CHAPTER II
MRS. WOOLF AND THE TRADITION: STRUCTURE IN HER EARLY NOVELS

The word 'novel' as a literary term, connoting a literary genre in English, has its origin in the eighteenth century. Earlier than this, however, Chaucer and Bunyan told stories using characters as vehicles to propagate morals. But Chaucer told his stories in verse, and Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* is a mere record of many adventures which the hero takes with utmost divine virtues and magic powers. It appears more like a fantastic story than a novel.

After Bunyan, Defoe can be claimed somewhat as a novel writer. His works, *Robinson Crusoe* and *Moll Flanders*, stand out significantly. *Robinson Crusoe*, autobiographical and narrative in technique, has most of the fundamental features of the novel form. It centres round a single individual, regarded as an allegory of his own life of strenuous struggle to overcome the odds and obstacles in his way to success. The incidents are arranged on the basis of cause and effect, presenting the story complete in itself. David Daiches' comment that "in the traditional novel what the author has to say can only be said through the arrangement and patterning of a chronological series of events" applies very aptly to it. *Moll Flanders* has more conscious literary craftsmanship than
Robinson Crusoe, and thus carries the tradition further.

Richardson represents a step forward in the growth of the tradition. He changed the tone as well as the frame of the novel. He created memorable characters, putting stress upon the morals. Fielding continued the traditional frame of the novel, with Joseph Andrews and Tom Jones, of carefully constructed plots based on definite stories. His characters and circumstances are so natural that the curiosity of the reader increases more and more as the story advances. Characters here, as axiomatically in the traditional novel, are used as the agents of the story. The incidents are probable and well-designed.

Jane Austen, standing on the verge of the nineteenth century, represents another step further in the development of the traditional novel. She concentrated more on human beings and their mutual relations. She created a large gallery of well-developed characters. She was precise in her writing, as she recognized the limits. She was a highly sophisticated artist. Generally speaking, the theme of her novels is a young woman's successful search for a husband and it is unfolded very dramatically. Mrs. Norris in Mansfield Park and the Eltons in Emma are comic but different from characters like Parson Adams in the early eighteenth century fiction. She owed much
to Fielding and continued his dramatic method of presenting action through a succession of scenes. She differed from Fielding in her notions of morals because she laid much emphasis on manners. She is often praised for her delineation of characters. The language of her novels is descriptive, not symbolically suggestive. Nothing is left to be interpreted; everything is said in narrative manner.

In the nineteenth century the novel form got deep roots and solid foundation as a literary form. The concepts of plot during the century varied from time to time. As R. S. Crane has rightly remarked on this phase, the plots differ in structure according as one or another of three casual ingredients is employed as the symbolizing principle. There are, thus, plots of action, plots of character, plots of thoughts. Dickens wrote novels not merely for artistic purpose but with a sense of social reform at the back of his mind. When we read Dickens' novels, our attention is inevitably drawn to a number of aspects. As we praise his characters, we also appreciate his sense of reform and are struck by the way his characters impress us. One may not find a very disciplined pattern in Dickens' novels but he never leaves any character or incident underdeveloped.

Thackeray further enriched the traditional pattern. He attacked snobbery and false sentiments in men and women in society. His intention was to create better
social human beings. Dickens wanted to change the whole frame of society; but Thackeray wanted to correct them without hurting. He wrote parodies. His comic invention led him to take pleasure in upsetting the sacred order of things, because he smelt snobbishness in this sacred order of things.

George Eliot was not welcomed as favourably as Dickens and Thackeray were. The boldness that she showed in the philosophic flights in her novels was not appreciated by the tradition-lovers, even though her interpretation of life is not only sound but also intelligent.

The twentieth century opened a new phase in the realm of traditional fiction. Various trends, movements and experiments started. H. G. Wells, John Galsworthy, Arnold Bennett, Joseph Conrad and Thomas Hardy more or less conformed to the tradition in form, though they differed widely in content and themes.

Thus we may conclude the above bird's eye view of the development of the novel in English literature with the observation that in the traditional novels the story element is predominant. In this type of novel characters are presented for the sake of the story. As a result, the principal characters are more or less completely portrayed as three-dimensional
Characters. The readers find them interesting as specimens of the human race. The events of the plot are arranged on the basis of cause and effect, with the various conventionally established stages of its development, such as exposition, complication, climax and denouement more or less fully depicted. Time is presented as a consecutive framework to delimit the story and not in a disordered manner as it gains a particular shape in the stories of the characters.

