

## Stylistic aspects of musicality in literary text: a study of V. Woolf's "To the Lighthouse"

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**Abstract.** This article focuses upon the analysis of key features of literary text musicality from a multimodal perspective. It examines the significance and further prospects of such research for contemporary stylistic studies with a special emphasis on the musical markers in V. Woolf's "To the Lighthouse".

**Keywords:** musicality, multimodality, multimodal stylistics, stylistic means.

**Introduction.** Modern stylistics is characterized by the increase of scholarly interest in the multimodal research of literary text. Being rooted in social semiotics, multimodal stylistics examines the ways of meaning-making not only with regard to verbal, but also to implicit audial, spatial, visual and other modes of literary text [10].

Melopoetics as a branch of multimodal cognitive studies is of particular interest to stylisticians. Recently much research has been done to study and systematize stylistic means which contribute to the musicality of literary prose, however this problem needs more consideration.

Musicality is a distinctive feature of British modernist fiction, which is characterized by innovative writing, including the stream-of-consciousness technique and the integration of "art, music and jazz" [7, p. 4–5]. Thus, in the article, musicality of prose will be analyzed on the material of Virginia Woolf's "To the Lighthouse", where musicality of prose stands out very prominently. The novel does not only contain artistic markers of visual impressionism in fictional descriptions, but also explicit stylistic musicality at different text levels.

**Brief review of publications on the issue.** Due to close affinity of music and literature, many scholars studied the interaction of musical and verbal codes in literary text. C. S. Brown [6], C. F. Jacob [9], S. P. Scher [11], Th. Sebeok [13], Ch. Hauer [8] developed various theories of comparability of the two arts. A number of Ukrainian scholars [3; 4; 5] focused on musical rhythm in literary prose.

Raw material for both arts is organized sound. However, a literary sound unit differs considerably from a musical sound unit: the individual word usually possesses semantic connotations, whereas the individual tone does not [4, p. 61].

S. P. Scher distinguishes three basic kinds of "literary music":

- "word music";
- musical structures and techniques in literary works;
- "verbal music" [12, p. 42]

Word music is a common type of poetic practice that aims primarily at imitation in words of the acoustic quality of music (including non-musical sounds) and that is realizable because of affinity in the basic material.

Certain constituents organize sound structures and patterns in both music and language: rhythm, stress, pitch (intonation) and timbre (tone colour) are applicable in literature for creating music-like textures [2, p. 36]. Such strategies of versification as alliteration, assonance, consonance, and rhyme are successfully employed for this purpose as well.

Verbal music is any literary presentation of existing or fictional score; it often suggests characterization of a musical performance or of subjective response to music. Verbal music possesses greater aesthetical potential. As a combination of rhetorical, syntactical, and stylistic strategies, it can create plausible literary resemblance of actual or fictional

music as well as integrate music-like verbal textures into a larger epic context [11, p. 173–202].

According to O. P. Vorobyova, musicality of prose finds its manifestation in: 1) explicit verbal, phonosemantic and/or syntactical imitation of the sound scale, certain musical genres and styles; 2) imitation of musical forms; 3) the dominant or counterpoint motif which serves as the plot pivot; 4) hidden musical rhythm and melodies [1, p. 34], and 5) artistic representation of music perceived by the narrator or a fictional character. This article applies Vorobyova's classification of musicality in prose for analysis of musical elements in V. Woolf's "To the Lighthouse".

The **aim** of the article is to reveal verbal mechanisms of musicality in Virginia Woolf's "To the Lighthouse", its functions and role in literary text from a multimodal stylistic perspective.

**Materials and methods.** The material under examination includes the novel by Virginia Woolf, musical elements are identified and interpreted in the course of stylistic analysis. Musicality of prose is viewed as a linguistic phenomenon created by certain stylistic means. The stream-of-consciousness writing technique applied by V. Woolf involves a wide range of such devices at different text levels. They do not only create a special rhythm and melody, but also characterize V. Woolf as a typical "literary musician" in British literary modernism.

**Results and their discussion.** According to Vorobyova's classification of musicality in prose, the paper addresses such formats of literary musicality as **explicit verbal, phonosemantic and syntactical imitation of the sound scale**, as well as miming **certain genres and styles**. They are realized in the novel through various expressive means and stylistic devices.

