Chapter Four

Theoretical Application in the Works of Virginia Woolf

Postmodern feminism is an approach to feminist theory that incorporates postmodern and poststructuralist theory and thus sees itself as moving beyond the modernist polarities of liberal feminism and radical feminism. Patricia Waugh comments:

The term post modernism has come to seem definitive of our end-of-millennium consciousness, along with all other ‘post’-phenomena which emerged in the 1970s and 1980s: post-industrialism, post-Marxism, post-humanism and, of course, so-called post-feminism. The term exerts an enormous grip upon our intellectual climate and upon contemporary debates within feminism. A crucial problem in trying to assess the relations between postmodernism and feminism is that, although feminism can be broadly defined as a political movement whose objectives are ultimately emancipatory, postmodernism cannot be described so easily. The term ‘postmodernism’ has now come to designate a bewildering diverse array of cultural practices, writers, artists, thinkers and theoretical accounts of late modernity. It also refers to a more general sense of radical change in the ways of thinking we
The term post modernism was first used in the year 1950s by critics concerned to describe what they perceived to be new kinds of literary experiment arising out of but moving beyond those of cultural modernism. Some changes took shape in the early eighties. The term swings from the description of a range of aesthetic practices involving playful irony, parody, self-consciousness and fragmentation. It encompasses a more general shift in thought and seems to register a pervasive cynicism about the progressivist ideals of the enlightenment. Post Modernism can be counted as the best thought of as a ‘mood’ arising out of a sense of the collapse of all those foundations of modern thought which seemed to guarantee a reasonable stable sense of Truth, Knowledge, Self and Value. Jean Baudrillard has styled post modernism “as a condition of hyper-inflation of the aesthetic, for ‘art is everywhere, since artifice is at the very heart of reality’” (178). Nancy C.M. Hartsock feels that Postmodernist theories should be understood as a situated knowledge that reveals itself as “the felt absence of the will or the ability to change things as they are . . . the voice of epistemological despair” (251).

Post modernism thus demands a pervasive crisis in the modern understanding of selfhood as founded upon a unitary coherent subjectivity. Much of this ‘crisis’ was actually formulated within the discourse of modernity. The crisis in the understanding of selfhood and knowledge has created a radical uncertainty, which has infected feminism as much as any other emancipatory movement. There was a rise in the second-wave feminism and it coincided with a
growing incredulity towards universal truth-claims. Yet feminism to some extent, always has been ‘post modern’. Feminists as well as post modernism have long renowned the need for a new ethics responsive to technological changes and shifts in the understanding between the relations of power and knowledge. Feminism has delivered its own critique of “essentialist and foundationalist assumptions, arguing, for example, that gender is not a consequence of anatomy and that social institutions do not reflect universal truths about human nature” (qtd. in Stevi Jackson & Jackie Jones 179-180).

Some feminists have claimed that Enlightenment discourses of emancipation have functioned as much to oppress as to liberate women. Contemporary feminists have examined the ways in which ‘universal’ principles were always contradicted by the Enlightenment’s construction of a public/ private split. Feminists have fought for the extension of Enlightenment discourses and sovereign rights to women as full human subjects. Mark Hannam draws attention to modernism. He says, “modernism does have a legacy of progressive ambitions which have contributed to substantive social change, and these ambitions need to be remembered in order to be reinserted into any developing discourses on democracy” (qtd. in Giroux 3). Feminists, like other analysts on post modernism, remain intensely divided. Most of them are either for it and some are against it. Some feminists sack postmodernism as mystificatory academic pretension, while others perceive it as the only viable future for a revived political philosophy:

Feminism and postmodernism are the only contemporary theories that present a truly radical critique of the Enlightenment legacy of modernism. No other approaches on the contemporary
intellectual scene offer a means of displacing and transforming the masculinist epistemology of modernity. (qtd. in Stevi Jackson & Jackie Jones 181)

Postmodernism is depicted in various ways by various authors. Terry Eagleton (1985) terminates postmodernism as a perversion of the radical energies of an earlier avant-garde, and sees it as cultural practice, which merely reflects the superficiality of late capitalist consumer society. Linda Hutcheon (1989) perceives in the postmodern the only possibility of critique and opposition from the margins which gives a voice to feminists, post-colonials, ethnic, racial and sexual minorities. Fredric Jameson (1991), a critic feels that to praise or condemn postmodernism is simply beside the point. He says that we are in the condition of post-modernity and simply have no choice but to resign ourselves to that condition. According to Jameson postmodernism is best thought of as a periodising concept which serves to correlate the formula and stylistic features of contemporary culture with the underlying economic structures of late consumer capitalism. Steven Seidman highlights his view which challenge the Enlightenment paradigm of social knowledge. Its purpose is “to survey proposals to rethink the human studies. This ‘postmodern’ knowledge contests disciplinary boundaries, the separation of science, literature, and ideology, and the division between knowledge and power” (2).

A little deeper dive into the relationship between feminism and postmodernism will make the subject crystal clear. To free the knots between feminism and postmodernism as theoretical critiques and cultural practices it is important to view postmodernism as existing in two generic varieties. One can be
referred to as ‘strong’ and the other as ‘weak’. The freedom to develop as one wished was often sketched as ‘feminine’. The male theorists rarely had very much to do with actual women and even threatened, in continuing to label femininity with a mysterious, irrational and unrepresentable ‘otherness’. They wanted to keep real women locked in a prison house of (postmodern) language, a circumstance which might seem disturbingly equal to that earlier state of eternal feminity dared by the whole tradition of modern (i.e. Enlightened) feminism. *The Postmodern Condition* by Jean-Francois Lyotard’s has been the most influential text in establishing the antifoundationalist thrust of the strong postmodern critique of knowledge in its axiomatic assumption of the exhaustion of Enlightenment metanarratives and of the so-called emancipatory project of modernity. Postmodern feminists wiped out the lines between masculine and feminine, sex and gender, male and female. They tried to find out ways in order to break down the conceptual grids that have prevented women from defining themselves in their own terms rather than through men’s terms.

Belief cannot be dragged consequently, in privileged meta-discourses such as Nature, History, Spirit or Pure Reason which goes beyond local and contingent conditions and in which truth can be grounded. Feminism can be labelled as that gender, like class, or race, or ethnicity, which can no longer be regarded as an essential or even a stable category. It cannot be used to explain the practices of human societies as a whole. It is no longer legitimate to appeal to the category ‘women’ to ground a metanarrative of political practice even in the name of emancipation. Contemporary feminist literary theory travels across borders to recruit the energies of autobiography, social polemic and graphic
poetry. It is acutely experimental and exciting. Literary theory counts a lot because all representations, literary or otherwise, make constructions of knowledge and subjectivity possible. Through representations, one sketches one’s identities and one’s worlds. The insights of feminist literary theory will aid the society to think about cultural identities in new ways. Maggie Humm exclaims that “Gender is a social construction which oppresses women more than men; that patriarchy shapes this construction; and that women’s experiential knowledge is a basis for a future non-sexist society” (qtd. in Stevi Jackson and Jackie Jones 194).

Feminism’s double agenda at the outset regarding the task of critique attacks gender stereotypes as well as the task of construction. The second task sometimes called as “feminist praxis” plays a major role because without this feminism has no goal. Such notions give feminism a particular interest in cultural constructions of gender, including those in literature. The cultural practices of literature are present everywhere in schools, higher education as well as in the media. Literature plays a major role and is responsible for bringing the changes in the society as well a change in women’s life style. It produces representations of gender difference, which contribute to the social perception that men and women are of unequal value. Women often become feminists by becoming conscious of the criticism and the power of symbolic misrepresentations of women. Terry Eagleton claimed that the greatest English critics are frequently foreigners or outsiders to tradition. Maggic Humm feels that feminists, above all others, gamble the greatest stakes in this literary wages. Rosemarie Tong claims that the Third-wave feminists, eager to shape new-millennium feminism, constrain just as
hard as postmodern feminists do to reorganize the kind of “woman/women.” For third-wave feminists, difference is the way the world is. For now, however, feminist thought are old labels remaining serviceable. Tong says:

They signal to the public that feminism is not a monolithic ideology . . . . The labels also help mark the range of different approaches, perspectives, and frameworks a variety of feminists have used to shape both their explanations for women’s oppression and their proposed solutions for its elimination. (1)

Kate Millett’s *Sexual Polities* (1970) asserted that second-wave criticism began as a spatial construction, as border crossing, with its key theme ‘the personal is political’ linking two hitherto conceptually, separately spaced worlds. Margaret Drabble achieved an important position in feminist criticism. She is the one who wittily described in her plenary address to recent conference, which shocked the Oxford University Press regarding her suggestion that she has included feminist criticism in her new edition of *The Oxford Companion to English Literature* published in 1985. Feminist literary criticism in 1970s tended to define space diachronically as origin, as the significance of male or female authorship and was the key feature of feminist criticism at the time. “The break with the fathers” is characterized by second-wave feminism because critics such as Kate Millett, Germaine Greer and Mary Ellmann made revisionary readings called as “phallic” writing. Linda J. Nicholson claims:

A postmodernist reflection on feminist theory reveals disabling vestiges of essentialism while a feminist reflection on postmodernism reveals androcentrism and political naivete. It
follows that an encounter between feminism and postmodernism will initially be a trading of criticisms. But there is no reason to suppose that this is where matters must end. In fact, each of these tendencies has much to learn from the other. . . it is the prospect of a postmodernist feminism. (20)

In the 1970s, feminist criticism took birth into a new phase, often called as “gynocriticism” or the study of women writers and women-identified themes. Critics, together with Ellen Moers and Elaine Showalter, described women’s literary expressions and ‘sub-cultures’. They also defined and celebrated women’s literary history as a progressive tradition. Ellen Moers through her *Literary women* offered a new shape to the tradition of women’s literature. But in 1980s it was attacked for its partial racism, homophobia and idiosyncratic choices. *Literary Women* was one of the first texts of feminist criticism to give women writers a history. It demonstrated women’s choices of literary expression, to create an identificatory commemoration of the supremacy of women writers: “There in no point saying what women cannot do in literature, for history shows they have done it all” (qtd. in Stevi Jackson & Jackie Jones 196).

Tillie Olsen’s *Silences* and Adrienne Rich’s *The Dream of a Common Language* played a major role to explore a distinctive women’s language and to establish a body of literary criticism. In 1975 Elaine Showalter presented a review of literary criticism in the journal *Signs*. Her work *A Literature of Their Own* was a significant contribution to feminist criticism. Like Woolf’s *A Room of One’s Own* she too faced the similar issues of women’s exclusion from the academy. She brought into attention to undervalued nineteenth century writers
such as Sarah Grand and George Egerton. Instead of defining a ‘universal’ woman’s text, Showalter tried to identify a female ‘sub culture’ that created those texts. She replaced the traditional periods of literary history with an alternative three-stage process, which she couched as a growth into consciousness namely: feminine, feminist and female. Showalter went on to develop her ideas in *Toward a Feminist Poetics, Feminist criticism in the Wilderness* and *The New Feminist Criticism* in 1985. In order to explain her views more clearly Showalter in the essays divided criticism into two distinct categories. In the first type she focused on the women reader, a consumer of literature and in the second type she focussed on the women writer, a producer of textual meanings. Showalter brought into limelight four models of gender difference - biological, linguistic, psychoanalytic and cultural.