Virginia Woolf, at the start of her career, became heir to this tradition and wrote her first two novels in this spirit. The next section of this chapter will be devoted to making this point by means of detailed close analysis of plot, character, treatment of time and place, and language and style used in these novels.

II

Mrs. Woolf started her career as a novelist in the tradition of Henry Fielding, Jane Austen, George Eliot, Arnold Bennett and John Galsworthy. Her first two novels, The Voyage Out (1915) and Night and Day (1919) continued the tradition.

Dorothy Brewster, in her full-length study of Mrs. Woolf's novels, has noted the traditional framework in The Voyage Out. She observes that it is in many ways
traditional, "with its chronological sequence, easily followed flashbacks, central characters fully drawn and others receding into the background, a narrative diversified with scenes and dialogues, explanations of what goes on in peoples' minds, but not in a stream-of-consciousness technique description of settings, and so on."3

The novel deals mostly with manners in society. The tone is set by the first para of the book:

As the streets that lead from the Strand to the Embankment are very narrow, it is better not to walk down them arm-in-arm. If you persist, lawyers' clerks will have to make flying leaps into the mud; young lady typists will have to fidget behind you. In the streets of London where beauty goes unregarded, eccentricity must pay the penalty, and it is better not to be very tall, to wear a long blue cloak or to beat the air with your left hand.4

A comedy of manners arises, as early in the novel as in the third chapter, out of the traditional contrast between the values of the upper middle class gentry and those of the merchant class in English society. The Dalloways represent the British upper middle class and the Vinraces and the Ambroses are from the merchant class. When they sit at the dinner table, the clash between the manners comes to the fore. Mrs. Dalloway often disliked the questions put to her by Helen Ambrose and she only laughed at her by way of reply. The contrast between these two classes is presented more pointedly through Mrs. Dalloway's letter that she writes back home. She sarcastically remarks on her hosts like this:
How long they've all been shut up in this ship
I don't know - years and years I should say - but
one feels as though one had boarded a little
separate world, and they'd never been on shore, or
done ordinary things in their lives.®

Mrs. Dalloway condemns their manners as well as their
dresses because they did not change for dinner. She
continues her letter, adversely commenting on the
etiquettes of the merchant class. At one place she
criticizes the shabbiness of Mr. Pepper, remarking that

there's a dreadful little thing called Pepper. He's just like his name. He's indescribably
insignificant, and rather queer in his temper, poor dear . . . only one can't comb him out, and
sprinkle him with powder, as one would one's
dog. It's a pity sometimes one can't treat
people like dogs.6

As the story of the novel progresses, in the
second important section of it the manners and habits
of the tourists on the South Atlantic island, Santa
Marina, are so copiously described as to assume
prominent narrative position. Chapter IX is devoted
to portraying a tea party arranged by Mrs. Thornbury,
Hewet, Hirst, Arthur and Susan. Chapters X and XI
are mainly devoted to detailed description of a
picnic to which Hewet insistently invited Rachel.
The next chapter is given to the portrayal of a dance
party, arranged to celebrate the betrothal of Susan
Warrington to Arthur Venning. Chapter XVII gives
a word-picture of Sunday Church service on the island
in which the tourists participate. The focus of attention
is the church manners of different types of tourists.
Chapter XIX presents the tourists assembled at a tea-party in the hotel during which they plan another expedition during which the love between Rachel and Hewet matures. The next two chapters take up the social event of the expedition to the riverside on horseback. At its conclusion, the hero and heroine announce their engagement. In Chapters XXIII-XXIV we find Mrs. Thornbury inviting all the party to tea to celebrate this new engagement. And finally, Rachel's death is presented in Chapter XXVI as a social event. The reaction of different members of the group (except for Hewet to whom it was an intense, tragic event of personal and elemental significance) are recorded so as to give it the air of a minor event in the general run of social activities.