Phonologically the novel resorts to the use of **alliteration** and **assonance** to create a musical sound, e.g.: "*she was stern, she was searching, she was beautiful like that light*" [14, p. 30], "*this dining-room table... lay, like a lake*" [14, p. 44]; "*The fatal sterility of the male plunged itself, like a beak of brass, barren and bare*" [14, p. 17].

Sound repetition in the novel is often onomatopoeic. For instance, the description of a rock falling down from the mountain is perceived as credible and vivid because of the use of the "roaring" sound "r":

*Once in the middle of the night with a roar, with a rupture, as after centuries of quiescence, a rock rends itself from the mountain and hurtles crashing into the valley* [14, p. 62].

The anaphoric repetition of *sh-* [ʃ] tends to create the "music" of waves, e.g.:

*And Andrew shouted that the sea was coming in, so she leapt splashing through the shallow waves on to the shore* [14, p. 36].

The author frequently uses graphons – mainly for making

logical stresses: “*She knew all about **THAT***” [14, p. 31]; “***SHE** was a favourite*” [14, p. 10]; “*James will have to write **HIS** dissertation one of these days*” [14, p. 14]. They also produce musical effects as musical compositions rely upon certain stresses, which can be provided not only by the structure itself, but used by a composer deliberately to accentuate particular, sometimes unexpectedly illogical fragments or sounds.

Syntactically, the main emphasis is laid upon **repetition** as the key element generating the “music” of the text. Reiterated adverbs and adjectives add expressiveness and brightness to the narrative, e.g.: “*He had thought of it, **often and often***” [14, p. 10]; “*Her thought which had spun **quicker** and **quicker** exploded of its own intensity*” [14, p. 11].

In addition to ordinary lexical repetitions, there are numerous cases of phrases and themes recurrence. Analogically to musical compositions, the repetition of phrases makes the reader remember and differentiate them among the other themes as those containing the main idea, e.g.: “***He did not know. He did not know***” [14, p. 14]; “***It was bad, it was bad, it was infinitely bad!***” [14, p. 23]; “***It will end, it will end, she said***” [14, p. 30]; “***It is enough! It is enough!***” [14, p. 30]; “***For the first time in his life Charles Tansley felt an extraordinary pride; a man digging in a drain stopped digging and looked at her, let his arm fall down and looked at her; for the first time in his life Charles Tansley felt an extraordinary pride***” [14, p. 6].

Repetition combined with **periphrasis** shapes bright and memorable images and reminds of a musical theme played in a varied, indirect way:

***Odious little man***, thought Mrs. Ramsay, why go on saying that?... This going to the Lighthouse was a passion of his, she saw, and then, as if her husband had not said enough, with his caustic saying that it would not be fine tomorrow, this ***odious little man*** went and rubbed it in all over again [14, p. 6].

**Anadiplosis** or catch repetition is able to connect not only the sentences but also the whole paragraphs. Correspondingly, musical themes can join different parts of a piece of music:

*The sight of them fortified him and satisfied him and consecrated his effort to arrive at a perfectly clear understanding of the problem which now engaged the energies of his **splendid mind**.*

*It was a **splendid mind*** [14, p. 14-15].

**Chain repetition**, together with **framing repetition** (“full of life... filled with life”), adds vividness to the narrative. Basically, all kinds of repetitions resemble various ways of musical themes recurrence:

*All the rooms of the house made full of life – **the drawing-room; behind the drawing-room the kitchen; above the kitchen the bedrooms; and beyond them the nurseries; they must be furnished, they must be filled with life*** [14, p. 16-17].

**Dashes** are often used for denoting pauses and fluent shifts from theme to theme. Analogically, musical ascending/descending passages and pauses serve as a “bridge” between different themes:

*She looked up – what demon possessed him, her youngest, her cherished? – and saw the room, saw the chairs, thought them fearfully shabby* [14, p. 12];

*She could see her, as she came up the drive with the washing, stooping over her flowers (the garden was a pitiful sight now, all run to riot, and rabbits scuttling at you out of the beds) – she could see her with one of the children by her in that grey cloak* [14, p. 66].

