



JACLR

*Journal of Artistic
Creation & Literary
Research*

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Volume 7 Issue 2 (December 2019) Article 6

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Recommended Citation

Llamas Diéguez, Silvia. "Feminism in Virginia Woolf essays: *A Room of One's Own* and *Three Guineas*" *JACLR: Journal of Artistic Creation and Literary Research* 7.2.6 (2019): 72-86

<<https://www.ucm.es/siim/journal-of-artistic-creation-and-literary-research>>
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Abstract: This work aims to raise awareness about the subjugation that women had to endure during the nineteenth century and even nowadays. The main purpose of this work is to show how women fail to find their identity in a patriarchal world, being frustrated and having their own personal desires restrained, and how everything in our patriarchal society has collaborated to the aggravation of this identity crisis of women. It will also explore how this subjugation is analyzed in the literature of women writers, particularly in the works of the well-known feminist figure Virginia Woolf. The chosen works are *A Room of One's Own* and *Three Guineas*. The last part will focus on analyzing how women can liberate from these patriarchal ideas that are rooted on their minds and how they can finally overcome gender inequality. This part will consider the important influence that women writers can have on other women, by giving voice to important feminist ideas through writing.

Keywords: feminism, oppression, patriarchal, women writers, Woolf, écritures féminines.

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Feminism in Virginia Woolf essays: *A Room of One's Own* and *Three Guineas*

0. Introduction

Female subjugation to men has always been a highly discussed topic. Many sociologists and writers from different periods, from John Stuart Mill to Karl Marx, or to female writers and social reformers such as Charlotte Perkins Gilman or Jane Ellen Harrison, have explored this issue looking for possible solutions to improve women's situation. The lack of a definitive strategy to solve this inequality makes it still significant for feminist figures to further analyse the topic nowadays. Therefore, women's oppression still has a considerable importance in the present times.

The way of understanding female subjugation has changed in the last decades. Back in the first centuries, women accepted their role since they believed in their own inferiority and respected what society dictated them to do. However, around the 17th century, there was a switch on how women faced their oppression since the first important feminist figures started to appear and to preach their ideas about how women deserved the same rights and opportunities as men. The suffragettes became essential figures for women's acquisition of the right to vote. Mary Smith, Millicent Fawcett, Emmeline Pankhurst and Annie Kenney had to fight hard. In 1832 Mary Smith presented the first women's suffrage petition to Parliament (Wingerden X), Millicent Fawcett was elected as president of the not-so-militant National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies in 1890, Emmeline Pankhurst founded the Women's Social and Political Union and Annie Kenney joined the WSPU and was famous for – among other political activities-interrupting with Christabel Pankhurst a political meeting of Winston Churchill to yell: "Will the Liberal government give votes to women?"(Wingerden 72), after that, they held a protest meeting but were arrested on charges of obstruction. From this point on, feminism has been a huge social and political movement that has fought for women, not only for white middle-class women as in previous time, but for all women in general. Feminist ideas have been present on the everyday life of many, and women have acquired many new possibilities arriving to the point in which women are essential for the economic, political and social life of almost every country.

This work aims to understand female subjugation taking into account the feminist essays of an authority figure of feminism, Virginia Woolf. The key themes in *A Room of One's Own* and in *Three Guineas* will be analyzed to help us comprehend the situation of women during the 20th century. It will also put together information about different theoretical sources of feminism, while it will develop fundamental questions that will be tried to answer. The main objective of this work is to raise awareness about the figure of women in this patriarchal society and to make others continue wondering about important problems that need to be solved in order to arrive to a definite solution one day, because there is still a lot of work to be done. On the other hand, it offers a series of recommendations in order to prevent the problem from worsening as well as improve the situation.

The purpose of this work is also to answer different questions such as: How was feminism in the past? How was it represented by an innovative figure like Virginia Woolf? How was it represented in writing, both in literature of men and in literature of women? How was it analyzed by feminist theory and criticism? And, most importantly, what are the possible solutions? This work will respond to these questions using feminist theory, trying to become a tool to show the importance of feminism. The answers to these questions and the

results of this work will allow us to undertake a process of amelioration from a realist and updated perspective.

The investigation of this work based on feminist theory has been divided into three parts. The first part is devoted to collect the ideas of different sources of authority in feminism such as Mary Wollstonecraft, Simone De Beauvoir, Betty Friedan and John Stuart Mill. An exhausting analysis of context, facts and ideas about feminism has been done. It aims to put together the theoretical referents that establish the basis for feminist theory and the way of understanding our patriarchal society. It will be the most descriptive part out of the three.