Gynocriticism’s stress on the significance of women’s literary friendship broadened everywhere during the early 1980’s. Some writers started gaining popularity and this was focussed through the works of Adrienne Rich’s *Of Woman Born* in 1976. Davidson and Broner in 1980 wrote about the mother/daughter nexus in *The Lost Tradition*. Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gular works in 1980s created a feminist aesthetic from within the female literacy tradition itself. *The Madwoman in the Attic* in 1979 and their subsequent series of texts, *No man’s Land*, 3 volumes in 1988 focussed on some of traditional criticism’s most stern elimination such as: the material and psychological controls over women; women’s secret lives and culture; and anxieties of masculinity and femininity represented in literary metaphors of the frontier, the visual, the domestic and cross-dressing.
The key feminist focus in the late 1980s was on language. French feminine critics embraced the term *écriture feminine* to describe a feminine style. This style was equally available to both men and women. Sedgwick treats representation of homophobia as tools for understanding the gender system as a whole. Feminist theory has fashioned and profited from critical appropriation of a number of assumptions central to both modernism and postmodernism. Feminism teaches that literacy/critical language, like any others, are not simply technologies of communication but intensely caught up in gender value judgement. Feminists who are involved in new literacy practices rather than simply in metaphors are trying to understand the wider meanings of change. It focuses on three core subjects: political affairs, pedagogy or presentation and positional. Maggie Humm says that

By destroying the idea that literary theory is a bounded entity, feminist literary theorists move on from simply identifying the ‘facts’ of literary cultures to cultural transformations. ‘For we (feminists) are in the unusual historical position of having come so far while the rest of society has been unable to move’. (qtd. in Stevi Jackson and Jackie Jones 208 )

A woman writer tries to compete and transcend the traditional medium of a male dominated culture, but is immediately met with complicated as well as strong opposition from society. Sandra Singer points out Michael’s arguments:

Modernist texts by women anticipate postmodern strategies in relationship to subjectivity, ‘because of their interest in finding ways to depict the consciousness of women . . . postmodern
impetus in feminist fiction can be traced back to the experimentation of women modernists such as Lessing and Woolf. (177)

Michele Barrett claims that a recent article on the conception of female sexuality employed in the ideology of fascism has singled out Virginia Woolf as “one of the earliest people to perceive the importance of the oppression of women, and the reduction of women to their sexual and reproductive functions, to the fascist programme” (15). Elaine Showalter claims that “gynocritics” was a term, which she coined, assessed and evaluated the specialized discourse of women’s writings. This discourse contends with women’s language, women’s ideas, and women’s ways of communication, women’s careers that includes the history, styles, themes, genres, and structures of writing by women. Woolf proves her gift for writing through her variety of novels, short stories and essays. Woolf and her writings are quoted several times throughout Elaine Showalter’s essay stating that a woman’s writing is always feminine; it cannot help being feminine; at its best it is most feminine; the only difficulty lies in defining what one means by feminine.

If an analysation has been made on the history of feminism, it is understood that the movements and ideologies all aimed at equal rights for women. All movements that work for women’s rights should be considered as feminist movements. Among the three categories of feminism like First-Wave Feminism (19th century to early 20th century), Second-Wave Feminism (1960-1980) and Third-Wave Feminism (1990-2000) Virginia Woolf belonged to the First-Wave Feminist group. Though many activists who were labelled “proto
feminists” started the argument of equality of women right from the 14th century, the scholar found out that even Plato, around 24 centuries ago, argued for the total political and sexual equality of women. Woolf, the writer who strongly defended for women’s rights, was born in the 18th century, which was called the “Age of Enlightenment”. The 19th and early 20th century “Anglosphere” feminist activity was determined to get women’s suffrage, female education rights and better working conditions.

Virginia Woolf (1882-1941), an English essayist, novelist, biographer, feminist and modernist who also wrote letters and memoirs and became the centre figure of English literary culture during the Bloomsbury era. Woolf was the most adamant of the modernists in her claim that “We are sharply cut off from our predecessors.” (qtd. in George Johnson 139). She chooses Freud as representative of scientists of the mind, since he had the highest profile of psychologists whose ideas were frequently discussed by the Bloomsbury group by 1924. Woolf in a draft of “Character in Fiction” (1924), a paper given before the Cambridge Heretics Society writes:

No generation since the world began has known quite so much about character as our generation . . . . The average man or woman today thinks more about character than his or her grandparents; character interests them more . . . . If you read Freud you know in ten minutes some facts – or at least some possibilities – which our parents could not have guessed for themselves . . . . (139-40)
Man have time and can take time to consider the positive, negative, true, false, possible and emotional ramification of an insignificant situation. However, women are forced to separate themselves from their aspirations thus Woolf creates “new woman” to find a new voice amidst a historically male-dominated culture and she succeeds in achieving it. There is an endless gender role in every facet of life from household duties to the employment industry, from emotions to thoughts, from husbands to wives, from reading to writing and from general behavior and beyond. Patricia Moran demonstrates the intricacy of Woolf’s depiction of food and sexuality for the female artist. She declares,

To eat is to align oneself with the father, and more generally with heterosexuality; women who refrain from food are more pure in spirit, but they also will lack confidence and will experience exclusion from the social order . . . ‘the creative act itself generates guilt and fear: the affiliation of writing with the father contaminates the restorative impulse and implicates the daughter in the mother’s destruction’. (qtd. in Garvey 1027)

Woolf is a feminist pioneer. She is also a modern socialist master in her novel *To the Lighthouse*. In this novel, she conveys her own feminist ideas through her steam of consciousness and large number of images. This helps the women to understand the situation of women in society and how they too can be a part of society by overcoming their criticisms, obstacles and restrictions that are sown in their path to success. Welty in the foreword of *To the Lighthouse* written in 1981 edition states that reading this book “opened the door of imaginative fiction for me” (qtd. in Bauer 497). She notes in Woolf the very qualities that
illuminate her own work: “‘a vaunting, a triumph of wonder, of imaginative speculation and defiance . . . . She has shown us the shape of the human spirit’” (498). Woolf chooses Lily as an example by shaping her as a feminist who blatantly denies male culture. Roger D. Lund says, “As an artist who feels most deeply the impulse to bring form and order out of the flux of experience, it falls finally to Lily Briscoe to stem the tide” (88). Josette Feral opines:

Woman as mother, woman as wife, woman alone, girl waiting to become a woman, grieving wife, women’s experiences . . . all serving the same purpose: to express woman, her life, her unconscious and her repressed self. It is to break the silence surrounding her most intimate self and her being as a subject. (552)

Woolf helps the readers to understand her character’s psychological progression. Lily reflects the change process by extreme feminist to gender integration process and this process reveals the feminine success as well as the female artist’s growth course. Woolf depicts in her novels the feminine characters, which can make the readers realize the changes that have taken place in the society. Women who were considered as marginalized have changed their life and have come up with a courageous trait. Their independent life has become a source of inspiration for others too. Woolf presents the reality. She gives importance to the inner quality of a person rather than the outer appearance. *To the Lighthouse* presents a traditional woman who takes care of her husband and children. She rarely says ‘no’ to his commands and accepts every rule imposed on her by him. If one tries to compare Lily with her then she can be sorted out as
a different one. Mrs. Ramsay binds her character in such a way that she rarely falls out of these qualities and Lily admires her. Lily respects Mrs. Ramsay during her life and even after her death.

Lily wants to achieve her goal that is to win the position of an artist. She is ready to face the patriarchal world. Thus, she wears a mask of a man and wins the game of life. Lily possesses skill like Woolf. Both of them wanted to prove that if a woman carries a strong will power they could prove it. They both gave a new world for women in the patriarchal society by their strenuous effort & strong will power. The nineteenth century American writer Nathaniel Hawthorne marks that women do not have the mind and a woman in writing literature field is only a misfortune. The patriarchal world, which is filled with patriarchal thoughts, tries to curb the talents that are inborn in women. Women have tried their best to break the chains that bound them. Mrs. Ramsay insists that marriage is a woman’s final home to return to. But Lily is not bothered about marriage. Woolf opinion in *Professions for women* adds meaning and a source of alertness to all women. Woolf mentions that if a woman wants to be a creator or artist she must kill the ‘angel’. She must try to get rid of the imprisonment and she must not let the angel to dig out one’s passion of writing from one’s heart. In *To the Lighthouse*, the readers are able to see Mrs. Ramsay as the ‘angel’ who is after lily’s marriage. She becomes an obstacle to her painting who is eager to create her status as an artist.

At times Lily used to think about the obstacle that came in her painting through a man, Tansley. She was trying to find out “why he said it?” However, Woolf who is expert in bringing out the feminist qualities arouses in Lily a desire
to prove herself in order to get the answer. Lily thinks that the patriarchal society will never give her a chance to come up but she will surely come out of her dutiful personality and break the chains of eternal servitude. Lily insists on her creation though she has to face a lot of resistance. She believes that she had “perfect control of herself”. Whatever the circumstances may be Lily has the capacity to face everything whether a male interrupts her aim or female. Lily is bent on proving her attitude whereas; Mrs. Ramsay sacrifices her independence and enacts the Angel role. She also attempts to educate her daughter, Cam to surrender her independence. Cam also endures the throbbing process like Woolf who once stated that the Angel troubled her and wasted her time thus in fury she killed her. Cam is considered as a new woman who employs herself in a thorny fight to liberate herself from the Angel’s grip and eventually “liberates herself from its influence, thereby enabling her to emerge as independent and free to pursue her own meaningful, professional, and educational cause” (qtd. in Forbes 466).

There is another scene when Mr. Ramsay travels with James and Cam in To the Lighthouse. In the boat, Cam is instructed by James not to talk to their father. However, Mr. Ramsay tries to break Cam’s silence through his conversation she does not give up and he thinks, “Women are always like that; the vagueness of their minds is hopeless . . . . It had been so with her – his wife. They could not keep anything clearly fixed in their minds” (To the Lighthouse 150). James and Cam have vowed to stand by each other and carry out the great compact to resist tyranny to the death. She was determined not to break her brother’s heart. At the same time, she remembered how her father had borne them
down once more with his gloom and his authority, making them to do his bidding. Woolf shows the struggle in breaking the ice between the two sexes. Woolf throws her view that men sometimes bind women with such a promise or command that they are unable to make a decision. Cam felt herself overcast, as she sat there calm without answering to her father’s questions. She was wondering how to answer her father. She thinks “about the puppy; how to resist his entreaty-forgive me, care for me; while James the lawgiver, with the tablets of eternal wisdom laid open on his knee . . . . Her brother was most god – like, her father most suppliant” (151).

