artificial, however, and will be discussed in the following chapter dealing with time and space, imagery and metaphors.
Like Jacob's Room, The Waves uses time and space, imagery, and, in addition, metaphors to organize the novel, universalize theme, and establish that the six characters are one character, Bernard. As mentioned previously, the metaphors seem somewhat stilted or contrived especially when one considers that the metaphors are found in thoughts, generally spontaneous, and recorded spontaneously. However, the metaphors offer cohesiveness and lyrical beauty and do not detract significantly from the novel.

The book is divided into nine sections, each section having an introduction. Each introduction establishes time and space for that section by describing the position of the sun and its relation to a seascape. As a result, the characters' ages and circumstances are also established. More specifically, section one opens with dawn; by section five, "the sun had risen to its full height" (p. 218); and in the last section, the sun has set. In section one the characters are of preschool age, and by section nine they are old. More specifically, the following is taken from section five's introduction:

... Now the sun burnt uncompromising, undeniable. It struck upon the hard sand,
and the rocks became furnaces of red heat; it searched each pool and caught the minnow hiding in the cranny, and showed the rusty cartwheel, the white bone, or the boot without laces stuck, black as iron, in the sand. It gave to everything its exact measure of colour. ... (p. 278)

The characters, now in their late 20's or early 30's, have had to face the ultimate reality—death. Their friend Percival has died rather ignominiously in far-off India. Just as the sun reveals the hidden realities and ugliness of the beach in an "uncompromising" and "undeniable" manner, so has Percival's death revealed the transient nature of human life.

Therefore, order is imposed on each section by its introduction. Each introduction establishes the time and circumstances of the characters within that section. Moreover, order is imposed on the entire novel in that a time progression is established through the image of the sun. The nine introductions make up one day in the sun's journey.

Time and space are also used to organize the body of each section. More specifically, a particular event—time and place—is established. Once the event is introduced, it becomes much easier for the thoughts of the characters to be revealed and understood. In other words, each character reacts to the event without the need for repeating, unnecessarily, details that are connected to the event but not the character's perception of it.
For example, in section two the characters are on their way via train to their homes for summer vacation. Each character's thoughts are revealed in relation to the train ride and the movement away from one life and towards another. Ultimately Neville reveals the following:

"The train slows and lengthens, as we approach London, the centre, and my heart draws out too, in fear, in exultation. I am about to meet--what? What extraordinary adventure awaits me, among these mail vans, these porters, these swarms of people calling taxis? I feel insignificant, lost, but exultant. With a soft shock we stop. I will let the others get out before me. I will sit still one moment before I emerge into that chaos, that tumult... I become drawn in, tossed down, thrown sky-high. I step out on to the platform, grasping tightly all that I possess--one bag." (p. 274)

Thus, as the train nears London, Neville becomes more and more concerned since he is unsure of his future and feels "insignificant" and "lost." His literal journey is a part of his figurative journey from boyhood--school--to manhood--London--and from innocence to experience.

Time and space also help to universalize theme--e.g., death. For example, by establishing time and space in the introductions, the narrator helps to universalize theme in that each section deals with a part of a day. By the end of the novel, an entire day has passed in the introductions. However, an entire lifetime has passed in the body. Thus the fleeting nature of human life in
relation to infinite time is presented as well as the imminence of death: life is short.

Imagery also helps to organize the novel and at the same time establish that the six characters are one. Ralph Freedman stresses this function:

Narrative progression is created through images which unify the characters as a chorus—as an image of man in his diverse manifestations—and connect them with the macrocosm of the prose poem.

Freedman also states that "The six figures are particular manifestations of a general framework in which individual sensibilities are portrayed as motifs."

