

Dusting off the Classics: Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse*

Richard Sacks – Spring 2021 (section #2)

Handout #1 (for class of 5/12/21)



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The opening three paragraphs of *To the Lighthouse* (Window.1, pp. 3-4):

"Yes, of course, if it's fine tomorrow," said Mrs. Ramsay. "But you'll have to be up with the lark," she added.

To her son these words conveyed an extraordinary joy, as if it were settled, the expedition were bound to take place, and the wonder to which he had looked forward, for years and years it seemed, was, after a night's darkness and a day's sail, within touch. Since he belonged, even at the age of six, to that great clan which cannot keep this feeling separate from that, but must let future prospects, with their joys and sorrows, cloud what is actually at hand, since to such people even in earliest childhood any turn in the wheel of sensation has the power to crystallise and transfix the moment upon which its gloom or radiance rests, James Ramsay, sitting on the floor cutting out pictures from the illustrated catalogue of the Army and Navy stores, endowed the picture of a refrigerator, as his mother spoke, with heavenly bliss. It was fringed with joy. The wheelbarrow, the lawnmower, the sound of poplar trees, leaves whitening before rain, rooks cawing, brooms knocking, dresses rustling—all these were so coloured and distinguished in his mind that he had already his private code, his secret language, though he appeared the image of stark and uncompromising severity, with his high forehead and his fierce blue eyes, impeccably candid and pure, frowning slightly at the sight of human frailty, so that his mother, watching him guide his scissors neatly round the refrigerator, imagined him all red and ermine on the Bench or directing a stern and momentous enterprise in some crisis of public affairs.

"But," said his father, stopping in front of the drawing-room window, "it won't be fine."

The closing lines of section 3 of "The Window" (pp. 16-17):

Suddenly a loud cry, as of a sleep-walker, half roused, something about

Stormed at with shot and shell

sung out with the utmost intensity in her ear, made her turn apprehensively to see if anyone had heard him. Only Lily Briscoe, she was glad to find; and that did not matter. But the sight of the girl standing on the edge of the lawn painting reminded her; **she was supposed to be keeping her head as much in the same position as possible for Lily's picture. Lily's picture!** Mrs. Ramsay smiled. With her little Chinese eyes and her puckered-up face, she would never marry; one could not take her painting very seriously; she was an independent little creature, and Mrs. Ramsay liked her for it; so, remembering her promise, she bent her head.

1: The "present-time" dialogue in the novel's opening 3 sections (pp. 3-17):

Pg. 3: "Yes, of course, if it's fine tomorrow," said Mrs. Ramsay. "But you'll have to be up with the lark," she added.

followed by long 2nd ¶ of the novel

Pg. 4: "But," said his father, stopping in front of the drawing-room window, "it won't be fine."

followed by ¶ progressing to things "(James thought)"and then to ...?

Pg. 4: "But it may be fine—I expect it will be fine," said Mrs. Ramsay...

¶ w/ Mrs. R. then "addressing herself particularly to her daughters"

Pg. 5: "It's due west," said the atheist Tansley...

¶ with Mrs. R. remembering how her children "mocked" Tansley

Pg. 6: "Nonsense," said Mrs. Ramsay, with great severity.

is this line even in the present-time? (note next ¶'s "She turned with severity...")

Pg. 7: "There'll be no landing at the Lighthouse tomorrow," said Charles Tansley...

begins 7-pages of past scenes, especially a "great expedition" with Tansley

Pg. 14: "No going to the Lighthouse, James," he said, as he stood by the window...

followed by ¶ with "Odious little man, thought Mrs. Ramsay..."

Pg. 15: "Perhaps you will wake up and find the sun shining and the birds singing," she said...

¶ ending with Mrs.R. upset with her husband and "this odious little man"

Pg. 15: "Perhaps it will be fine tomorrow," she said...

Begins a 4-¶ sequence with "the scale of sounds" changing, a sequence which includes the 262-word sentence on pp. 15-16 beginning "The gruff murmur..." and the sentence finally ends with:

"... 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.