**Parenthetical clauses** within a larger syntactical structure, especially those separated by dashes, perform the following

functions:

- Exemplifying: “*They knew what he liked best – to be for ever walking up and down*” [14, p. 2];

- Emphasizing:

*He worked hard – seven hours a day; his subject was now the influence of something upon somebody – they were walking on* [14, p. 5];

- Creating two layers of the narrative: “*They gave him something – William Bankes acknowledged that*” [14, p. 10]. They correspond to various musical themes, analogically, exemplifying, emphasizing and making the musical “narrative” multi-layered.

The use of **brackets** is also worth mentioning. If compared to a piece of music, in which the minor parts are performed quieter, reading the fragments in brackets aloud also requires some quietness as marking while marking them as additional or unimportant. So, considering the phonetic aspect, brackets make the general “melody” of the novel softer.

*Here, on his terrace, he was merely foraging and picnicking (he threw away the leaf that he had picked so peevishly) like a man who reaches from his horse to pick a bunch of roses* [14, p. 20];

*So James could tell, so Cam could tell (they looked at him, they looked at each other), from his toss and his vigilance and the ring in his voice* [14, p. 79].

Syntactically, brackets that enclose parenthetical clauses make the narrative structure polyphonic (as the fugue structure in music):

*I respect you (she addressed silently him in person) in every atom; you are not vain; you are entirely impersonal; you are finer than Mr. Ramsay; you are the finest human being that I know; you have neither wife nor child (without any sexual feeling, she longed to cherish that loneliness), you live for science (involuntarily, sections of potatoes rose before her eyes); praise would be an insult to you; generous, pure-hearted, heroic man! But simultaneously, she remembered how he had brought a valet all the way up here; objected to dogs on chairs; would prose for hours (until Mr. Ramsay slammed out of the room) about salt in vegetables and the iniquity of English cooks* [14, p. 10].

**Partial and complete inversion**, which is employed in the novel, renders the “stream-of-consciousness” manner of narration. Leaps from thought to thought and absence of precise sentence structure while thinking are successfully embodied in the sentences with inverted word order. Musical fragments can also be inverted in different ways. The brightest example can be found in piano studies, e.g. in ascending and descending scales.

Partial inversion used in the novel, regarding the analytical structure of the English language, adds poetry to the narrative, though it does not change the slant of the text radically: “*To her son these words conveyed an extraordinary joy*” [14, p. 1]; “*Insoluble questions they were, it seemed to her, standing there, holding James by the hand*” [14, p. 4]; “*Suddenly, in she came, stood for a moment silent*” [14, p. 6]; “*But slumber and sleep though it might there came later in the summer ominous sounds like the measured blows of hammers dulled on felt*” [14, p. 64].

The use of complete inversion is more drastic and hence contributes more to creating the text “musicality”:

***Never did anybody look so sad.** Bitter and black, half-way down, in the darkness, in the shaft which ran from the sunlight to the depths, perhaps a tear formed; a tear fell; the waters swayed this way and that, received it, and were at rest. **Never did anybody look so sad*** [14, p. 13].

**Syntactical split and detachment** are used to emphasize the phrase which was separated. They make the text fragmentary and, consequently, modernistic:

*One moment more, with her head raised, she listened, as if she waited for some habitual sound* [14, p. 7];

*Dazed and blinded, she bent her head as if to let the pelt of jagged hail* [14, p. 15];

*Filled with her words, like a child who drops off satisfied, he said, at last, looking at her with humble gratitude, restored, renewed, that he would take a turn* [14, p. 18];

Numerous **parallel constructions** make the narrative fluent and musical. It can be viewed as the most “musical” stylistic device because musical phrases are commonly not fully repeated but reiterated with certain changes; parallel constructions, too, form a similar syntactical pattern which does not mean exact word-for-word repetition:

*She did not know. She did not mind* [14, p. 39];

*She was telling lies he could see. She was saying what she did not mean to annoy him, for some reason. She was laughing at him. He was in his old flannel trousers. He had no others. He felt very rough and isolated and lonely. He knew that she was trying to tease him for some reason; she didn't want to go to the Lighthouse with him; she despised him: so did Prue Ramsay; so did they all* [14, p. 41].

**Anaphoric constructions** contribute greatly to creating the rhythm of the narrative:

*She had a dull errand in the town; she had a letter or two to write; she would be ten minutes perhaps; she would put on her hat* [14, p. 4];

*She never spoke. She was silent always. She knew then – she knew without having learnt* [14, p. 13].

The last example comprises both parallelism and catch repetition. The repetition of a personal pronoun emphasizes the character's traits. At the same time, the rhythmical pattern is modelled.