Cam as a woman is tossed between a father and a brother. Both of them take their dominant role and she is left alone to decide what role she has to play. Woolf beautifully puts the scene in the novel to show how women are unable to handle the situation at times when they are passed with a vow. Woolf connects Cam’s disturbed mind with the image of fish that was caught by Macalister’s boy tugging the hook out of the gills of another fish. It brings to her mind something, which poisoned her childhood and raised bitter storms, so that even now she used to wake up in the night with rage and trembling heart. It made her remember some rude commands made by her father such as: “‘Do this’, ‘Do that’; his dominance: his ‘Submit to me’ ” (152). All such things remained as an obstacle to erase her hatred and accept him as a caring father. Throughout the entire trip to the lighthouse Cam’s thoughts oscillate between being loyal to James and trying to break the compact. Therefore, after inner struggle Cam realizes that she will not let the ‘angel’ to oppress her. She refuses to surrender herself to James’s demands. She realizes that she will not sacrifice her independence to appease
James. She will not give in to James’s oppression. She now does not regard her father as a tyrant after departing from the clutch of her brother. Cam comes out of her slavery breaks the vow owed to her brother, kills the angel and becomes a “new woman”.

Woolf uses many different styles and techniques in this novel though the term feminist is never used within the novel it is clearly focuses from the feminine point of view and is a feminist text. Woolf’s novels challenges and questions the representation and treatment of women, as well as the social relationship between men and women. *To the Lighthouse* is a novel that is enchanted by women. It asks the question of women’s role within the family and within the society. The highest praise and admiration goes to Lily who represents Woolf’s ideal woman and Mrs.Ramsay can be portrayed as the ‘angel of the house’. Miroslav Beker highlights:

> We see here the effect of time on man and his environment. So far does Virginia Woolf go in this direction that she turns the conventional plot upside down: the main characters (Mrs. Ramsay and the others) have become subsidiary . . . while time has become the central and undisputed force. (384)

Lily is also very much a product of society, yet she has new ideas for the role of women and produces an answer to the problems of gender power. Lily sticks on to her aim. She finds strength within her artistry. It can be said that Lily is a sort of pathfinder for other women. Kelly S. Walsh claims, “Woolf never suggests that the elegist could ever overcome the desire to make things whole or resurrect those we have lost . . . art achieves its insufficient consolations is
represented ekphrastically through the painting of Lily Briscoe” (11). Woolf is a wonderful feminist writer who was bewildered by the roles women were forced to play in society. She felt that though the sexes are different, they inter-mix. Woolf comments that often it is the attire that keep the male or female image, while underneath the gender is the very opposite of what it is on top of. Urmila Seshagiri highlights Woolf’s precariousness of Western identities and influences:

When we come to consider the question of the West & the East, – then indeed – we lay down the pen, & write no more. Although her pen remained mute on this issue during the balance of her stay in Turkey, it regained its voice in the mature novels she wrote twenty years later. The ‘question of the West & the East’ infiltrates many of Woolf’s major works, transforming Englishness and modernity into sites defined by racial difference, imperialism, and Orientalism. (58-59)

Maria DiBattista as a critic of Woolf blends a positive groundling in traditional scholarship namely: rhetoric, myth, the history of literature as well as with extra contemporary concerns of criticism especially the Freudian and related psychologies, modern social history, and the like. She scrutinized Woolf’s stories and novels “the problems of narrative authority, narrative voice, and narrative succession . . . her transvaluation of the convention of narrative omniscience through the recreation of the many-sided voice of ‘Anon’, the voice of the one in the many” (Magalaner, Major Novels 685). She further reveals that Virginia Woolf had concluded that “women must write masterpieces, speaking not in their
own individual voices but with the voice of the ‘common life’ of men and women” (685-86).

Woolf creates a new radial modern approach to literature. *Mrs. Dalloway* is a complex and compelling modernist novel by Woolf published in 1925. She criticizes the patriarchal dividend in the family that enslaves women. One critic explains that Woolf reaches beyond personal relationships to explore man’s wider relationship to the Universe. Woolf helps the females to make their own space in the stark reality of the external world. This novel has been regarded as one of the greatest feminist novels in the 20th century. The main character Clarissa Dalloway is full of complexity. This novel shows the image of Clarissa Dalloway especially her relationship with other men, women as well as her daughter, Elizabeth. This novel not only focusses on Clarissa but also unveils the condition of other women in the novel, which shows that they suffer from male oppression. The readers can see her trying to maintain her social status by throwing parties and trying to seek happiness in her life. Simone de Beauvoir while examining the division of historical and mythological labour reveals that

The man is typically the hero, the subject, the representative of humanity, the winner and conqueror, while the woman is mother, background, landscape, temptress, or goal. She is so much an outsider that she is not human. She is ‘other’: she is ‘natural’ or childlike or holy or evil, while the man is ‘man’ (humanity). (qtd. in Little 10)

*Mrs Dalloway* is regarded as a masterpiece of Woolf. It is a novel where Woolf has much to say about society and the post-war changes. However, a
steady underlying theme in the book is feminism, the roles of women of that period and their seeming insignificance. Woolf reveals the physical as well as the psychological world of womanhood. She focuses on women struggling for an identity, their dilemmas, subjectivity, and sexuality and thereby portrays their condition in the traditional patriarchal society. Woolf’s identity, privacy and freedom in the male dominated society bloom in the novel. For Woolf the formation, the idea of what she wanted to do, always preceded the means of doing it. Thomas C. Beattie explains:

The final note Woolf strikes in *Mrs Dalloway* is the transfiguration of Clarissa, not into a completely new self but into a self-accepting self . . . . The ultimate significance of her self-assessment and self-acceptance on this crystallizing day is an affirmation of the ongoing flow and excitement of living. (534)

Woolf criticizes the patriarchal dividend in the family that enslaves women. From the beginning until the end, Clarissa is focused. She takes freedom to arrange parties and is trying to be independent. She preferred to marry Richard Dalloway rather than Peter. Compared to her daughter’s powers she can be said to be in the list of a traditional one like Mrs. Ramsay. Though she loved Peter, she changed her decision thinking about his character. Woolf focuses on life’s journey between Mrs. Ramsay and Clarissa; both of them belong to the Victorian age. However, Clarissa can be listed in one rank above Mrs. Ramsay, as she is somewhat independent to arrange parties. Clarissa wanted to put Elizabeth under her control as she finds her very much attached to her tutor, Miss Kilman. Clarissa plays the role of an ‘angel’ to her daughter as is played by Mrs. Ramsay
for her daughter, Cam. As Alex Zwerdlin writes that in *Mrs Dalloway* Woolf presents Clarissa as “a sympathetic picture of someone who has surrendered to the force of conventional life and permitted her emotions to go underground.” (Ferbee, Real World 356). Moreover he looks upon the two discursive books *To the Lighthouse* and *Mrs Dalloway* which is centered on women’s lives as “attempts to find a vehicle to accommodate her twin needs in writing those works: to vent her anger about the subjection of women and to conciliate the male audience she could never entirely ignore” (356).

Woolf does comparison in order to make the readers comprehend the two choices of life such as submissive and independent. Clarissa is a brilliant woman who thinks a lot for her social status. She tries to explore what is enduring and keeps herself happy. Her daughter Elizabeth depends on her own views though she was instructed by her mother to stay away from Kilman she knows that no one can change her views. Clarissa felt that Kilman would change her daughter completely. However, Elizabeth outwits them all. She falls a prey neither to her tutorress nor to her mother. When much pressure is on her, she starts evaluating everything. These thoughts help her to get over the negative influence, which is imposed on her and thus makes her realize and achieve her dream. Pamela Transue says, “She deeply resents her daughter’s attraction to the embittered Miss Kilman, and yet it is clear that there is too much distance and formality in her relationship with Elizabeth to allow them to discuss the problem openly” (67). Mrs. Ramsay, on the other hand, “is the archetypal mother, so loving and understanding that her children become fiercely protective of her and resentful of their father’s tyranny and insensitivity” (68).
Clarissa is having a pinch of feminist qualities because she takes her own decisions to keep herself happy whether it is related with her life, marriage or other societal matters. She follows the rules of her husband and therefore, she is also a traditional kind of a woman. Jesse Wolfe regarding Clarissa states:

Her determination to celebrate life, to treat not only her marriage but her existence as a romance, reaches philosophical – nearly religious – proportions on multiple occasions. In a moment of self-doubt, wondering whether she should have married Peter, she imagines herself a child and grown woman at once, coming to her parents . . . holding her life in her arms which, as she neared them, grew larger and larger in her arms, until it became a whole life, a complete life, which she put down by them and said ‘This is what I have made of it! This!’ Her sense that her life is not merely a given, but something to be ‘made,’ secures her footing as a modern heroine, an artist of more than just the hostess’s realm.

(49)

The ‘new woman’ Elizabeth tries to get rid of the influence brought by her traditional mother. She realizes and discovers the value of freedom. Thus in the end even her father, busy with his own affairs is unable to realize her daughter being molded into a new personality. Jesse Wolfe comments,

Her father had been looking at [Elizabeth], begins one of the novel’s final paragraphs, ‘and he had thought to himself, who is that lovely girl? And suddenly he realized that it was his Elizabeth’ . . . . This defamiliarization results in Richard’s
redoubled love for his daughter: ‘he had not meant to tell her, but
he could not help telling her. . . he had wondered, Who is that
lovely girl? And it was his daughter!’ On the crest of his second
wave of familial affection within one day, Richard is more
articulate with Elizabeth than he was with Clarissa . . . . The party
creates an occasion for tenderness between father and daughter;
Richard’s expression thereof confers a crowning achievement on
the party. (54-55)

Woolf creates feminists and she leaves on the readers to know the
meaning of feminism and realize how a woman becomes a feminist. She throws
her views on the society saying because of the circumstances there emerges a
new woman with feminist qualities. Anna Snaith asserts:

Without a voice or name, the figure must stand as an
‘enduring symbol of the state,’ and the onlookers must create their
own interpretations and reactions. Rather than dominating the
characters, in terms either of voice or of position, both the
dignitary and the narrator – who also is ignorant of the figure’s
identity – leave the characters free to maintain their own voice in
the narrative. (140)

Woolf in The Voyage Out introduces her protagonist, Rachel Vinrace as a
new woman. Rachel sets out on a voyage with the Ambroses and is introduced to
a few people. When the novel begins, she is shown as a girl who is unknown to
ways of the society. She is of the age of Elizabeth as in Mrs Dalloway. In order to
bring about different life style of women Woolf portrays women from a variety of
approach. Rachel is just twenty-four, she does not possess the knowledge of men, and she is tempted to enter into a relationship with one. In the beginning she lacked the stimulating interaction with men and as the days goes on, she turns into a ‘new woman’. Diana L. Swanson illustrates:

*The Voyage Out* is about the struggle of a young middle-class British woman, like Virginia Stephen, to become a person, and her defeat by the socio-sexual forces of British society. Woolf’s first novel is her first major articulation of her experience as a patriarchal daughter and her understanding of woman’s position in upper-middle-class British society. As such it is also a story of sexual abuse and its implications for female subjectivity. . . . ‘a painstaking woman who wishes to treat of life as she finds it, and to give voice to some of the perplexities of her sex, in plain English, has no chance at all’. For Virginia the point of writing her novel was that ‘it represents roughly a view of one’s own’. The central problem of the novel concerns Rachel’s struggle to find and develop her own view of the world, to become a subject rather than an object of desire. (287-88)

Woolf carefully chooses a suitable title for every novel and thus from every novel there emerges a “new woman” who can be labelled as a “feminist. *The Voyage Out* itself shows that something is connected with a journey, a journey to an outside world. Woolf makes Rachel to travel from a childlike quality to new woman. Two kinds of voyages are focussed: the voyage out from London to South America, and the voyage in from Santa Marina to Amazon. As
the voyage proceeds, Rachel’s own transformation towards becoming a woman progresses on a minutely conscious level. Woolf demonstrates how due to the passage of time women get an opportunity to have a new identity. Phyllis Rose scrutinizes that the idea of voyaging to a ‘new world’ that is Rachel’s pilgrimage is nonetheless “Virginia Woolf’s own ‘journey’ from Hyde Park Gate to Bloomsbury” (qtd. in Ellis 35).