Pg. 17: "*Stormed at with shot and shell* / sung out with the utmost intensity..."

begins ¶ ending W.3 w/ Mrs. R. remembering "Lily's picture. "Lily's picture!"

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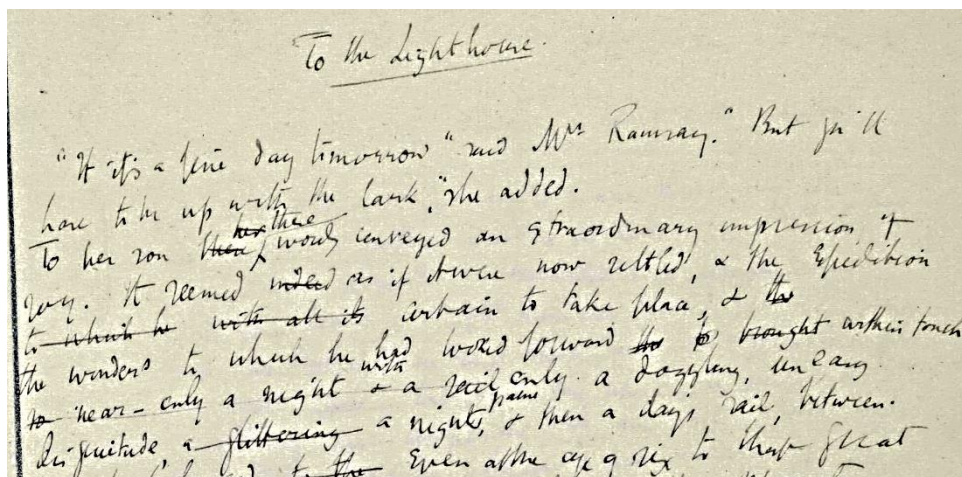
The opening three sentences of *To the Lighthouse* (Window.1, pp. 3-4):

"Yes, of course, if it's fine tomorrow," said Mrs. Ramsay. "But you'll have to be up with the lark," she added.

To her son these words conveyed an extraordinary joy, as if it were settled, the expedition were bound to take place, and the wonder to which he had looked forward, for years and years it seemed, was, after a night's darkness and a day's sail, within touch.

The opening three sentences of *TTL* from VW's Notebooks:

from Woolf Online (<http://www.woolfonline.com/>)



Transcription of "Notebook" version of 1st three sentences of *TTL*:

from Woolf Online (<http://www.woolfonline.com/>), with minor editorial adjustments

"If it's a fine day tomorrow" said Mrs. Ramsay. "But you'll have to be up with the lark," she added.

~~her~~ these

To her son ~~these~~ words conveyed an extraordinary impression of joy. It seemed ~~indeed~~ as if it were now settled, & the expedition ~~to which he with all its certain to take place, & the~~ wonders to which he had looked forward ~~the~~ brought within touch

with

so near - only a night & a sail only a dazzling, uneasy

pains

disquietude, a glittering a nights, & then a day's sail, between.



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2. The opening two sentences (=1st paragraph) of *To the Lighthouse*:

2A. 1st sentence of *TTL*: notebook vs. final version:

Notebook: "If it's a fine day tomorrow" said Mrs. Ramsay.

Final: "Yes, of course, if it's fine tomorrow," said Mrs. Ramsay.

Cf. final sentence of *TTL* (L.13, p.209):

Yes, she thought, laying down her brush in extreme fatigue, I have had my vision.

2B. 2nd sentence of *TTL* – "sky-lark" (from *Oxford English Dictionary Online*):

1. Any of several Eurasian larks of the genus *Alauda*; esp. the widespread *A. arvensis*, noted for its continuous warbling song, delivered in hovering flight high in the air.

1802, Montagu, *Ornithol. Dict.* "It has been asserted that the Sky Lark never perches."

Cf. 2nd-to-last paragraph of *TTL* (L.13, p.208):

"He has landed," she [= Lily] said aloud. "It is finished." Then, surging up, puffing slightly, old Mr. Carmichael stood beside her, looking like an old pagan god, shaggy, with weeds in his hair and the trident (it was only a French novel) in his hand. He stood by her on the edge of the lawn, swaying a little in his bulk and said, shading his eyes with his hand: "They will have landed," and she felt that she had been right. They had not needed to speak. They had been thinking the same things....