The plot structure of this novel is quite of the usual traditional type. The story is very simple, and is told, more or less, simply, even as it ends on an intense, tragic note. Mr. Vinrace, a businessman, had a ship, Euphrosyne, that embarked to Santa Marina. His daughter Rachel, twenty-four years old, travelled by the ship with her aunt Mrs. Helen Ambrose and uncle Mr. Ambrose, an eminent scholar. During the voyage Rachel collected experience at various levels. Incidentally she met a traveller on the ship, Richard Dalloway, who revealed the secrets of life to her
by kissing her and left her in the middle with curious passions just aroused, before the ship reached Santa Marina after four weeks' journey. The life at Santa Marina brought a large amount of experience to Rachel. Hewet and Hirst, staying in the 'Villa' near the hotel where the travellers lodged, came in contact with Rachel. Both of them courted her, but she liked Hewet more, as he was smart and good-natured. They planned expeditions together and arranged parties. Rachel and Hewet fell in love and agreed to get married. But here the situation takes a tragic turn. Rachel caught fatal fever almost as soon as she got engaged; the grip of death was so strong that she was felled from life before she knew what was happening. Love remained for Hewet unfulfilled for ever.

The central theme around which the incidents in the novel, briefly summarized above, are arranged is initiation into life. As Mrs. Thornbury puts it, it is "to know much more than any one does in life."

Another way to illustrate the traditional framework of the story and plot of this novel is to point out that the development of this theme by means of plot in the novel goes through the conventional five stages of exposition, complication, climax, denouement and catastrophe. The first three chapters are the exposition
of the main theme in the story of Rachel. She is a
girl of twenty-four, yet completely ignorant of the
realities of life and the relations between men and
women, being a motherless child, living a secluded
life in a provincial town under the aerated care of
aunts and a father whose business keeps him away from
her more often than not. The voyage out was to be for
her an education in life. When she saw Mr. Ambrose
kissing his wife, a strange curiosity stirred in her.
More than this, when Richard Dalloway surreptitiously
kissed herself on the ship, she was introduced to a
new world, and started into the secret of the relation­
ship of men and women.

The complication (Chapters IV-XI) starts with
the acquaintance of Hewet and Hirst with Rachel which
further variegates her new-fangled relationship with
men. Both of them courted her. Thus her experience
in the world of men grows complex. Hirst had brilliance
and elan; but is ugly and sarcastic. Hewet is gentle
and handsome. Her experienced guardian, Helen, too,
is not quite sure which man would win Rachel's heart.
But gradually Rachel shows her definite preference for
Hewet. Meanwhile she closely observes Susan and
Arthur in love.

The growth of love between Terence and Rachel
leads up to the leisurely worked out climax (Chapters
The expedition to the riverside brought them closer. Their engagement was announced after it. The next stage, the denouement culminating in Rachel's illness (Chapters XXII-XXV), in contrast to the carefully long plotting leading to the climax, is short, sudden and shocking. Almost as soon as the engagement of Rachel and Terence becomes public and the immediate circle starts giving it social sanction, Rachel unexpectedly catches infection and dies suddenly of a few days' fever. Terence and Rachel do not even get the time to realize how their grip on life is lost and slips out of their hands.

The quiet catastrophe does intensify the sense of tragedy. One does not feel like wholly agreeing with David Daiches' view that in this novel, "the plot is quiet, with no complications and no moments of high tension." The intense moments in the struggles of the young people like Rachel, Terence and St. John Hirst with life in its central aspect of love are not easily forgotten. They leave their impact. But all the same, it cannot be denied that the plot presents the theme rather quietly and traditionally.

The traditional narrative device is reinforced by such traditional structural devices as parallelism. The theme of love in the central episode of Rachel and
Terence is adequately paralleled in the episodes of Susan and Evelyn M. The love of Susan for Arthur has normal conventional culmination in engagement and happy marriage. As a contrast to this, even though Evelyn M. is courted by many, she does not eventually show faith in love and marriage, and talks of friendship between opposite sexes. Between these two extremes is the intense and tragic path of Rachel's love.

The other salient aspect of the novel in which we can see the traditional structural pattern manifest in *The Voyage Out* is characterization. Raj Kumar, in his recent book, *Some Aspects of Modern Fiction*, remarks on the traditional feature of characterization in this novel, noting that in it, "the characters are revealed through their words and action." Another notable feature of characterization in this novel is that, contrary to the typically modern tendency (practised by Mrs. Woolf in her later work) of using characters fractionally to subserve only the requirement of theme, there are still to be found in this novel a large number of memorable flesh and blood characters, portrayed in full. They appeal to our intelligence and arouse curiosity in us as well, after the fashion of traditional works of fiction. They are nearer to real life in the tradition of Jane Austen's characters like Emma, Darcy and Bingley,
Elizabeth and Jane, Mr. Collins and Lady Catherine de Bourgh.