As the time goes on little by little, Rachel keeps on changing. She is molded a bit through Evelyn and Terence Hewet. Evelyn’s approval of Terence drives Rachel further on towards ‘womanhood’ which she is going to be. Rachel is in the track of transformation. Through this, the readers are made known that Rachel is trying to step out of herself merely to experience emotions that are servilely associated with men. The first step she takes to attain the rank of “womanhood” is that she is prepared to give up her good sense and get into a relationship with Terence. She wanted to change her relationship from single to betrothed. Diana L. Swanson says that Terence is “as traditional as Rachel’s father (or Virginia’s); he wants Rachel’s energies and thoughts to revolve around him, wants her to be the enabling background music to his accomplishments” (294). Woolf does not want Rachel to be trapped. She does not want her to enter into the list of traditional women. She wants her womanhood to be memorable for the readers as well as the society. Thus if Rachel dies, her death will be a triumph to her femininity. Rachel’s death ends her transience for good and the responsibility for Rachel’s loss of life might be thrown on the symbolized femininity, which stroked back against her for trying to become a patriarch-charmed woman.
The readers might as well charge Rachel responsible for her death because she could have put an end to her investigation of the people in the society as well as the civilization. Thus, her craziness to know about the other sex made her to dive into the sea of life. Therefore, by dying, she wins her life or else she would also have become a slave in the patriarchal world. There is a focus on reality. Rachel discovers the reality of male sexual violence and female victimization as well as the orderly, horrendous effect it has had on her own life. Richard Dalloway betrays Rachel’s trust and violates her. When she shares this incident with her aunt Helen, she says that Dalloway’s behaviour is “the most natural thing in the world” (*The Voyage Out* 72). However, Rachel is determined to reflect on it all day and all night until she finds out exactly what it does mean. Finally, she exclaims, “‘So that’s why I can’t walk alone!’ . . . she saw her life for the first time a creeping hedged-in thing, driven cautiously between high walls, here turned aside, there plunged in darkness, made dull and crippled for ever . . .” (72)

Helen is an admirable figure crafted by Woolf. She is actually a portrait of her sister Vanessa. On first reading the manuscript Vanessa’s husband, Clive Bell, wrote to Virginia: “Of Helen I cannot trust myself to speak, but I suppose you will make Vanessa believe in herself” (Maze 11). Rachel gets sick by going to a native camp on the bank of the Amazon with Terence Hewet. In search of her womanhood, she gets bed ridden and is in the stage of death. Her attempt to cross the inter gender chasm is akin to a pilgrimage. Death means martyrdom to her sex. She can be termed as a feminist who has picked up the courage to clear up her doubts which was haunting her. Even in the deathbed, she is not bothered
about her life. She is like a martyr who gave up her life to make herself free from the burden, which she was carrying with her. Her thoughts become mature as days goes on. Rachel’s reaction to Richard Dalloway’s passionate kiss is the root cause of her discovery. Behzad Pourgharib says:

Rachel describes the terrible experience of being a woman, inasmuch as this means becoming dispossessed of a body which is violated and possessed by the man . . . . Having been previously assaulted and kissed by force by Richard Dalloway, Rachel feels the victim of a dispossession of the body similar to that of prostitutes. (Excursion 4-5)

Diana L. Swanson feels that, “Dalloway’s kiss functions as a synecdoche for rape and sexual assault of women in general . . . . Rachel has already suffered but of which she, like many incest survivors, seems to have no conscious memory” (295). Rachel’s imagination and desire for more realities about life presents a feminist view. The Voyage Out focusses on the plights of women within the power structures of modern society. In every novel a new woman, a woman icon for others is exposed.

Woolf next brings into limelight her courageous feminist in her novel Night and Day. Katherine and Mary Datchet are independent, educated little creatures, not confined to the home domestically. Katherine Hilbery, the granddaughter of the distinguished poet belongs to a privileged class. She secretly prefers mathematics and astronomy. Because of her mother Margaret Hilbery, she is engaged to William Rodney, a frustrated poet and dramatist. Though he loves Katherine, he is largely attracted by her grandfather’s status as
one of the greatest English poets. He every time tries to impress her without realizing his limitations. He is more interested in molding her to suit his needs rather than appreciating her for what she is. He is a typical Victorian man. Later she breaks her engagement with William Rodney. Katherine struggles to reconcile her need for personal freedom with her notions of love. She stands as a feminist because she feels that she cannot live a caged life and remain submissive to his demands. Katherine has taken her own decision regarding her future. She neglected the rules imposed by the society as well as her suitor. She sought to lead a life very different from those of her mother by engaging herself in activities, which proclaimed much more independence for her personal worth and her role in the public.

Mary Datchet is venturing into a new territory. She is developing from her life as she realizes that life will become useless if she gets married to Ralph Denham. She realizes that love is insincere so she gives up. She is a strong feminist as well as a new woman who emerges from the traditional woman’s sphere. Mary Datchet is an advocate for the suffrage movement. She spends much of her time in the office and that too in front of a typewriter. She fights for the rights of women. She is a modern, independent and courageous woman who is bold enough to face the reality of life. Woolf creates Mary as the only character like Lily who remains consistent throughout the whole book while everyone else changes around her. Woolf shows how in order to keep up with the traditions, the daughters, even after the death of their fathers keep them alive in the society. Katherine’s mother is working on the biography of her late father with Katherine. Katherine is selected as a guard by her mother to keep her grandfather’s
belongings safe and to show them to their guests. Katherine feels entrapped leading such a life and she looks for a way out of her house. She hated feelings, emotions, ideas of marriage and love. She hides her passion in ancient Greek dictionary. Woolf shows how most women used to hide their works as they were greatly frowned by the society. Katharine’s mother Mrs. Hilbery is not a bold character because she is trying to keep up the literary traditions of her father, which represents her as a silenced and trapped woman. She is following the laws formulated for women by the society. She is living in the past because instead of bringing out her creativity, she is bent on keeping the memories of her father, Richard Alardyce alive. She was keeping him alive through his biography. She is keen on proving his greatness to the society, which is ruled by men. She cripples her own present writing and creativity. She can be added in the list of traditional women as well as traditional woman writers.

Mary, a feminist usually has gatherings for intellectual people to discuss art, music as well as literature. Mary acted as a guardian angel to all who were having confusion, overwhelming feelings and queries. They used to knock at Mary’s door and seek her assistance for the problem. She gains worldly knowledge while she was in love with Ralph. She is no longer in pain and uses her time for more productive things. Melinda Feldt Cumings mentions that Woolf’s *Night and Day* suggests “the tension present in all her fiction between “the moonlit world of vision and the sunlit world of facts” (339).

*Between the Acts* takes place in the house of Oliver’s family, Pointz Hall. This novel spans a single summer day on the eve of World War II in 1939, focuses on the Oliver family, and brings out the feminine qualities of her
characters in the novel. Woolf shows how the family is trapped between two worlds, Victorian and Modern as well as between the two World Wars. Woolf illustrates the Oliver’s strong will power who despite the coming war organizes a pageant written by Miss La Trobe. Woolf also focusses the differences between art, artist and audience in her novel.

Isa is trapped within a male power structure. Her position is a pathetic one because she is under the power of her husband, Giles and her overbearing father-in-law, Bart. The novel focuses on the interactions among the Olivers and the country pageant performed that afternoon. Miss La Trobe presents a Victorian melodrama and a postmodern conclusion of the present time reflecting identity, empire and the self. She is the enigmatic author and producer of the pageant, who seems to represent the creative mind in relation to audience and actuality. The characters themselves are aware of the roles they must play. Their thoughts reveal a great deal about the roles they all play within the society in which they live. Isa thinks a lot for her husband. Every time she spies her husband and later she feels pity on him thinking that he is the father of her children. She is the poet-mother and the most likely protagonist. She too withdraws into her own mental vision to recognize the needs of others.

A significant portion of the novel is spent within the house. Pointz hall is presented as an already - opened space and a relic of the Victorian refuge which, in 1939, no longer exists as such. Though no bombs fall and no physical harm is exposed in Between the Acts Woolf is trying to explain her witness to a very real destruction during the Blitz the bombing of her residences at 52 Tavistock and 37 Mecklenourgh Square. The strange experience of talking to someone on the
phone who might be killed at any moment are the images which provide the outline for Woolf’s troubling mind. Jane Wheare remarks that “Woolf puts into practice her belief that theoretical ideas make the deepest impression when they are dramatized through fictional scenes or episodes, creating “the illusion of absence from her own text” so as to appear dramatic rather than didactic” (Ferebee, Dramatic Novelist 802).

The same despair takes shapes in Between the Acts but Miss La Trobe tries to bring relief to the people by constructing an outdoor stage. She tries to have her audience’s attention and gives them a solution. Between the Acts establishes a structure through which it challenges the current beginning of art, the role of the artist. Woolf initially predicts the artist as being able to combine life. She feels that the artists have the knack of presenting life a life, which astonishes the people and helps them to learn something from it. She shifts the focus of the novel from the artist to the participants to show how modern arts depend on the introduction of the author’s own life like force into it. She examines generational differences in the Giles and Swithin’s household. In this novel, Woolf attempts to breathe life into the static and unmoving. Isa and Giles are unable to share a sense of human passion and sensation into their future. Between the Acts is that of exploring life and Woolf wanted them to understand as well as make progress in their every day life. Isa attempts to come out of her caged life and give importance to her art. Miss La Trobe tries to provide a solution for bridging the gap between modernism and a new age that demands the thrust of a lifelike force. She attempts to show her audience “how their origins have shaped them, thus suggesting that they might act differently through the
pageant’s implicit questioning of how their culture has progressed . . . ” (Olson 64). The novel focuses on the future modernists to enliven the movement. Isabella and Giles finally face one another. The silent hostility of modernism’s forms creates the possibility for generation and creativity. There is a union between them. They both have changed and Isa admires her husband and her love for him grows thinking “The father of my children, whom I love and hate” (Between the Acts 134). Woolf in the end of the novel asserts:

Left alone together for the first time that day they were silent.