Like *Jacob's Room*, *The Waves* has recurring images that organize, universalize, as well as amplify character. These images are primarily colors, circles, lights, the moon, globes, looking-glasses, and waves. Waves, representing death, are the ultimate image in the book, as seen in section nine, where death is rapidly approaching Bernard: "The waves broke on the shore" (p. 383). Moreover, the images, since they recur in different characters, offer overall thematic organization to the novel as well as organization to the streams-of-consciousness when one considers the possibility that the six characters are one. In addition, the recurring images support the idea that the characters are one since each thinks in the same or similar image.
In regards to universalization the images help considerably. For example, the waves image is established in the introductions. Traditionally waves are a life-force image or a sexual image. On occasion they may and have been used as a death image. This is the case in *The Waves*. Moreover, each character is concerned with death, whether figurative or literal, and talks about the waves washing over him or her. Figuratively, for example, Bernard talks about Neville and how Neville has destroyed Bernard with an unkind remark: "... Like a long wave, like a roll of heavy waters, he went over me, his devastating presence—dragging me open, laying bare the pebbles on the shore of my soul..." (p. 236). Literally, Bernard realizes that death is the ultimate reality:

"And in me too the wave rises. It swells; it arches its back. I am aware once more of a new desire, something rising beneath me like the proud horse whose rider first spurs and then pulls him back. What enemy do we now perceive advancing against us, you whom I ride now, as we stand pawing this stretch of pavement? It is death. Death is the enemy.... Against you I will fling myself, unvanquished and unyielding, O Death!"

*The waves broke on the shore.* (p. 383)

The use of metaphors also offers organization as well as universalization of theme and character in the same way that images do. However, the metaphors seem somewhat contrived and
incongruous in relation to stream-of-consciousness. For example, James Naremore points out that

... There is no disorder in Louis' speech, no sense of texture of consciousness, which is fundamentally disordered, inchoate. ... As for the rest of the speech, the rhythmic, metaphorical assertions sound more like Virginia Woolf at her most literary than like Louis. "Flower after flower is specked on the depths of green" is a self-consciously poetic line. ... ³

However, Naremore does go on to say that the metaphors are a result of one voice's expressing many voices: "But at the same time all the voices seem to be a part of the same medium, expressing themselves through a single highly artful style..." ⁴

Freedman finds the technique praiseworthy in regards to the figurative organization that results:

... In The Waves (1931), however, formal soliloquies spoken by the characters translate all of the usual stage business of the novel into formal prose poetry. Converting both inner and outer worlds into a symbolic design, The Waves represents the ultimate step in the development of Mrs. Woolf's lyrical method.⁵

He continues in regards to imagery: "It [the omniscient narrator] describes the act of cognition in which awareness unites with objects and other selves, or separates from them, to create a world of imagery that directs the flow of the novel..." ⁶

Thus, the metaphors seem contrived in relation to the spontaneity of thought: thought becomes poetic and deliberate as
opposed to spontaneous and haphazard. However, the metaphors enhance the lyrical quality of the novel as well as the organization and theme.

Therefore, like *Jacob's Room*, *The Waves* uses time and space and imagery to organize the novel, universalize theme, and establish that the six characters are one. In addition *The Waves* makes use of metaphors that also organize, universalize as well as give another possible point to the argument that the six characters are one. Moreover, although the metaphors are formal and contrived in regards to stream-of-consciousness, they greatly enhance the lyrical quality and cohesiveness of the novel.
Conclusion

Chapter VI

The omniscient-narrator technique has progressed from a somewhat elementary form in Jacob’s Room into a much more complex usage in The Waves. Although the technique is fundamentally comprised of the same parts—internality through externality, time and space, imagery—Woolf enhances the technique with an additional emphasis on metaphors and androgyny. Ralph Freedman comments in regards to the development of Woolf’s omniscient narrator:

As she gradually refines an impersonal image of the self [in The Waves], individual monologues become more absorbed into the omniscient point of view whose vision is rendered in a formal perspective. This is Virginia Woolf’s approach to poetry: the evaluation of the self toward a depersonalized image. Its development culminates in The Waves, but its beginning is clearly reflected in Jacob’s Room...1