Rachel is every inch a traditional heroine. Mrs. Woolf starts her novel by presenting her as an innocent and immature girl and leads her into the educational process of "knowing life" to the other end of the pole - love, comedy and tragedy, and finally regrettable death. She is at the centre of the novel and we do not forget her as we preserve her impression in our minds' eye. She is memorable for her sincere and honest feelings. We feel pity for her innocence.

Hewet, likewise, emerges as the traditional hero of the novel. He possesses innocence, constancy, good looks, gentleness and sobriety. As a true lover he is portrayed according to the rules of the game.

Some traditional novelists have used characters in their novels as vehicles to voice their opinions. Hewet plays a similar role, for he is a budding novelist, and one like Mrs. Woolf herself, more or less, as he tells Rachel:

I want to write a novel about silence ... the things people don't say. But the difficulty is immense. ... All you read a novel for is to see what sort of person the writer is.10

St. John Hirst is another full portrait, a foil to Hewet. He is the frustrated young man - the loser.
in the race for the place of hero. His lack of self-
realization is the root cause of his depression.
Life has become a defensive fight for him. He had to
leave Cambridge due to differences with the
authorities. That was a turning-point in his life.
He is shown struggling all the time in the novel to bag
a beloved, but pitiably failing.

Mr. and Mrs. Ambrose - the uncle and aunt of the
heroine, are memorable minor characters more or less
in the tradition handed down from Troilus and Cressida
and Pride and Prejudice. Mr. Ambrose is an eccentric
scholar, always busy reading books. Rachel is impressed
by his way of life. He is firm and constant in his
duties as the Pole Star. On the contrary, Helen plays
the role of friend, philosopher and guide, besides being
the chaperonne of the motherless, young impressionable
heroine in her initiation to love.

Mr. Pepper is another eccentric scholar, a minor
caracter as memorable as many others in the tradition
of fiction. It is also a full portrait, though merely
a sketch and not a close-up. Similarly, the Dalloways
are another example of complete character sketch -
traditional figures of upper class bureaucratic society.

The traditional novelistic device of character -
contrast has also been used in this novel as a principle
of structure. To take just a couple of salient examples to illustrate the point, let us consider the fact that Rachel, the heroine, with her innocent, hesitating, unsure attitude towards conjugal love is contrasted with Susan the normal, conventional marrying-type girl and the unorthodox Evelyn M. who is a free thinker in matters of love, and too disillusioned a Feminist to have faith in love necessarily leading to marriage. Similarly, the character of Hewet, the traditional hero of the novel is built partly on the principle of character contrast as old as Elizabethan drama, if not a tradition older than this in English literary history. As has been pointed out briefly above, his character as the subject of romantic calf-love shines in glaring contrast to that of the angular St. John Hirst who is used as a foil to the hero's character.

Yet another traditional aspect in the novelistic structure of The Voyage Out is the treatment of fictional time in it. Its chronological structure follows the traditional pattern of linear consecutive development. The incidents are put in a chronological sequence. The story has a chronological beginning, middle and end. It begins with Rachel's voyage out on the discovery of "life"; and simply describes the course of discovery by means of fictional treatment of a few months in the life of the heroine and her immediate circle during that period of time. As Jean Guiguet neatly puts it,
"The succession of chapters... follows the temporal sequence of events, grouped in scenes, which are determined by the time, the place, the grouping of the characters."

The language and style of this novel are simple and traditional in the sense of being straightforward narrative. The descriptions are comparatively more factual than in her later novels and the story is narrated plainly.

Yet there is in this early style a clear dimension of suggestive richness that anticipates the dense, rich symbolism that made her later novels like To the Lighthouse and The Waves landmarks in the history of English fiction. As Brewster has pointed out, the title phrase itself has three levels of meaning: "the literal voyage out to South America, the voyaging out of Rachel's adventuring personality, and the voyage out of life altogether." Already in this novel Mrs. Woolf, sometimes straying a little from the narrative tradition, makes adventurous use of symbols, though the symbols she uses at this stage are traditional ones. N. C. Thakur, in his study of symbolism in her novels, has remarked:

She employs atmosphere, character, and action symbols mostly in the traditional way. Even so, she is obliged to use symbols in a subtler way when she has to suggest the highly emotional state of mind of her.
characters or to evoke their feelings and thoughts.  