Alone, enmity was bared; also love. Before they slept, they must fight; after they had fought, they would embrace. From that embrace another life might be born . . . (136)

Woolf declares such kind of relationship is very important to run a family and there should be no contrasting ideas. One must understand each other’s feelings. Woolf compares herself with the artist Miss La Trobe. Miss La Trobe interferes between the two generations by exhibiting her vision in the pageant. She cleverly choreographs her play by making full use of the typically English custom of her outdoor theatre, the breathtaking landscape, the trees, the cows, the swallows all of which draws attention to the force of nature’s continuity and will overtake the existing human generation and the human crisis. She presents a pageant of human continuity because she wanted her audience to realize and have a look on the inevitable linkage among the dramas of existence, of history, and of art. The end of the novel hints on the human pair who has suddenly become fragile. Miss La Trobe ends her pageant focussing her representation of humanity as competent of violence, kindness, destruction as well as construction. She is
Woolf’s imitation and through her, she states the truth about the artist and her increasing effort to make her audience perceive.

Woolf in the epiphany reaches her most penetrating insights into the plights and the glory of modern man. Miss La Trobe organizes the pageant in order to bring everyone together. The audience after the pageant disperses in separate cars to their homes losing the unity, which they had while enjoying the play. Woolf reveals that in society only during such gatherings, they converse or share with each other. People fail to make out that their lives do come together in the minutiae of community life. Therefore, in order to keep in touch with each other Miss La Trobe brings them together once a year to remind them of their common heritage and to stimulate them into serious reflection. Lucy compliments her and she feels triumphant.

Lucy’s thoughts parallels to that of Miss La Trobe. She looks for a bright life from the life of darkness and she observes everything in detail. Woolf focusses the thinking capacity of women who spend sometime for the unseen happenings around the world. Lucy gazes into the lily pool and notices that, the fish have withdrawn due to the passing shadows of actors and audience above them. She chases the fish “the speckled, streaked, and blotched; seeing in that vision beauty, power, and glory in ourselves” (127). Lucy tells her brother that “Fish had faith. They trust us because we’ve never caught’em” (127). Woolf connects women to the fishes in the lily pond. They are frightened by the dominating men and rules laid for them by the society. They find their meaningless in the midst of dominant men. However, like the fishes they have also miraculously begun to overcome their fear by facing the society boldly,
which they have realized lying in the corner of their heart. A woman should have belief in renovation and faith for a successful life.

Like the title *Between the Acts*, they both are trapped between the acts in a confusing and threatening way unable to come to a decision and fix things in the life. They have to struggle in order to keep the joy of life going and they know that they have sacrificed a lot for the benefits of living. Woolf’s ending in every novel gives a message, which adds meaning to life. Her imagined world filled with people is true to life spreading faith and hope. Woolf wants women to keep the spirit of life very strong in the dimness in order to find a spark of glow in their life. Changes take place even in the life of the artist, their works and their achievements. Their works brings about a change in the society and in their life as well. Woolf works reflects feminist ideology but she is not a radical feminist because she shows the opposition and gender differences. Through the novels, she explores the value of life’s purpose in order to pursue reasonable gender relations. Men have a career because they have the society, which always supports them whereas women have no career. Through novels, Woolf arouses a desire in women to write and have a position in the society.

DeSalvo pins his opinion that Woolf is concerned with an unconscious level of experience in her characters. In *Jacob’s Room*, though there is no importance given to the main character the readers are pushed forward to clearly observe the role of other women who play a different role in the society. All of the key external characters in this novel are found to be women. Woolf connects life and war as well as people connected to it. Jacob’s life begins with his mother but when he grows up her role is left behind as other women characters like
Sandra and Florinda take her place with whom Jacob has various degrees of sexual and romantic attractions. Woolf links Jacob’s life with women so that she can show how men at times lead their life. She also wants to show that as a male they can do anything of their choice without bothering about the society. *Jacob’s Room* is often considered as Woolf’s first modernist novel. Barry Morgenstern says:

The story she tells has two plots: Jacob’s growth and death, and the narrator’s learning about him. The second greatly influences the first because her way of viewing the world in general affects her perceptions and her confidences to us and, therefore, is a large part of our understanding of Jacob. (353)

The novel makes the society to realize the sufferings of women and that it should sympathize with a mother who has been left alone in this world. Betty Flanders as a widow makes a strong mind to face the world in order to bring up her children. She sends her son Jacob to Cambridge for higher education. Woolf reveals Betty Flanders as a strong feminist and a new woman. However, it is pathetic to see that such a brave woman lost her son. This novel reveals the ethics of modernism. In the end of the novel, his mother and his friend go into his empty room and comment on his untidiness it is as if he is expected to come back. *Jacob’s Room* has made Woolf to break fully from the traditions of Victorian life realism. It shows the importance of responsibility, a responsibility that calls the self into being. Woolf brings everything into the knowledge of the readers such as connection, relationship, unpredictability, disruption and claims to self-mastery.
The readers can realize what might have happened to Betty Flanders on hearing the news of her son’s death. She has accepted her son’s fate because as a strong woman she knows that one has to face the other part of life and she already have an experience of it. When she lost her husband, she picked up courage to face the patriarchal society, a world where woman is rarely respected. In this novel, Woolf found out how to begin to say something in her own voice. Woolf is capable to create a narrative, a specific history effective of explaining her presence, background and motives. She yearns to have access to a comparable accounting of the women’s development. The first three novels *The Voyage Out, Night and Day*, and *Jacob’s Room* centers on the evident dichotomy between two kinds of time and two worlds. On one hand, the world of linear time, of past, present, and future, where one is subjected to incessant and disorderly fluctuation. On the other hand, the world of mind time, an inner world of thought and imagination, in which “the chaotic flow of experience derived from our life in linear time is reduced to order and unity, and in which we are therefore liberated” (Latham, Critics 28). Kathy Phillips asserts that an expanded political hub on race and colonialism is revitalizing Woolf’s studies once again just as it was twenty years ago. They were remade by feminist criticism and she says, “Woolf made her critique with characteristic obliqueness by juxtaposing phrases and sentences to imply a condemnation of imperialism. Phillip’s portrait of Woolf as a committed social critic is appealing . . .” (qtd. in Rosenman 176).

An earlier contest, in 1937 cover article in *Time* magazine, pits Woolf against Margaret Mitchell and recommends that for literary brokers Woolf is preferred option for a long-term investment in the literary stock market. Brenda
R. Silver exhibits the increase of Woolf’s stock, probing how the currency
“Virginia Woolf” has been figured in the history of her public reception, asking

‘What representations of Woolf have emerged from the proliferation of her image and her name, and what do these representations tell us about the sites of cultural contestation in which they appear?’ . . . Woolf still bring with them not only fear but a fear that is linked to gender, to high and low culture, to institutional and social struggles for power, authority, and voice . . . (qtd. in Jones 3)

Woolf inscribed her novel *Orlando: A Biography* in 1928, following the publication of acclaimed novels *Mrs Dalloway* and *To the Lighthouse*. She dedicates this novel to her friend and lover Vita Sackville-West. Adam Parkes says that Woolf while planning to write for *Orlando* wrote to Sackville-West, “it sprung upon me how I could revolutionise biography in a night” (448). Woolf treats this novel in a different way. So far, she has been trying to bring out the feminism from her novel and here she gets a chance to introduce a feminist in a man who becomes a woman and realizes her talent hidden and consequently brings it out through her poem “*The Oak Tree*”. While Orlando is identified as male in the beginning of the novel, his transformation into a woman marks his transcendence of human sexuality and this makes him to take on both roles simultaneously. Woolf explains that a man can understand and realize the sufferings of a woman only when they step into the shoes of a woman. When he was a male, he used to flirt with many women but he is seen sincerely loving Sasha. Sasha is a character who is responsible for arousing a feeling of despair in
Orlando. He led a deceitful life until Sasha deserted him. He led a rich life where he got everything he wanted. He was born in a noble family and was chosen by the queen at an early age to have great fortune and status therefore he did not desire much. However, Sasha’s entry and her exotic appearance changed his mind completely. She awakens in Orlando a deep sexual desire and even before he identifies her gender, he is drawn towards her. She moves flexibly and wears androgynous clothes. Her exoticism is compounded by her foreign tongue and deceptive manner. He wanted to achieve her in his life and thus he feels vulnerable when she speaks to the sailor. Sasha is his first real experience by love, lust and female nature.

The plot change, Orlando becomes a female and faces many sexual encounters. In contrast to the relatively overt sexuality of the male version of Orlando, the female Orlando quickly discovers the differences in female sexuality. Orlando remains anchored in modernism. The novel also encompasses strategies that move toward the postmodern. Magali Cornier Michael states “Woolf”s novel works to destabilize the hierarchical oppositions that structure notions of sex and gender in Western culture, using fantasy and parody. . . and the dichotomy between fact, or truth, and fiction” (70). Woolf makes Orlando to confront male & female in the society. Many feminists have cited Orlando as an example of modernism. When Orlando was a guy, he never bothered about his life and led his life as he wished. Woolf narrates about the female Orlando encountering a sailor and how she gets disturbed a lot. Later Orlando changes herself to survive in the society. She becomes a desire for her self-expression. Woolf creates this character differently to say that ‘sex’ is what society has
created it. Orlando’s life constitutes a postmodern approach to the body and Woolf succeeds in presenting the difference of male and female. The novel’s treatment of Orlando’s sexuality throws light of his/her history as both a man and a woman.

Woolf highlights the protagonist experiences as a man and later as a woman: first, for Sasha, a Russian woman who initially appears to the male Orlando as masculine; second, for Shelbourne, a seafaring Englishman who appears to the female Orlando as a feminine. In both the cases, Orlando’s desires seem heterosexual because of the partially sexed embodiment. The novel explores social mores about marriage, children, and appropriate occupations for women. Orlando faces the society without any fear within her. She becomes a women writer and learns the value of writing from nature. She faced a lot of discrimination from poets and society when she steps into the world of women. Karen Lawrence states:

Woolf does not negate the property struggles of her poet-protagonist, the agony of Orlando (female) fighting to retain her relation to her inheritance, as Vita Sackville-West tried to do (indeed, in fiction Woolf reinstates Vita’s rightful inheritance). Culture is not escaped in the round-trip journey of the narrative; rather, the voyage out enables a return to the scene of home in which home itself is transformed by the return of Shakespeare’s sister, the survivor. For in this representation of the woman writer (unlike that in *A Room of One’s Own*), Orlando is a poet with both ‘world enough and time’ . . . . Woolf represents both the necessity
of confronting one’s ‘inheritance’ and of transforming it with new paradigms of female desire. (275)

Orlando’s character is a tool to expose the shallowness of social life and its restrictions. Woolf focusses how as a male they stick on to their dignity. Thus, when he was a man he has thinking for women of lower classes, which creates a problem in his life and gets him into trouble with his patron, Queen Elizabeth. The same situation repeats when he becomes a woman. When as a female Orlando makes friends with London prostitutes whom she might have patronized when she was a guy. It brings out essential truths of Orlando’s life that only after becoming a woman she draws closer with the life of women. Thus to bring out how women are restricted in the society Woolf combines both male and female. She tells how as a male, Orlando had insisted that women must be obedient, chaste, scented and exquisitely appareled by nature. Orlando reflects on this and says, “Now I shall have to pay in my own person for those desires . . . . They can only attain these graces, without which they may enjoy none of the delights of life, by the most tedious discipline” (Orlando 76-77).