In Jacob’s Room, the omniscient narrator reveals the internal workings of all but the title character, Jacob. Thus we see Jacob through the externality of the other characters’ opinions and thoughts concerning Jacob. Ultimately, the omniscient narrator, implied author, shows that “Nobody sees any one as he is, ... they see a whole—they see all sorts of things—they see themselves. ...” (pp. 30-31). This lack of understanding or comprehension becomes tragically apparent in the novel’s closing chapter.
Jacob has been killed at war. His mother and Bonamy, Jacob's best friend, have come to Jacob's room—a metaphor for Jacob's mind—to dispose of his things. In looking at the confusion in the room, Bonamy begins to question who Jacob was. Bonamy tries to view Jacob's world from Jacob's perspective and finds that he cannot. The coup de grâce occurs when Mrs. Flanders appears and asks what she should do with a pair of Jacob's old shoes. Thus the absurdity of trying to comprehend another person becomes apparent with this trivial concern of Jacob's mother. All she sees is the confusion in the room and the necessity of disposing of Jacob's things as opposed to Bonamy's concerns—trying to understand his friend.

Therefore, by the novel's end it becomes apparent that people, represented by the characters, judge subjectively. As a result no one understands anyone else. They comprehend only their own needs and selves. On occasion the omniscient narrator will allow a scene to dissolve into chaos. Each character seems to be speaking in non sequiturs. The characters are reacting to their own internal states and not the external states—conversation and gestures—of the others. Thus the chaos reinforces the idea of subjective perception.

In The Waves the omniscient narrator reveals the inner workings of six characters—Bernard, Louis, Neville, Jinny, Susan, and
Rhoda. By the novel's end, it becomes obvious that the six characters are mostly likely six selves making up one self—Bernard. Harvena Richter comments in regards to the six selves:

"In The Waves, Virginia Woolf takes the self of a single being, ultimately represented by Bernard and slices it into six sections which personify, on a varying number of levels, the conscious and the unconscious selves and drives within the human personality."²

Thus the idea that nobody ever understands anyone else is compounded by the idea that we are many selves. Moreover, these selves can be both masculine and feminine, or androgynous. Furthermore, these selves can present themselves separately, in combination, or ultimately as a blend, joined, if not in life, in death. Thus we have many lives in relation to our many selves.

In order to present these selves, the omniscient narrator records direct thought. As a result, soliloquies, interior monologues, and stream of consciousness are used.

In both Jacob's Room and The Waves, time/space and imagery are used to move the novel, organize the novel, and universalize theme. In Jacob's Room time and space are also used to reflect internality through their externality. However, Woolf adds the use of metaphors in The Waves. These metaphors help to move the novel, organize it, and universalize theme as well as to help to establish that the six characters are one. The metaphors, although incongruous to

²
spontaneous thought, add cohesiveness and lyrical beauty to the novel.

Therefore, in comparing and contrasting Jacob's Room with The Waves, one becomes aware of the progressive development in Woolf's omniscient-narrator technique. In The Waves the technique has become far more complicated than that used in Jacob's Room and is a smoother blending of its components. Moreover, the omniscient narrator almost seems to disappear. Unlike the narrator in Jacob's Room, the narrator in The Waves allows the characters' minds to direct the action thereby making the omniscient-narrator technique more sophisticated and complex.
Endnotes

Chapter I


2 Friedman, p. 1176.


8 Booth, pp. 157-158.


Chapter II

1 Virginia Woolf, The Waves in Jacob's Room and The Waves (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1968), pp. 30-31. (All further citations from this primary source will come from this text and will be noted in parentheses.)
Chapter III


2 Humphrey, p. 86.

Chapter IV

1 Virginia Woolf, *The Waves in Jacob's Room and The Waves* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1968), p. 179. (All further citations from this primary source will come from this text and will be noted in parentheses.)


3 Freedman, p. 213.


5 Richter, p. 120.

Chapter V

1 Freedman, p. 247.

2 Freedman, p. 247.

3 Naremore, pp. 155-156.

4 Naremore, p. 159.

5 Freedman, p. 159.

6 Freedman, p. 213.
Chapter VI

1 Freedman, p. 206.

2 Richter, p. 120.
Bibliography


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