The suggestion of tragedy in Rachel's journey through life is made through the language in which her dream after Richard kissed her and her reverie after Terence has expressed his love for her are described. This is how Mrs. Woolf describes Rachel's dream after she was kissed by Richard:

She dreamt that she was walking down a long tunnel, which grew so narrow by degrees that she could touch the damp bricks on either side. At length the tunnel opened and became a vault; she found herself trapped in it, bricks meeting her wherever she turned, alone with a little deformed man who squatted on the floor gibbering, with long nails.

The imagery of tunnel being transformed into a vault summarises in suggestive terms the tragic end of Rachel's voyage along the road to love. A similar reinforcement of the tragic theme occurs in the passage describing Rachel's reverie immediately following the love scene on the expedition:

A hand dropped abrupt as iron on Rachel's shoulder; it might have been a bolt from heaven. She fell beneath it, and the grass whipped across her eyes and filled her mouth and ears. Through the waving stems she saw a figure, large and shapeless against the sky. . . . At last she lay still, all the grasses shaken round her and before her by her panting. Over her loomed two great heads, the heads of a man and woman, of Helen.

The iron hand dropping on Rachel's shoulder is the hand of death and inevitably follows upon the first fruits of love.
To suggest the smallness of man and greatness of Infinity, the novelist has employed a strikingly meaningful image - the image of Terence and Rachel seen together in the looking glass:

They stood together in front of the looking-glass. ... But it chilled them to see themselves in the glass, for instead of being vast and indivisible they were really very small and separate. It suggests the philosophical premises central to the novel that individual human beings grow diminutive in perspective, and that even their union in love cannot eliminate the initial separateness of each individual. That is the tragedy of life.

The symbolism of land and sea which became much more prominent in the later novels is seen already in this first novel. Here the voyage on sea means freedom from the restricted life of a "doll's house" that Rachel had lived in Richmond. The novelist comments on the voyagers that "they were free of roads, free of mankind, and the same exhilaration at their freedom ran through them all." Mr. Grice's remark gives yet another shade of meaning to the contrastive imagery of land and sea: "What a very small part of the world the land was? How peaceful, how beautiful, how benignant in comparison the sea?"

Suggestive imagery is diffused throughout the novel,
as is evident from the above discussion. A few more striking illustrations further the point. The ship Euphrosyne on which Rachel goes on the voyage out is described as follows:

She was a bride going forth to her husband, a virgin unknown of men; in her vigour and purity she might be likened to all beautiful things, for as a ship she had a life of her own. 19

This passage recalls the whole theme, as it applies both to the heroine and Euphrosyne in a richly ambiguous, poetic manner. Again, a similar rich ambiguity of poetic meaning embodies this remark about the sky:

Some said that the sky was an emblem of the life they had had; others that it was the promise of the life to come. 20

Similarly, the great yellow-butterfly "which was opening and closing its wings"21 becomes symbolically suggestive of the state of Rachel's feelings in Chapter XIII, as she was weighing and balancing her feelings for her two suitors and her mind "sought the origins of her exaltation, which were twofold and could be limited by an effort to the persons of Mr. Hirst and Mr. Hewet."22

The above bird's eye view of diffused symbolism, ambiguity and complexity in the use of language, style and imagery is an indication of the remarkable fact that even though Mrs. Woolf's first novel is not as concerned with the infra-structure of life as her later novels, it is not as much of a traditional social novel of manners
either, concentrating on the macrocosm as Tom Jones and Pride and Prejudice. The voyage out is after all a voyage into the inner life of feelings and can be seen to have in it the seeds that flowered into the characteristic, later novelist Virginia Woolf, the explorer of the self.

III

Mrs. Woolf continued the traditional pattern of novelistic structure with which she had started The Voyage Out in her second novel, Night and Day. Bernard Blackstone has made the following remark, with which one feels in full agreement:

Virginia Woolf's second novel continues the discussion initiated in The Voyage Out. The scene is London; the time, just before the war; the theme love, marriage and the family. There is a touch of Jane Austen in the setting, a hint of Meredith in the interplay of characters, a flavour of E.M. Forster in the right conversational style.23

(This, too, as hinted above in Blackstone's remarks, is a novel of social manners. It also gives the central impression of being a comedy of manners, by and large, resulting from the contrast of two London families, one upper middle class and the other lower middle class - the Hilberys and the Denhams. The added charm of this novel, as compared to the earlier one, is a fuller portrayal of the London social scene. Bernard Blackstone points out: "she adds London, tea-parties, discussion
groups, the family, the suffragettes. And she complicates the plot by making triangles. The story centres round the marital and domestic problems of the Alardyces, the Hilberys, the Mannings and the Otways. Katharine Hilbery's acquaintance with Ralph Denham introduces the first signs of social conflict. When she asks him whether he was proud of his family, he replies that they had not anything to be proud of: "We're a respectable middle-class family, living at Highgate."  