Orlando after becoming a woman she realizes how male impose restrictions on women. She pitted one sex against the other. As a woman, she comes with a conclusion about Sasha’s motivations and character. Woolf does not stop with this she shows how women must take effort like Orlando who changes the track of her life without bothering much about her restrictions and her weakness. Woolf says that no one can stop anyone from his or her love for literature because it is not gendered. Orlando got a chance to think about
Orlando thinks:

Fame! (She laughed.) Fame! Seven editions. A prize. Photographs in the evening papers (here she alluded to the ‘Oak Tree’ and ‘The Burdett Coutts’ Memorial Prize which she had won . . . when we write of a woman, everything is out of place—culminations and perorations; the accent never falls where it does with a man. (154)

This clearly focuses on how a woman can also seek glory and ambition and thus the winning awards for poetry can be a signal or an indication of triumph for female. Her hard work in spite of the obstacles in her life brought her to the peak. She is a new woman stepping out of the traditional values. One has to shape one’s thoughts and the same is seen in Orlando. Her life turns out rather differently and in the end of the novel, he is a married woman with a successful career in poetry. Having a thought similar to that of Woolf, she has a way to live a room of her own and a profession with her of her choice. She can live a peaceful life without depending wholly on her husband. Woolf sometimes creates situation and situation is responsible for bringing out the changes in woman. She drags her to the realization of her sufferings accomplish the role of a feminist.

Woolf succeeds in creating a feminist in the end who drives down a street having various images, which sparks new selves, new memories and a ‘new woman’ in her. Woolf wrote with a desire to modernize biographical writing, a genre in which her father had achieved considerable success during the Victorian era. She exposes the androgynous character of Orlando. It demonstrates Woolf’s
belief that each of us has both male and female characteristics and that intellectually man and women are indistinguishable. It exposes an in-depth discovery of what it means to be a man and a woman. The end focusses on Orlando’s attainment of having achieved what she was looking for namely a peaceful life, name and fame. Christy L. Burns observes that Orlando accomplishes a contented gender ambiguity in the modern era. She reveals:

Orlando reflects on the way of her marriage – which turns out to be strikingly nontraditional – has given her an odd freedom . . . . Although she conforms by virtue of marrying Shelmerdine, Orlando resists the particular demands of Victorian marriage and womanly roles . . . . After her marriage, Orlando asks herself if she has satisfied the demands of the age and if she might again write in her own hand . . . and finds to her great relief that ‘she need neither fight her age, nor submit to it; she was of it, yet remained herself’. (355)

Professor Merry Pawlowski says that Woolf instructs and assures women with a feeling that they can believe in themselves. She was an amazing woman who, despite bouts with mental illness, accomplished an enormous amount during her lifetime. Woolf is a great innovator for women writers as well as for women in the society. With the dawning of the twentieth century, a new voice appeared on the forefront: the “new woman” had not only a strong voice, but also many obstacles to overcome. Modern writers disregarded the standards set forth by their predecessors. Woolf in her own works went deep into the heart of human consciousness experimenting boldly with language and narrative. Orlando
reflects the theme of marriage, the equality of sexes and the riddle of individual personality.

*The Years* gives a vision of an ordinary family filled with people and children. It shows Woolf’s ambivalent feelings towards women's entry into the professions. The readers can see the eagerness of women to become professionals and gain financial independence. Woolf herself seems to equate the professional system in her time with masculinity and oppression. In *The Years*, Woolf throws her views of the professional system that she thinks has originated from feminist concerns. She longs for a new type of society, a ‘new world’ where all women shall be free with no rules implied on them. *The Years* mentions about sex, education, life and gives the whole of the present society facts as well as the vision. Grace Radin throws light on Woolf’s artistic progression and proposes that “Woolf used her first draft to vent her anger, to write out long furious passages she could later cool and transmute into the “transparent” stuff of art . . .” (Hill-Miller, Evolution 636).

The family in the novel *The Years* has a resemblance with the family in *To the Lighthouse*. The passing of the years, describes the family in opposition to a background of shifting social conditions. Like other women Eleanor, Delia, Rose and Milly were deprived of formal education in contrast with the public school education given to their brothers Morris, Edward and Martin. Eleanor is one of the central characters in the novel and she is the eldest daughter. Like Mary Datchet and Lily Briscoe, she too chooses a life of her own and becomes a new woman. She did not bother about her life and remains an unmarried woman.
until the end of her life. She decides to make a name in the society. Like Mary she too has affection towards suffrage movement. Behzad Pourgharib says:

_The Years_ is an attempt to expose the darker sides of the Victorian family structure which had always uncomforted Virginia and also the entire dynamics of its mode of operation had sowed in her heart inveterate terror, anger and disgust . . . the author traces the journey made by the English women over a period of fifty years. (Feminine Consciousness 150)

The ambitions and desires of women, which were blocked in 1880s, paved way for educational and professional opportunities for women in 1930s. This can be seen in the case of Peggy, Eleanor's niece, who is given a chance to grab the title of a doctor. Peggy is visualized as a successful professional woman in the historically male-dominated field of medicine. Woolf tries to bring about an image of the difference in the way of living between 1880s and 1930s. Peggy outwits her brother in the field of education. J.E. Apter records:

In her diaries Virginia Woolf wrote that in this novel she was determined to stick to fact rather than to vision; but she has shown throughout her fiction that there is no meaningful distinction between the two, that to see the world as constructed by fact alone is to employ a type of vision . . . (151)

One witnesses the struggle in _The Years_ on the part of Woolf not to be pushed into the world of consciousness at the expense of social reality. While writing this novel she discovered her talent for capturing the intricacies of social reality. Woolf brings a vision of the urban experience. She presents Eleanor, an
optimist and a symbol of social range who is impossible to fall into the grip of the society. She can shape her life to her liking. J.E. Apter says:

Eleanor Pargiter, at seventy, reflects upon the value of her life, and on the definition of her life. She feels that even as an old woman she has only the present moment. She feels that she can make this sole possession meaningful only by connecting the present with the past and future. In such a process of integration will she find the key to life and happiness, and she will find happiness not only in dreams but in living people and ordinary rooms. (159)

_The Years_ novel indicates one such kind of a woman called Eleanor who is unmarried, independent and a professional woman. Her life’s background as well as circumstances makes her to remain unmarried. Like Woolf, Eleanor is also a fearless feminist. _The Years_ focuses on the radical themes of women’s rights, women’s experiences and economics as demonstrated in the novel. It is studded with “illuminated scenes in just such a way. A family tea-table, or a Victorian drawing room with curtains closed against early dark and light falling from a single lamp . . .” (_The Years_ viii-ix). There are many characters in the novel exposing the older and new generations. Eleanor is the eldest daughter of the Pargiter family. When the novel opens, she is seen as looking after the family in her early twenties. Eleanor, a bold woman takes the charge of household as well as of her professional life. In her thirties, she runs her father’s household, does her charity work in order to provide enhanced lodging for the poor. She travels to London on a horse-drawn omnibus. She visits her charity cases and
visits court to watch Morris arguing a case. Milly has a great admiration towards her elder sister, Eleanor. She thinks, “Eleanor always would stick up for the poor. She thought Eleanor the best, the wisest, the most remarkable person she knew” (26). She tries to hold the family together though others are not bothered about it. Events are followed from the perspective of different family members at different times. The novel does not seem like a novel it is as if a real happening of events are taking place. It indicates the passage of time as well as life & death. Memories reappear and recur down the years.

Emily Dalgarno’s claims that Woolf in an early version of The Years writes that “If you object that fiction is not history, I reply that though it would be far easier to write history . . . that method of telling the truth seems to me so elementary, and so clumsy, that I prefer, where truth is important, to write fiction” (135). Woolf exposes the fact how due to the passage of the years and passage of time changes take place in everyone’s life. Woolf’s novel The Years celebrates the spirit of the individual self and beautifully paints a life across time, generation and class. Woolf shows the reality of truth and highlights the pathetic conditions of women. There is a scene when Eleanor is left alone. The year 1911 brought with it a pathetic life for Eleanor. Her father died and her house was shut up. She had no attachment at the moment anywhere. She is unable to take any step for her accommodation. She thinks “What shall I do now? Live there? She asked herself, as she passed a very respectable Georgian villa in the middle of a street. No, not in a village she said to herself . . .” (The Years 170). But, Eleanor was brave enough to handle this situation alone without any one’s support. She realizes that she has grown old and there were wrinkles across her forehead;
hollows and creases where the flesh used to be firm. However, a woman can be weakened in beauty because of her age, but cannot be suppressed by the society if she has got a strong will power moreover if she desires to hit the bowl of success no one can stop her. Behzad Pourgharib writes:

The novel, using the character of Eleanor Pargiter, a spinster, tries to project the lot of Victorian women whose only escape from drudgery was marriage which often led to a terminal thraldom. The only interesting and exciting thing that was considered likely to happen to women was marriage which led to a more miserable life, leaving women to conclude that marriage or no marriage their life was essentially predetermined to be a long boring and monotonous affair. In spite of their marital status, the only thing the Victorian women are shown as doing is attending parties which seem to be happening in every other page. Women of younger generation want to break away from this closeted and trussed up lifestyle and Kitty finds a stirring within her to change the basic pattern of life. The older women, happy and contented as they are, find it hard to understand what else the younger generation wants from life. (Feminine Consciousness 153-54)

The pathetic conditions of two ladies Crosby and Eleanor at the departing scene melts the heart of the readers. Crosby was unable to bear this separation and for her it was the end of everything. They and their doings had made her entire world but now she was going off, alone, to a single room at Richmond. The pathetic separations of these women add more to the novel. These things are true
to life. The readers can feel their feelings when Crosby tells Eleanor that it was her home for forty years. Eleanor had been a little girl of thirteen or fourteen when Crosby came to them, looking very stiff and smart but now due to the passage of years she has changed a lot. Eleanor faced the situation and prevented her tears to flow down from her eyes. Crosby along with Rover, their dog, began to edge sideways down the slippery steps. It was a dreadful moment for them filled with unhappiness.