3. A generic name for: a pleasure boat. Chiefly in *any more for the Skylark?*: a cry used to advertise pleasure cruises at seaside resorts:

1892, *Bow Bells* 16 Sept: **Any more for the Skylark? Splendid day for a sail!**

2C. Examples of Woolf's use of "lark":

Jacob's Room (ch. 2): Yes, yes, when the lark soars; when the sheep, moving a step or two onwards, crop the turf, and at the same time set their bells tinkling; when the breeze first blows, then dies down, leaving the cheek kissed; when the ships on the sea below seem to cross each other and pass on as if drawn by an invisible hand; when there are distant concussions in the air and phantom horsemen galloping, ceasing; when the horizon swims blue, green, emotional...

Mrs. Dalloway (opening lines): Mrs. Dalloway said she would buy the flowers herself. ¶ For Lucy had her work cut out for her. The doors would be taken off their hinges; Rumpelmayer's men were coming. And then, thought Clarissa Dalloway, what a morning—fresh as if issued to children on a beach. ¶ **What a lark! What a plunge!** For so it had always seemed to her, when, with a little squeak of the hinges, which she could hear now, she had burst open the French windows and plunged at Bourton into the open air. How fresh, how calm, stiller than this of course, the air was in the early morning; like the flap of a wave; the kiss of a wave...

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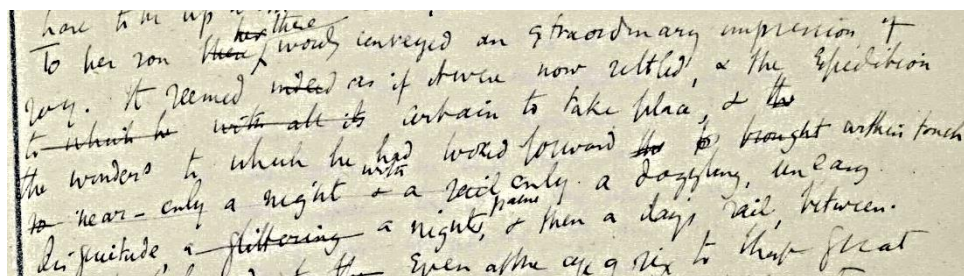
Handout #1 (for class of 5/12/21)

The opening of the 2nd ¶ (= 3rd sentence) of TTL (Window.1, p. 3):

To her son these words conveyed an extraordinary joy, as if it were settled, the expedition were bound to take place, and the wonder to which he had looked forward, for **years and years it seemed**, was, after a **night's darkness** and a **day's sail**, within touch.

The third sentence of TTL from VW's Notebooks:

from Woolf Online (<http://www.woolfonline.com/>)



Transcription of "Notebook" version of third sentence of TTL:

from Woolf Online (<http://www.woolfonline.com/>), with minor editorial adjustments

~~her~~ these

To her son ~~these~~ words conveyed an extraordinary impression of joy. It seemed ~~indeed~~ as if it were now settled, & the expedition ~~to which he with all its~~ certain to take place, & the wonders to which he had looked forward ~~the~~ ~~br~~ brought within touch ~~with~~ so near only a night & a sail only a dazzling, uneasy ~~pains~~ disquietude, a ~~glittering~~ a nights, & then a day's sail, between.

Notebook vs. final version of third sentence of TTL:

Notebook: To her son these words conveyed an extraordinary impression of joy. It seemed as if it were now settled, and the expedition certain to take place, and the wonders to which he had looked forward within touch, with only a dazzling, uneasy disquietude, a night's pains, and then a day's sail, between.

Final: To her son these words conveyed an extraordinary joy, as if it were settled, the expedition were bound to take place, and the wonder to which he had looked forward, for **years and years it seemed**, was, after a night's **darkness** and a day's sail, within touch.