The contrast between the two classes is presented early in the novel (Chapters I-III) through detailed description of Katharine's and Denham's home environments. Beside the pomp of the library and drawing room in Katharine's parental house, this is how the upper storey room in Denham's house is set: "his clothes and boots were disagreeably mixed with books which bore the guilt of college arms; ... there was a look of meanness and shabbiness in the furniture and curtains, and nowhere a sign of luxury or even of a cultivated taste ... a tame and, apparently, decrepit rook hopped dryly from side to side." On the contrary, Katharine Hilbery's house shines in glittering antithesis: 

Lights sprang here and there, and revealed a square mass of red-and-gold books, and then a long skirt in blue-and-white paint lustrous behind glass, and then a mahogany writing-table, with its orderly equipment, and finally, a square picture above the table, to which special illumination was accorded."
The Otway house is equally impressive for a contrast with the well-off Hilberys; for the Otways have fallen out of opulence due to the retirement and return to England of the head of the family from civil service in India, with a large number of do-nothing dependants:

The worn pattern in the carpets, and the pallor of the drawing room, where no chair or cover had been renewed for some years, were due not only to the miserable pension, but to wear and tear of twelve children.28

The novel abounds in traditional descriptions typical of the novelists whom Virginia Woolf was later to call 'materialists': family portraits, drawing room sessions of the leisure class, tea-parties, dinners and excursions. The novel starts with a tea-party at the Hilberys' where distinguished men came and Ralph was also invited. The second meeting between Katharine and Ralph takes place in Ch. IV, at a paper-reading session in Mary Datchet's apartment. Close on it follows tea in Mary's office in Russell Square that Ralph and Katharine attend. Chapters VII and XXIV deal with sumptuous dinner parties where partners in love change, which is one of the central themes of the book. Equally important is the dinner in Rodney's apartment to which Ch. XXII is devoted where the action takes an important turn, and Rodney is made to realise that he loves Cassandra and not Katharine. Excursions cover about a third of the total length of the novel and contribute substantially to the development of the action.29
The central theme of the novel, as in the first one, is the age-old traditional theme of fiction - love and marriage. There are three love stories involved in a complex pattern in this novel, forming complicated triangles. At the beginning we find Katharine Hilbery and William Rodney of the same family circle engaged to be married, when she comes in contact with Ralph Denham, a man of different circle. At the start of the story, Ralph Denham and Mary Datchet are a more suited pair for conventional love and marriage. But as the story progresses, the lovers change partners, forming interesting love-triangles. This crossward movement recalls Jane Austen's Pride and Prejudice. Katharine gradually drifted away from Rodney and came closer and closer to Ralph, until her love for him finally won family approval and provided the main episode of the novel a happy ending. Ralph is shown with an initial interest in Katharine at the beginning of the novel, but he thought the alliance next to impossible, and could not express his love to Katharine. He just brooded over his star-crossed love. Meanwhile, his semi-professional friendship with Mary Datchet is exploited by her far rapid conversion into love, until a timely revival of meetings with Katharine dissuades her. Finally, he expresses his love to Katharine and is accepted. The third story is that of Rodney. The story starts with Rodney and Katharine cut out for each other in the family circle, but their
relationship undergoes a striking structure of reversal woven on a pattern of converging and diverging lines reminiscent of Jane Austen, as he breaks with his betrothed and falls for her more ebullient but less deep cousin, Cassandra Otway.

The plot structure in this novel is built on traditional lines of dramatic development. The exposition is long and leisurely, running through the first eleven chapters culminating in the engagement of Katharine and William Rodney and circumstances forcing Ralph very close to a formal engagement to Mary Datchet. The complication takes a more rapid pace through Chs. XII-XIX, in which Rodney and Katharine begin to regret the engagement, and the former realizes that Cassandra, the cousin of his betrothed, would be a more congenial life-partner.