Eleanor and Rose are strong enough to lead their own life without any one’s help. They are independent in their own way and their existing circumstances have made them face everything courageously. Woolf creates Kitty who has a tinge of qualities similar to Clarissa. Kitty is happy to have married a wealthy man and like Clarissa, she too keeps herself busy by arranging parties. Her mother Mrs. Malone wanted the best for her daughter. She does not allow Kitty to marry Edward. She thinks, “No, not Edward . . . . There was young Lord Lasswade . . . . That would be a nice marriage. Not that I want her to be rich, not that I care about rank . . . . No, but he could give her what she wants . . . .” (The Years 71). In 1910, Lady Lasswade attends the party arranged by Delia where all the families meet at that time; she realizes that she is lucky, as she did not marry Edward. This same feeling was found in Clarissa also. Kitty was a mother to three boys and she had been in Australia, India and other places. She would not have enjoyed if she had married Edward. She took their own decision in order to be happy in their life.

Kitty was different from all. Out of all the women, she enjoyed her life to the utmost. She wanted a speech in the party and thus she says in her
authoritative manner that she wanted something that gave a impulse, a finish. She does not want the past, which carried a load of memories. She wanted present and the future to linger in her because she wanted to enjoy life. She is of the opinion that, “Now one can live as one likes . . . now that one’s seventy” (368). She is not bothered about anyone neither in the past nor in the present. Woolf has a passion for lives of the obscure and for the marginal and unvalued literacy forms. Every time she makes effort to write about feminism. Woolf always writes to her women friends urging them to write their life-stories. She brings out a spirit in her novels that will surely shape women’s lives.

Woolf has the power to make the dead come almost alive in her novels. Her feminist essay *A Room of One’s Own* describes the history of women in literature through an avant-garde and highly provoking exploration of the social and material conditions required for the writing of literature. Women were deprived of all the basic prerequisites. Woolf clearly penned down some of the hindrance in women’s life. Through her speech of *Women and Fiction*, she lays bare her view, which is almost true for women all over the world. She says that a “woman must have money and a room of her own if she is to write fiction” (*A Room of One’s Own* 2). She wants to create more feminists in the society. She begins her essay as:

I propose, making use of all the liberties and licenses of a novelist, to tell you the story of the two days that preceded my coming here – how, bowed down by the weight of the subject which you have laid upon my shoulders, I pondered it, and made it work in and out of my daily life. (2)
In order to make her essay crystal clear she tells how she was treated when she began to write an essay on the banks of a river at ‘Oxbridge’. She felt uncomfortable the moment because when she began to jot down her ideas, which stroked on her minds she was interrupted. This is enough to make the readers know how women must have struggled to bring out their voice in their writings. As Woolf describes her narrator’s thoughts on women and fiction, she emphasizes the role of interruptions. She bolsters her argument that a private room is a basic requirement for all kinds of creative work that is why she has chosen the title *A Room of One’s Own* for her essay. She not only mentions it but also identifies the fact that women were denied a private room. Her thoughts are blocked whether it is a life-long developmental of an individual or the historical developmental of an intellectual tradition.

Woolf throughout her novel keeps on focussing on women’s problem. Her main view was that money is the primary element that is preventing women from having a room of their own. Their creativity has been stifled throughout the ages. She believes that “Intellectual freedom depends upon material things. Poetry depends upon intellectual freedom. And women have always been poor, not for two hundred years merely, but from the beginning of time . . .” (102). It is true that women find easy to write novels than poetry because writing novels lends itself more easily to frequent starts and stops. Thus, it is clear that women without money will remain in second place to their creative male counter parts because they have no room where they can sit and write freely. Moreover, Woolf feels that “Fiction is likely to contain more truth than fact”. Though one does not find any feminist here, one is sure that Woolf is trying to make every woman a
feminist by motivating them to struggle for their freedom and have a room of their own. Jane Marcus effort has done more, perhaps, than anyone else has done to launch Woolf as “one of the few most important writers for contemporary feminist critics” (Dekovan, Languages of Patriarchy 276).

This can be considered as a positive essay because it brings life to women’s history and a way for their future. By digging the past, she prepares the women for the present. She forces her readers to question the veracity of everything she has presented so far. She feels that because of such circumstances there are less successful women writers. The failure is because when she is interrupted she fails to regain her original concentration. Woolf also creates a woman called “Judith Shakespeare”, the imaginary twin sister of William Shakespeare. The narrator uses Judith to show how society systematically discriminates against women. Judith has equal talents as her brother but because of the discrimination, her talents are underestimated and explicitly deemphasized. The narrator invents the tragic figure of Judith to prove that a woman though talented as Shakespeare could never achieve success because she is a woman and the fact that she is a woman her talents leads to a very difficult end. Woolf feels as well as predicts that until these inequalities are rectified, women will remain second-class citizens in the society. A Room of One’s Own is a landmark of twentieth-century feminist thought.

The narrator says, “Call me Mary Beton, Mary Seton, Mary Carmichael or any other name you please – it is not a matter of importance” (A Room of One’s Own 2). This is an enigmatic and elusive tone regarding the identity of the narrator. Woolf and the narrator both struggle with the same issues. She is a
fictionalized character, an invented creator of Woolf and she remains vague of her true identity. This quotation is enough to make the society know the lack of one’s identity and this kind is Universal. The ideas, which Woolf has scattered, apply to every woman in the society not just only the narrator. Women have no freedom to write and there was an argument that women produce inferior works of literature. The question the readers can ask is that when there is no room for women where they can have the freedom to do or write anything why the society expects the excellent literature from them. Woolf feels that a woman should be free from all troubles because when she is loaded with worries she will not be able to concentrate in her work. She will have frequent interruptions than found in the case of men. A private room to some extent can prove to be useful for her to have freedom to think without any disturbance. Nigel Nicolson and Joanne Trautmann states that Virginia Woolf’s letters has briefness and slap-dash quality. Almost every letter apologizes: “No time to write. Sorry about this dashed-off word. People coming, damn! Leonard’s committees filling the house . . . interruptions and complains always about the distractions of people and invitations” (Doner, The Letters 690).

Woolf’s assertion was revolutionary at its time. This essay and her other works helped women to recast the accomplishments in a new and far more favorable light. Woolf finds men guilty for the plight of women. She believes that men are treating women badly to strengthen their own confidence as the more capable sex in the society. The narrator says:

Life for both sexes – and I looked at them, shouldering their way along the pavement – is arduous, difficult, a perpetual
struggle. It calls for gigantic courage and strength. More than anything, perhaps, creatures of illusion as we are, it calls for confidence in oneself. *A Room of One’s Own* 32

Woolf through this quotation reveals the fact that women continue to write even though they are crammed with many criticisms in the society. They are not bothered about their relevance in society. They have the courage to go on with their work. They will continue to keep their flag high for the coming generations. The emerging generations have started to march towards their track of triumph and in this way Woolf depicts women as valiant. Jean E. Kennard states:

In *A Literature of Their Own* (1977), Elaine Showalter accuses Virginia Woolf of ‘expressing a class – oriented and Bloomsbury – oriented ideal,’ of separating politics and art, of indulging in ‘the fashion of bisexuality.’ In support of this accusation, Showalter quotes the well – known passage from *A Room of One’s Own* in which Woolf praises the androgynous mind, comparing it to a man and a woman entering a taxi together. ‘If one is a man,’ writes Woolf, still the woman part of the brain must have effect . . . . (149)

V.K. Das regarding Virginia Woolf states:

She is more truly an androgynist than a feminist, because she puts the emphasis every time on what a man and a woman have to give to each other, on the mystique of identities merging into a complete whole and not on the discussion of separate superiorities.
He further reveals that Woolf repetitively reiterates her audience and her self that “woman was held captive, often like a slave, by society, the conventions of the family, and the working of her own masculine brainwashed mind” (47). He declares that Woolf’s writings have been rightly pointed out as having more of femininity than feminism in it. He states:

She does not recognise ‘feminism’ as the right word to describe concern for women. It is a cliche, she feels, inappropriate in the modern situations . . . . Woolf’s real concern is the psychological acceptance of women rather than granting them so-called rights . . . . She observes: That word, according to the dictionary, means ‘one who champions the rights of women.’ Since the only right, the right to earn a living, has been won, the word no longer has a meaning. (47)

Laura Lojo-Rodriguez records how Woolf in A Room of One’s Own gives her opinion regarding female literary tradition. Woolf argues, “a woman writing thinks back through her mothers” (73) and the revival of female voices as a suitable substitute to the patriarchal literary custom proves essential. When male history is unsuccessful in presenting those female statistics to discover oneself with, then women’s fiction is an equally appropriate tool to execute such a task: “Let me imagine, since facts are so hard to come by, what would have happened had Shakespeare had a wonderfully gifted sister, called Judith, let us say” (73). Regarding Judith Shakespeare Woolf states:

She underlines the superiority of a woman insofar as she takes the first step towards adjustment and understanding. (48)
As is well known, ignorance and prejudice eventually killed Judith Shakespeare, who died young and never wrote a word. . . . is no failure in feminist terms, for her will to write served as a model for many other women who felt inspired by her daring example. (73)

Woolf says that the shadow of Judith Shakespeare follows everyone. “She lives in you and me, and in many other women who are not here tonight, for they are washing up the dishes . . . . But she lives; for great poets do not die . . .” (A Room of One’s Own 107-08). Laura Lojo-Rodriguez defines her statement:

Women’s confinement to the private realm as well as their lack of education and financial possibilities accounts for their absence from a glorious male national past: ‘Women’s history,’ Woolf clearly states in her essay ‘Women and fiction’, lies at present locked in old diaries, stuffed away in old drawers, half-obliterated in the memories of the aged . . . for very little is known about women. The history of England is the history of the male line, not the female. (75)

Woolf’s essay The Death of the Moth was written with a serious but with a tender tone. The essay is in a simple language. In order to show the struggles of women in society Woolf uses a small creature, which gives a powerful meaning. She drew the attention of the readers with her explanation that how life is like a race where everyone has to struggle in life to attain success. Though she has portrayed death, she drags the attention of the readers to comprehend the courage put forth by the moth for a hope of survival. She refers the moth as being content
with life. The moth’s actions show our own actions and it is related to the present
day of life. It seems to symbolize the dream of women to attain success in life.
Just as the moth does, flying all over the window, trying to find a way to break
through that barrier and live a life of joy women too does the same. Women and
moth both seem to be looking out the window, longing to enjoy the open air and
excitement of the world beyond that window. The windowpane is constrained by
the boundaries of the wood holding the glass. The glass can be symbolized as the
society trying to block women’s identity and freedom.

The moth, which is meant as symbol for women, seems to show that
women wants to accomplish their dreams, which they have, has seen outside the
window. She feels that nothing can hold them back neither man nor society. The
struggle of the moth shows the power of women to win against the odds in life.
Woolf feels that death is common to all so one need not give much importance to
that and need not fear. One must set things in order and wait for death fearlessly
and with much dignity as possible. Perhaps the physical struggle of a dying moth
can also be an inner struggle that the writer is experiencing as well. The images
created by Woolf appeal to the eyes. Woolf focuses on energy to show that
everyone has energy within himself or herself but they should let it flow.