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3: The structure of *To the Lighthouse*:

Part I: "The Window" (pp. 3-124), in 19 sections – "**years and years it seemed**"

W.9, p. 52: "She braced herself to stand the awful trial of some one looking at her picture.... But that any other eyes should see **the residue of her thirty-three years**, the deposit of each day's living mixed with something more secret than she had ever spoken or shown in the course of all those days was an agony."

W.10, p.59: "Only she thought life—and **a little strip of time presented itself to her eyes—her fifty years**. There it was before her—life."

Part II: "Time Passes" (pp. 125-143), in 10 sections – "**a night's darkness**"

TP.1, p.125: "a downpouring of **immense darkness** began."

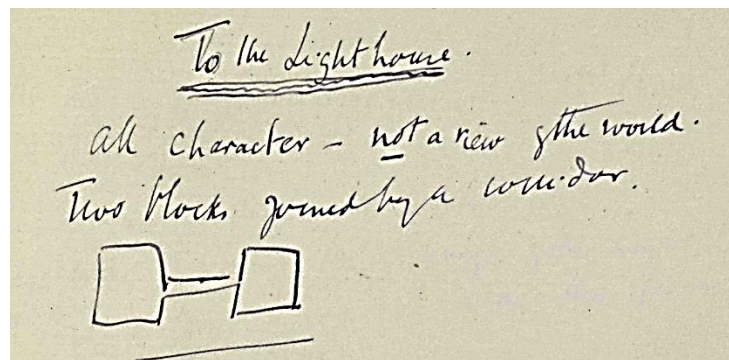
TP.3, p. 127: "But what after all is **one night**?"

Part III: "The Lighthouse" (pp. 145-209), in 13 sections – "**a day's sail**"

L.4, p.163: "...a little way out, the sails slowly swung round, the boat quickened itself, flattened itself, and shot off. Instantly, as if some great strain had been relieved.... Now **they would sail on for hours like this...**"

L.11, p.191: "So much depends then, thought Lily Briscoe, looking at the sea which had scarcely a stain on it, which was so soft that the sails and the clouds seemed set in its blue, so much depends, she thought, upon distance: whether people are near us or far from us; for her feeling for Mr. Ramsay changed **as he sailed further and further across the bay**. It seemed to be elongated, stretched out; he seemed to become more and more remote...swallowed up in that blue, that distance..."

Woolf's drawing/formulation of the novel's structure (from Woolf Online):



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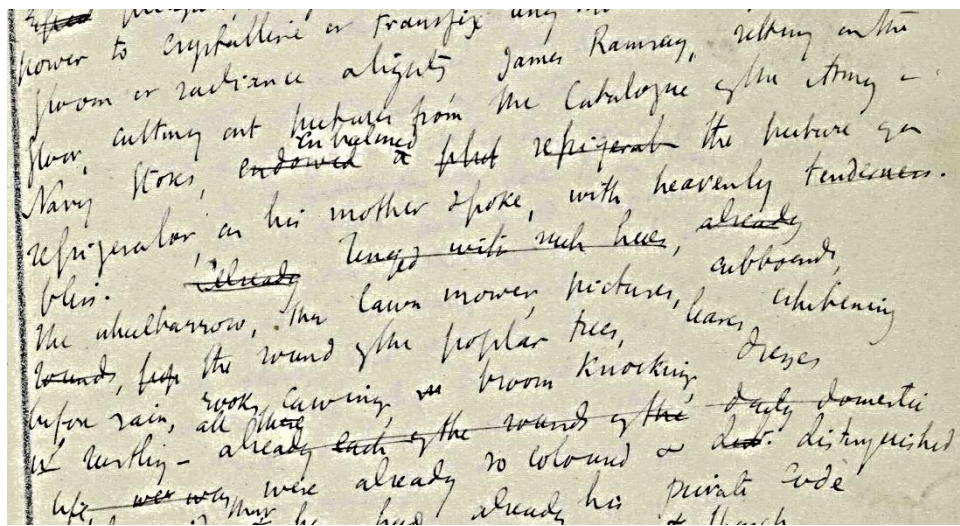
Handout #1 (for class of 5/12/21)

The Army & Navy stores catalog list in the 2nd ¶ of TTL (Window.1, p. 3):

The wheelbarrow, the lawnmower, the sound of poplar trees, leaves whitening before rain, rooks cawing, brooms knocking, dresses rustling—all these were so coloured and distinguished in his mind that he had already his private code...