The climax also takes on a placid rhythm, spread over four chapters (Chs. XX-XXIV). In Ch. XIX, Mary declares to Ralph that she cannot marry him (on account of his lesser interest in her than in Katharine, which she is quick to discern). It balances with Ch. XXIV in which William Rodney rejoices at the news of Cassandra's arrival on the scene eventually to rescue him from now clearly undesirable betrothal to Katharine.

The unravelling of complications starts with Ch. XXIII, and in the course of eight chapters a reshaping
of marital pairs is effected. Ralph and Katharine meet in Kew Gardens (Ch. XXI), discuss their affairs and come closer than ever before. Ch. XXVIII narrates the Elizabethan night vigil of Ralph and covers the discovery by Katharine that Ralph is madly in love with her. Things take a quick turn after this, and by Ch. XXXI Katharine confesses herself in love with Ralph.

The last three chapters bring about the resolution, with a dramatic reversal. An element of surprise is also contrived as the Victorian father, Mr. Hilbery, though deadly against the misalliance of his daughter with a man below their social status, is quickly ordered about to bless the betrothal by the genial, more practical, benevolent, if woolly-headed Mrs. Hilbery, who also tactfully gets her husband's approval to the equally disconcerting union of Rodney and Cassandra - an odd situation for the family pride when the betrothed son-in-law breaks engagement and post-haste declares his choice of the poorer relation.

(The traditional device of coincidence which makes Hardy's novels so notorious plays a significant part in the structure of events in Night and Day. It is pure coincidence that both Katharine and Ralph happen to go to Lincolnshire for Christmas, and their courses further converge to a visit to the Lincoln, which proved such a
turning-point in the relationship between Ralph and Mary Datchet. It is another coincidence that brings in Cassandra on the scene exactly when Rodney and Katharine are on the verge of breaking off their engagement, so that she precipitates the break-up and rapidly steps into the vacuum.

The structure of characters in this novel (as in *The Voyage Out*) is noted for the use of the traditional device of character contrast. Like the contrast between Terence Hewet and St. John Hirst, the complexity of Katharine's love-story is built around the contrast of character between Rodney and Ralph in the heroine's mind. Ralph strikes her as the very antithesis of William. The omniscient-author novelist puts it thus:

He was the very opposite of William Rodney, she thought; he was shabby, his clothes were badly made, he was ill versed in the amenities of life, he was tonguetied and awkward to the verge of obliterating his real character. He was awkwardly silent; he was awkwardly emphatic. And yet she liked him.

It is on these wings of contrast that the sentimental love of the rich girl for the poor but efficient boy makes its successful flight. This character contrast balances the character contrast between Katharine and Cassandra. This is how Mrs. Woolf unfolds it in the narrative style of the omniscient-author convention:

Where Katharine was simple, Cassandra was complex; where Katharine was solid and direct, Cassandra was vague and evasive.
The contrast between Katharine and Mary in Denham's mind is seen in a milder strain as Ralph thought that "two women less like each other could scarcely be imagined." 32

(Another aspect of the traditional framework of structure in the novelistic element of characterization in this novel is that just like in The Voyage Out, here also a large number of characters are fully portrayed in the omniscient-author convention. The portrait of the heroine is developed step by step in every detail, even the commonplace inherited features;)

Katharine... had a likeness to each of her parents, and these elements were rather oddly blended. She had the quick, impulsive movements of her mother. 33

Following the pet devices of traditional novel writing, characterization is done here, among other things, by means of impression of other characters. (William remarks on Katharine that she "doesn't like Titian. She doesn't like peas. She likes the Elgin marbles, ... she's a typical example of the cold northern nature." 34) Such remarks cut both ways, and quite in the traditional manner of characterization, contribute towards the portrayal of the commentator as well as the commented upon. (To distinguish Katharine from others, the writer points out such eminent features in her as that "she had been a very desirable and distinguished
figure, the mistress of her little section of the world; but more than that, she was the person of all others who seemed to him the arbitress of life, the woman whose judgement was naturally right and steady. A character, sometimes, comments upon herself; here is the heroine portraying her own character:

The most beautiful women are generally the most stupid. I'm not that, but I'm a matter-of-fact, prosaic, rather ordinary character: I order the dinner, I pay the bills, I do the accounts. I wind up the clock, and I never look at a book.