The writer is alone in her study, with the window open to the world. It
indicates that she is observing the outside world and the life loaded with rules and
regulations. A woman is put up with so many restrictions that she looks into the
society with fear thinking how she will be treated when her work is let out. How
the world will look upon her and her work. Thus, the moth helps her to know that
without struggle she cannot achieve anything. The writer’s life filled with
grievances and mysteries molded and influenced her, giving her a reason to create a literature, which the society has today. Woolf is considered as one of the best Modernist writers. The theme is applicable for every one living in the society. A woman enforced to various hardships strives to come out of the complex web interwoven with struggles. As the writer has said, “One’s sympathies, of course, were all on the side of life. Also, when there was nobody to care or to know, this gigantic effort on the part of an insignificant little moth . . .” (The Death of the Moth 6).

Woolf records the feeling of powerlessness of one’s suffering. Even in her novel Mrs Dalloway Woolf presents death as a symbol of both freedom and entrapment. She acknowledges that one is simultaneously suppressed by one’s mortality and is potentially liberated by it. She shows it as morbid and fascinating, a quiet human obsession, something experienced alone. Woolf committed suicide on 28 March 1941. She was contented to take such a stride for her freedom. Not long after writing this essay, Woolf weighted her pockets with stones and walked calmly into a River Ouse, Sussex, to lighten herself. She has chosen it peacefully and reasonably. She left her suicide notes, which has absorbed many people. Literature is in all forms, is about way of philosophy and mind-set and there is no stronger or intense emotion than feeling it necessary to take one’s life. Woolf can be considered as a martyr. T.S.Eliot obituary message of Woolf goes like this: “Without Virginia Woolf at the centre of it, it would have remained formless or marginal . . . with the death of Virginia Woolf, a whole pattern of culture is broken” (qtd. in Svendsen).
James Najarian expresses Ellen Tremper’s opinion on Woolf’s suicide. He says:

Tremper reads Woolf’s suicide as a literary event, as if Woolf’s life were a novel (in fact, as if it were *The Voyage Out*). She lards Woolf’s death with brutal sentimentality; for Tremper, it is ‘a self-determining act of courage’. ‘As a writer she had, with preeminence, been the words. In her death, she became the thing itself’. But Woolf’s suicide was not a plot device. Woolf’s anguished suicide notes and the reactions of her loving friends, sister, and husband should dissuade anyone of this heroic nonsense. (528)

Thus, the reader cannot help but look at parallels between Woolf and her struggle as a woman, and her fight for recognition for all women. She surprises the reader with more unexpected insights into the matter of life and death. Once you are dead, you cannot enter into this world again. She points out that life is short, so one must understand the meaning of life. Women can win the world if they make their attempt by entering into a profession. She is of the view that one should never give up one’s vitality because once gone they can never regain it. The ending of the essay can also be taken as a lesson for women that if they take effort to break the bondages they can but if they stay back thinking of the restrictions by man and not having the potential to fight back then the idea is clear and comprehensible. In this essay, there are various interpretations. All interpretation can be taken as a lesson to come up in life. Woolf’s moth can be interpreted in two ways. The moth can be compared with a courageous person
who is trying to come out of the trapped life by taking all attempts. It shows that women must struggle to break the hurdles of the society. Next, the moth can be compared to a lazy and coward person. Though it kept on trying, it did not escape from the window. The moth could have chosen some other way instead of escaping from the window. It should have tried it intellectually by not giving all his strength all at once. Sometimes patience paves way for finding a solution to every problem. Sally Minogue inscribes that it would be undeniably hard to strike Woolf at her own fixture of self-analysis, and likewise regarding her approach to death she is excessively sensitive. She claims:

I do not any longer feel inclined to doff the cap to death. I like to go out of the room talking, with an unfinished casual sentence on my lips. That is the effect it had on me – no leavetakings, no submission – but someone stepping out into the darkness. (284)

Woolf’s essay Profession for Women highlights the complex figure of modernist writer, professional expert and feminist intellectual that was subsequently taken by second-wave feminists too. This essay became a master narrative of female progress. If it is keenly observed her essay focusses on the well-crafted argument hidden in her words. Woolf’s explains that like men women too have desires to get into a profession. Women are held back by society’s standards and expectations they are labelled as inferior ones. In order to boost up their courage Woolf gave this speech to women and the thesis implied that women can do anything they want but they will have many obstacles to overcome. Women should neither get frightened by men who try to create obstacles nor by the successful men.
In order to make women understand her views she creates an image and calls her as ‘the angel in the house’ and clearly describes the obstacles. She tells that this “angel” a phantom tells her to “go with the norm” that is the traditional style followed by women for so many years. The angel tells her that she should not do anything that involves her views and that will be known to the public. The angel suggest her subtly that she should write to inflate a man’s ego and not to go against society’s norms. According to the angel, a woman should not “have a mind of their own”. Woolf wants every woman to kill such an angel and become a ‘new woman’. She is sure that every woman has such an angel in her life. She says that every time the angel may point out the defects, bring fears and doubts in order to hold them back from their true potential. Now she wants to tell women what happened to her after she has “killed” the angel. She says that women must fight against their personal hurdles and society’s obstacles.

Woolf through the essay wants to reveal the truth how she has become a writer. She uses her personal experience to make her points. She is very much particular about her subject and the connection between her and the speaker. Woolf narrates how the angel told her that as a woman writer, she must always, “Be sympathetic; be tender; flatter; deceive; use all the arts and wiles of our sex. Never let anybody guess that you have a mind of your own. Above all, be pure” (qtd. in Death of the Moth 237). She clearly makes her statement that this is how one’s angel gets in the way of one’s creation and waste one’s time. Woolf unveils the truth that she in order to get rid of this problem “caught her by the throat” and tried to kill her.
Woolf says that if women writers leave the angel scot-free then they will never come up in their life. She feels that if they will not kill the angel the angel will kill them by taunting like this. Therefore, she took this decision and she even succeeded in it. Now she is an example for everyone in this world. She says the angel is the society’s expectation of what women should be—self-sacrificing, gentle, charming, flattering and always willing to give themselves for the benefit of others. They were not supposed to argue or reveal their own thoughts. Louise DeSalvo says that Woolf uses the image of Laura and Miss Jan ultimately sharing the same fate. He says: "She was silent because she was terrified; she was silent because she was furious, she was terrified and furious because she had been abused" (Poole, The Impact 302). DeSalvo highlights that the invention of Miss Jan enables her “to establish her own intellectual identity” (302).

Woolf says that it is not an easy task to kill an angel. One should be ready to face all hardships after killing it because after that, the obstacles can become more severe. She too feels that after killing her angel the struggle was severe for her. Thus, she feels that women writers who have succeeded so far through their works are a pure model of having killed their angels. “Killing the Angel in the House was part of the occupation of a woman writer” (qtd. in Death of the Moth 238). Woolf knew that in order to be a successful writer, she had to cast off society’s restrictions on what women should and should not write and let her own thoughts and opinions come out. At her time, this kind of outlook was a very unusual one. She challenged the norms and risked her female respectability by writing about such topics beneficial to women and women writers never approached such kind of topics.
Woolf feels that one’s pen must be guided by one’s own thoughts. The angel should not be the guide. She feels that many phantoms and obstacles will be looming in women’s life. Such things should not be taken for granted. Women must try to raise questions and solve it. Woolf wants women to have the knowledge of feminists. Their biggest challenge in life must be confronting their ‘own angel’ in the house, their own phantom that keeps them away from becoming a modern woman, a feminist. It pinpoints their own sexual experience and becomes a barrier in their lives. Woolf’s *Professions for Women* is a lesson for all women in the society. Not only the men and the society prevent women from leading a life of their own but also the “angel”. This essay was read to the Women’s Service League in 1931. Her extroverted dignity shows that she is a figure for many other women to look at. Randhir Pratap Singh says that Woolf on 19 June 1923 scribbles in her *Diary* “I want to criticize the social system and to show it at work, at its most intense” (22).

Woolf is now at relief after giving an explanation of what an angel is and how it stops the progress of women. Woolf realizes that in the hall the women who came to listen to the speech were from different professions. She speaks for a room of their own in the house exclusively owned by men “though not without great labour and effort to pay the rent”. (qtd. in *Death of the Moth* 242). She is happy that they are earning five hundred pounds a year. She feels that this freedom is only a beginning and she challenges women to “decorate” and furnish” it as their rooms are bare. She wants them to do everything in an excellent manner. Moreover she throws few questions to group asking “How are you going to furnish it, how are you going to decorate it? With whom are you
going to share it, and upon what terms?” (242). As a woman, she knows that women have a soft corner for everyone and will easily believe others. She does not want them to be betrayed or fooled by anyone. She wants them to share it with caution and to an extent. She affirms this to explain that when one has achieved so much independently they must not let any obstacle come on their road of achievement whether through man, society or angel. Moreover, for the first time in history these women will ask themselves these questions and will be free to answer as they please. In the essay, Woolf repeats the word ‘you’ because she consider women as a great asset in her life. She cares a lot of them that is why she has chosen a topic apt for them. She says that women can bring many changes in their life and professions the only thing is that they have to decide it with the dos and don’ts. This essay was very relevant in the past and it is still used today. Woolf has written this essay with a hope that such obstacles would not be in the way of women any longer and stop it can’t them from achieving their goal. Rachel Bowlby states:

In her prehistoric pre-1910 guise, ‘one’s cook’ is pressed down with no fewer than four encumbering adjectives, ‘formidable, silent, obscure, inscrutable’; she is biblical almost, and animal – a creature, a leviathan . . . . But still, Woolf’s manifest point is that the cook has come up in the world, from the ‘lower depths’, even, into the broad daylight of the drawing room where the lady furthers her education in everything that a well-balanced modern woman might take an interest in, from politics to fashion . . . . (Changed Utterly 14)
Woolf describes that all human relationships have being wiped out those between masters and servants, husbands and wives, parents and children. For Woolf this is the improper, the relational economy on which the whole super structural fabric of society rests: “And when human relations change there is at the same time a change in religion, conduct, politics, and literature” (14). Rose Macaulay, a descendant of literary Victorians, brings into lime light Woolf’s mimicry of a Victorian voice: “‘Is this a great age?’ [Woolf would ask] or, ‘can there be Grand Old Women of literature, or only Grand Old Men? I think I shall prepare to be the Grand Old Woman of English letters. Or would you like to be?’” (qtd. in Booth 1).

Woolf has paid attention to the necessity of every one in psychological terms. When Woolf wrote her novels, the women were supposed to comfort and serve men. The patriarchal society imposed many rules and focussed on the differences between women and men by providing the stereotypes of feminity and masculinity. Woolf has mapped out the position of the woman writer through the centuries, wittily finishing it off with opposing pictures of men’s lives and women’s lives even today. Woolf’s unique critical voices chained fact and fiction in psychologically and politically unsettling ways that are well worth exploring. Woolf wanted women of all social classes to take advantage from a proper education. The next chapter summation will leave a wider scope for the future generation.