The passage with the Army & Navy stores catalog list from VW's Notebooks:

from Woolf Online (<http://www.woolfonline.com/>)



Transcription of "Notebook" version of catalog list from 3rd sentence of TTL:

from Woolf Online (<http://www.woolfonline.com/>), with minor editorial adjustments

the wheelbarrow, the lawn mower, pictures, cubboards
sounds, ~~pop~~ the sound of the poplar trees, leaves whitening
before rain, rooks cawing, ~~m~~ broom knocking, dresses
all these

~~w~~ rustling – already each of the sounds of daily domestic
life, ~~wer~~ were were already so coloured & ~~dist~~ distinguished

Notebook vs. final version of catalog list from 3rd sentence of TTL:

Notebook: the wheelbarrow, the lawn mower, **pictures, cubboards**, the sound of the poplar trees, leaves whitening before rain, rooks cawing, broom knocking, dresses rustling – all these were **already** so coloured and distinguished...

Final: The wheelbarrow, the lawnmower, the sound of poplar trees, leaves whitening before rain, rooks cawing, brooms knocking, dresses rustling—all these were so coloured and distinguished...



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4: The list from the Army & Navy stores catalogue (W.1, p. 3):

4A: wheelbarrow:

W.1, p.3 (*earlier in same paragraph*) – any turn in the **wheel** of sensation has the power to crystallise and transfix the moment.

W.10, p.54 – She was off like a bird, bullet, or arrow, impelled by what desire, shot by whom, at what directed, who could say? What, what? Mrs. Ramsay pondered, watching her. It might be a vision – of a shell, of a **wheelbarrow**, of a fairy kingdom on the far side of the hedge; or it might be the glory of speed; no one knew.

4B: lawnmower:

L.4, p.166 – She was thinking how all those paths and the **lawn**, thick and knotted with the lives they had lived there."

TP.9, p.141 – And now as if the cleaning and the scrubbing and the scything and the **mowing** had drowned it there rose that half-heard melody, that intermittent music which the ear half catches but lets fall; a bark, a bleat; irregular, intermittent, yet somehow related; the hum of an insect, **the tremor of cut grass**, disovered yet somehow belonging; the jar of a dorbeetle, **the squeak of a wheel**, loud, low, but mysteriously 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, and at last, in the evening, one after another silence falls.

4C&D: the sound of poplar trees, leaves whitening before rain

(compare Latin *pōpulus* "poplar tree" vs. *pōpulus* "people")

(note also French *père* "father" which is homophonic with English *pear*)

W.17, p.110 – The words (she was looking at the window) sounded as if they were floating like flowers on water out there, cut off from them all, as if no one had said them, but they had come into existence of themselves. ¶ "And all the lives we ever lived and all the lives to be are full of **trees and changing leaves**." She did not know what they meant, but, like music, the words seemed to be spoken by her own voice, outside her self, saying quite easily and naturally what had been in her mind...

W.4, p.24 – How then did it work out, all this? How did one judge people, think of them? How did one add up this and that and conclude that it was liking one felt or disliking? And to those words, what meaning attached, after all? Standing now, apparently transfixed, by the **pear tree**, impressions poured in upon her of those two men, and to follow her thought was like following a voice which speaks too quickly to be her own voice saying without prompting undeniable, everlasting, contradictory things, so that even the fissures and humps on the bark of the **pear tree** were irrevocably fixed there for eternity.

W.10, p.61 – The light in the garden told her that; and the **whitening** of the flowers and something grey in the **leaves** conspired together, to rouse in her a feeling of anxiety.