Anaphora at the beginning of the paragraphs creates the effect of echo widely used in music:

*“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 all go to the circus”* [14, p. 4].

**Epiphora** is concerned with placing the reiterated and thus dominating theme at the end. Similarly to anaphora, it gives “musicality” and completeness to the text. Epiphora seems to be especially noteworthy when it frames the whole paragraphs:

*Nothing would make Mr. Ramsay move on. There he stood, demanding sympathy.*

*Mrs. Ramsay, who had been sitting loosely, folding her son in her arm, braced herself, and, half turning, seemed to raise herself with an effort, and at once to pour erect into the air a rain of energy, a column of spray, looking at the same time animated and alive as if all her energies were being fused into force, burning and illuminating ... Standing between her knees, very stiff, James felt all her strength flaring up to be drunk and quenched by the beak of brass, the arid scimitar of the male, which smote mercilessly, again and again, demanding sympathy.*

*He was a failure, he repeated... So boasting of her capacity to surround and protect, there was scarcely a shell of herself left for her to know herself by; all was so lavished and spent; and James, as he stood stiff between her knees, felt her rise in a rosy-flowered fruit tree laid with leaves and*

*dancing boughs into which the beak of brass, the arid scimitar of his father, the egotistical man, plunged and smote, demanding sympathy.* [14, p. 16-17].

Even a letter can be of great importance in shaping the epiphoric endings of the paragraphs. It resembles ending several musical fragments with one and the same note:

*A shutter, like the leathern eyelid of a lizard, flickered over the intensity of his gaze and obscured the letter R. In that flash of darkness he heard people saying – he was a failure – that R was beyond him. He would never reach R. On to R, once more. R –*

*Qualities that in a desolate expedition across the icy solitudes of the Polar region would have made him the leader, the guide, the counsellor, whose temper, neither sanguine nor despondent, surveys with equanimity what is to be and faces it, came to his help again. R –*

*The lizard's eye flickered once more. The veins on his forehead bulged... He had not genius; he laid no claim to that: but he had, or might have had, the power to repeat every letter of the alphabet from A to Z accurately in order. Meanwhile, he stuck at Q. On, then, on to R.*

*Feelings that would not have disgraced a leader who, now that the snow has*

*begun to fall and the mountain top is covered in mist, knows that he must lay himself down and die before morning comes, stole upon him, paling the colour of his eyes, giving him, even in the two minutes of his turn on the terrace, the bleached look of withered old age. Yet he would not die lying down; he would find some crag of rock, and there, his eyes fixed on the storm, trying to the end to pierce the darkness, he would die standing. He would never reach R* [14, p. 16-17].

**Rhetorical questions** are utilized to describe the characters' inner state, their meditations and reflections. It is especially characteristic for V. Woolf's prose and for the works of modernist writers in general:

*But why not? she wondered. What was wrong with him then? She liked him warmly, at the moment. Had they not been taken, she asked, to circuses when they were children?* [14, p. 4];

*Had he money enough to buy tobacco? Did he have to ask her for it? half a crown? eighteenpence?* [14, p. 19];

*Was it wisdom? Was it knowledge? Was it, once more, the deceptiveness of beauty, so that all one's perceptions, halfway to truth, were tangled in a golden mesh? or did she lock up within her some secret which certainly Lily Briscoe believed people must have for the world to go on at all?* [14, p. 23];

*But did he notice the flowers? No. Did he notice the view? No. Did he even notice his own daughter's beauty or whether there was pudding on his plate or roast beef?* [14, p. 33].

Rhetorical questions can be found in music, too. They are not evident; however, the use of the ascending scale often corresponds to uncertainty and questioning intonation (e.g. short movements in Mozart's d-moll Fantasia).

**Exclamatory sentences** are numerous; they express a wide range of characters' emotions. It has been mentioned that parenthetical clauses can be compared to soft musical sounding (*piano*). Exclamations, on the contrary, correspond to *forte* (loud) sounding:

*Alas! even the books that had been given her and inscribed by the hand of the poet himself... disgraceful to say, she had never read them* [14, p. 12];

*But how extraordinarily his note had changed!* [14, p. 15];

*No! No! That was out of the question! Building a new billiard room!* [14, p. 42];

*How extraordinarily lucky Minta is! She is marrying a man who has a gold watch in a wash-leather bag!* [14, p. 56].