Besides the heroine, the other principal characters in the novel, Ralph Denham, William Rodney, Mary Datchet and Cassandra Otway have also been equally fully portrayed, and all the devices of omniscient-author convention, illustrated above in the case of Katharine, are copiously used for the purpose. Not only these principal participants in dramatic love stories are comprehensively done. The portrait gallery of this novel includes a large number of impressive minor characters done with the deft brush of the portrait painter in words. Mrs. Hilbery is an amiable humbug of an upper class well-to-do Victorian female dilettante, who cannot finish her distinguished grand-father's biography because ideas and plans rushed about her mind much faster than she could manage to put them on paper, and idle engagements overtook her so much faster than she could manage to handle them, poor dear! Mr. Hilbery is an equally unforgettable typical Victorian father. So
is each and every member of the Otway family unforgettable, from the retired Indian civil servant smarting under the pangs of imagined insult at the hands of senior officials and real throes of comparative poverty! So are the shallow 'Mem Sahib' of the thoughtless, incompetent Mrs Otway and her numerous off-springs at logger heads with one another on the one hand, and with both their parents on the other. So are the members of Ralph Denham's family, a fable to the Otways. Mary Datchet's Victorian father, the penurious divine, Rev. Windham Datchet, is an unforgettable institution in himself, as is the wonderful office-going secretarial dame, Mrs. Sally Seal.

The temporal structure of this novel is also traditional as in The Voyage Out. The chronological development is straight; the events are put in a linear order. The story advances smoothly on principles of conflict, surprise and reversal and arouses the usual type of engaging curiosity. Many chapters describe the course of action in close consecutive temporal detail from hour to hour and day by day.

The linguistic structure of this novel is simple narrative, with no trace of suggestive, symbolic ambiguity and complexity noted in the discussion of the first novel. (Ruth Gruber aptly observes; "in her second novel
In this matter, this one is still more traditional fiction in its narrative style than the first one.

_Night and Day_ marks a turning-point in the career of Virginia Woolf as a novelist. It was, after all, a failure. David Daiches has put his finger at the root of the matter in his comment on this novel: "The real 'plot' of the novel seems to fall between two stools; it is completely developed neither on the 'material' nor on the 'spiritual' level and thus the real structure and unity of the book is never completely clear." Mrs. Woolf started out as a regulation novelist. It is not sheer critical hindsight to realize that her characteristic genius was cut out for a different kind of role. Penchant critical acumen as she had, she herself realized that she was more suited for recording the 'voyage within' than for things like _The Voyage Out_. There is a kind of inner fury in the choice of the phrase, _Night and Day_ for the title of the second novel - a strong sense of drudgery and disappointment at the diurnal routine almost as much as the luminous contrast between hope and despair, light and darkness, conveyed through the image evoked by the expressive phrase. The budding novelist, in moments of unsparing self-criticism, must have realized as she was writing it that it was no go writing for and in the values to denote which she
soon was to coin her phrase of condemnation, 'materialists'; and that in the employment of the beaten-track authorship she was drifting away from her real interest. The 'spiritual' themes of love and freedom might have been expressed characteristically well, had more intense microcosmic concentration been afforded to Katharine Hilbery, which she failed to do in her characteristic endeavour to focus widely on the social scene and the husband-hunting spree.

As we shall see in the next chapter, Mrs. Woolf's thorough dissatisfaction with her first two novels led her thinking on a new mode of novel writing and to contribute preciously to literary criticism and personal diary by way of creative writing until the profile was born for her 'new' novel.
Notes and References


All references, unless otherwise stated, are to this edition.

5. Ibid., p. 51.

6. Ibid., p. 52.

7. Ibid., p. 131.


15. Ibid., p. 347.

The Excursions described in detail are (i) to the ruins of Lincoln (Chs. XVII-XIX), (ii) to Kew Gardens by Katharine and Ralph (Ch. XXV), (iii) to the London Zoo which the new pairs of lovers - Katharine and Ralph, and Rodney and Cassandra visit (Ch. XXVII); and (iv) the two pairs of lovers go (1) to a play on Friday evening, (2) to Greenwich on Saturday, and (3) to Hampton Court on Sunday.
33 Ibid., p. 10.
34 Ibid., p. 160.
35 Ibid., p. 222.
36 Ibid., p. 353.
38 *Virginia Woolf*, p. 37.