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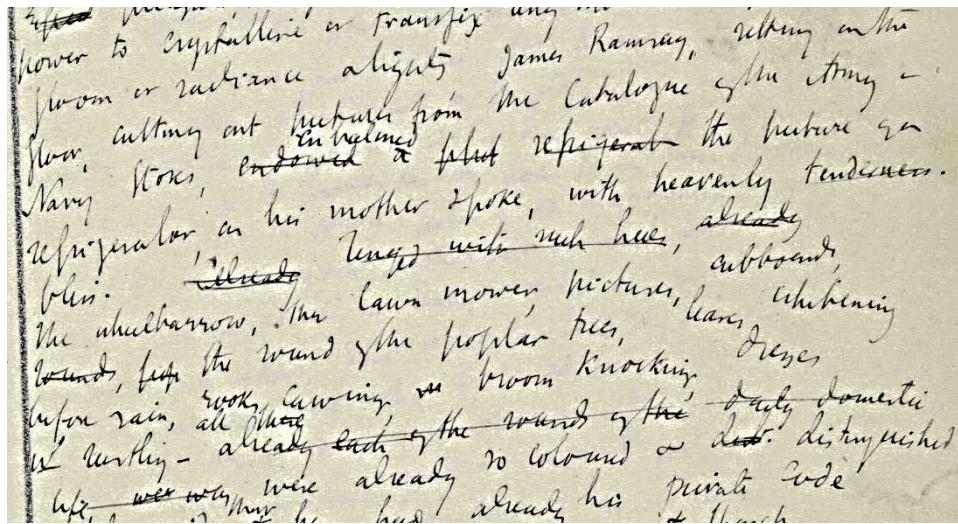
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4 (continued): the list from the Army & Navy stores catalogue (W.1, p. 3):

4E: rooks cawing

W.16, p.80 (3 of the 5 other instances of "rook" are in this one ¶)—"she looked out of the window at a sight which always amused her—the **rooks** trying to decide which tree to settle on. Every time, they seemed to change their minds and rose up into the air again, because, she thought, the old **rook**, the father **rook**, old Joseph was her name for him, was a bird of a very trying and difficult disposition.... ¶ 'Look!'" she said, laughing. They were actually fighting. Joseph and Mary were fighting."

4F: brooms knocking

TP.9, p.139 (3 of the 4 other instances of "broom" appear on this page)—"If the feather had fallen, if it had tipped the scale downwards, the whole house would have plunged to the depths to lie upon the sands of oblivion. But there was a force working; something not highly conscious; something that leered, something that lurched; something not inspired to go about its work with dignified ritual or solemn chanting. Mrs. McNab groaned; Mrs. Bast creaked. They were old; they were stiff; their legs ached. They came with their **brooms** and pails..."

4G: dresses rustling

L.8, p.185 (both of the other instances of the verb "rustle" appear in L.8)—"For one had settings for these scenes; **trees** that grew there; flowers; a certain light; a few figures.... They went in and out all day long...; all was blowing, all was growing; and over all those plates and bowls and tall brandishing red and yellow flowers a very thin yellow veil would be drawn, like a vine **leaf**, at night. Things became stiller and darker at night. But the **leaf-like veil** was so fine, that lights lifted it, voices crinkled it; he could see through it a figure stooping, hear, coming close, going away, **some dress rustling**, some chain tinkling.

4H: TP.9, p.141 (expanding on 2nd item in 4B; in same section, 2 pages later, as the 3 instances of "broom" in 4F)—"And now as if the **cleaning** and the scrubbing and the scything and the **mowing** had drowned it there rose **that half-heard melody, that intermittent music** which the ear half catches but lets fall; a bark, a bleat; irregular, intermittent, yet somehow related; the hum of an insect, **the tremor of cut grass**, disevered yet somehow belonging; the jar of a dorbeetle, **the squeak of a wheel**, loud, low, but mysteriously 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, and at last, in the evening, one after another silence falls. With the sunset sharpness was lost, and like mist rising, quiet rose, quiet spread, the wind settled; loosely the world shook itself down to sleep, darkly here without a light to it, save **what came green suffused through leaves, or pale on the white flowers** in the bed by the window.