Virginia Woolf uses **composite sentences** (both complex and compound ones) with a great number of subordinate clauses and homogeneous parts of sentence. Often connected by **repeated conjunctions**, they create rhythm and musicality of the text. Such sentences avoid abrupt transitions from one thought of the narrator to the other:

*Of course they must go; of course they must go, she cried, laughing; and running down the last three or four steps quickly, she began turning from one to the other and laughing and drawing Minta's wrap round her and saying she only wished she could come too, and would they be very late, and had any of them got a watch?* [14, p. 56].

The same can be observed in the subordinate clauses:

*It was Augustus Carmichael shuffling past, precisely now, at the very moment when it was painful to be reminded of the inadequacy of human relationships, that the most perfect was flawed, and could not bear the examination which, loving her husband, with her instinct for truth, she turned upon it; when it was painful to feel herself convicted of unworthiness, and impeded in her proper function by these lies, these exaggerations, – it was at this moment when she was fretted thus ignobly in the wake of her exaltation, that Mr. Carmichael shuffled past, in his yellow slippers, and some demon in her made it necessary for her to call out, as he passed,*

*"Going indoors Mr. Carmichael?"* [14, p. 19].

**Nominal and elliptical sentences** create the fragmentary modernistic structure of V. Woolf's novel. They are able to "slow down" its musical pace: *"Perhaps"* [14, p. 19]; *"Or, not in his sense"* [14, p. 25]; *"And why not?"* [14, p. 45]; *"A square root?"* [14, p. 51]; *"I – I – I"* [14, p. 51].

These sentences occur not only as separate units. They can often be present in complex sentences and be set off with the help of commas:

*Foolish questions, vain questions, questions one never asked if one was occupied* [14, p. 42].

**Apopsiopsis** is also one of the characteristic features of the stream-of-consciousness technique. It corresponds to interrupted musical phrases widely present in the 20<sup>th</sup> century

experimental styles: *"Then R ..."* [14, p. 16]; *"Charles Tansley..."* [14, p. 17]; *"Tell me now..."* [14, p. 45];

*It was like a beautiful mountain such as she had seen abroad, with valleys and flowers and bells ringing and birds singing and little goats and antelopes and...* [14, p. 55].

**Imitation of musical forms** is expressed in following fugue – a piece of music characterized by polyphony and themes recurrence in different parties, e.g.: *"...the Swiss girl, who would rather go without a bath than without fresh air, but then at home, she had said, "the mountains are so beautiful." She had said that last night looking out of the window with tears in her eyes. "The mountains are so beautiful." Her father was dying there, Mrs. Ramsay knew. He was leaving them fatherless... He had cancer of the throat. At the recollection – how she had stood there, how the girl had said, "At home the mountains are so beautiful"* [14, p. 16]. The phrase *"the mountains are so beautiful"* is repeated on different pitches with varied intonation which contributes to "polyphony" of the text.

**Conclusion.** Musicality of prose is a phenomenon of great interest in contemporary multimodal studies. It is one of the modernistic prose's peculiarities due to the stream-of-consciousness technique. V. Woolf's novel *"To the Lighthouse"* contains a considerable number of stylistic means on different language levels that contribute to creating "music" of the text. Alliteration, assonance and repetition are the main author's devices. Various modifications of repetition (parallelism, anaphora, epiphora etc.) throughout the novel add rhythm to the text. Because of the phrases recurrence the novel resembles the musical form of fugue characterized by the themes repetition on different pitches.

As art and language currently get more and more integrated, multimodal research of prose musicality becomes one of the most critical issues for modern linguists. Studies of musical elements in fiction require elaboration of existing theories and creation of new classifications which makes musicality of prose a considerably perspective area of multimodal stylistics.

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**Стилистические аспекты музыкальности художественного текста (на материале романа В. Вулф «На маяк»)**

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**Аннотация.** Статья посвящена анализу основных особенностей музыкальности художественного текста в мультимодальном аспекте. Рассмотрена роль и дальнейшие перспективы подобных научных разработок для современных стилистических студий. Продемонстрировано присутствие музыкальных элементов на примере романа В. Вулф "To the Lighthouse" (На маяк).

**Ключевые слова:** музыкальность, мультимодальность, мультимодальная стилистика, стилистические средства.