The second part is based on Virginia Woolf both as a writer and as a feminist figure. It will explore the most important themes in her writings such as education of women, women's stereotypes in men's literature, the presence of women during war and their contributions to economy and women writers and their fiction. This part of the investigation will rely on more practical aspects, dividing and decomposing Woolf's fundamental themes into smaller parts in order to be easier to analyze its different parts.

The last part of the investigation focuses on tracing the general conclusions extracted from the analysis and identifying if there are any solutions. It also shows the limitations and obstacles encountered, and it proposes new practices and ideas against female oppression.

1. First Wave Feminism

Women have played background roles in society from the beginning of times. They were reduced to mere properties of men, treated mainly as if they were slaves. They had to be obedient to their fathers or brothers during their first years of life, and afterwards to their husbands. Their roles revolved around their domestic life, based on childcare and marital obligations. Women were considered inferior and incapable of participating in political or in public life. In this context, women began to develop a consciousness of their unfair situation and began to question the superiority of men. There were debates about why women were not worthy of the same rights as men, and many authors began to treat the so-called Woman Question in their writing about the "inferior" nature of women and their political and social situation.

Women fought in order to have the same possibilities and facilities as men and that is how they developed a movement of feminist activity in the 19th century, the first wave of feminism, that was particularly concerned with acquiring the right to vote for women and other legal issues, although they only fought for middle class white females.

The very first petition in favor of the right to vote for women was presented to the Parliament by the suffragist Mary Smith in 1832, but her petition was rejected. The Second Petition from Women's Suffrage Committee, formed by Barbara Bodichon, collected 1500 signatures, however, it met the same fate. This one was defended in front of the Parliament by John Stuart Mill, who claimed that the great evolution for women was to acquire the right to vote. He paved the way to equality and his ideas were of great support for women of future generations, but the petition still did not receive enough recognition. After that, many organizations of women started to be created, such as the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies and The Women's Social and Political Union, in order to find support from

other women. The former was led by Millicent Fawcett and they were in favor of legal constitutional reforms, the latter was led by Emmeline Pankhurst and formed by the so-called suffragettes. They acted as law-breakers, more violent than the other societies, and provoked arsons or carried out hunger strikes. Their impact was important in society, but it was not enough to change the situation.

It was not until the People Act (1918) that some women acquired the right to vote. This act was a compensation for the female services to the country during the war, since they had taken care of the country by working in what used to be male professions. It was highly restrictive, but the first wave feminism obtained what they wanted to some extent: women older than thirty with wealth, property and education could vote.

Despite of this important victory, gender equality was far from being a reality. Women were still considered inferior, which perhaps would have been proven otherwise if they had had access to the same opportunities as men. For example, education was still a privilege devoted only to men. There were proto-feminist authors, such as Mary Wollstonecraft, who explored the issue of female education in her philosophical feminist writing: *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1796).

In *A Vindication of the Rights of a Woman* Wollstonecraft argued that women ought to have an education to achieve the same occupations as men, they were essential to the nation because they educated their children and because they could be "companions" to their husbands rather than only wives (Zalbidea 93)

Wollstonecraft believed that women were not allowed to receive education because it was better for society -for men- that they remained ignorant. That is, men were afraid of women not obeying them anymore if they realized that they were equal to men in terms of intelligence. The patriarchal system was afraid that too much education would spoil the femininity of women and their capacity of giving sexual satisfaction to men, which was their only role. However, Wollstonecraft claimed that it was necessary to "make women rational creatures and free citizens, and they will quickly become good wives and mothers" (113). Wollstonecraft did not only fight for the access of women to universities, but also for the access to remunerated jobs, for the right of women to own property, for their participation in political life and for their financial independence.

John Stuart Mill explored the subjection of women too, focusing on the process of the upbringing that women had to endure. According to John Stuart Mill, men desired "more than simple obedience, and they turned the whole force of education to effect their purpose" (27). Therefore, education was the main remaining goal women. They were raised to be submissive and to renounce to their own personal desires in order to attend the desires of others. In other circumstances, women would have probably grown up to be equal to men. John Stuart Mill claims:

I consider it presumption in anyone to pretend to decide what women are or are not, can or cannot be, by natural constitution. They have always hitherto been kept, as

far as regards spontaneous development, in so unnatural a state, that their nature cannot but have been greatly distorted and disguised; and no one can safely pronounce that if women's nature were left to choose its direction as freely as men's, and if no artificial bent were attempted to be given to it except that required by the conditions of human society, and given to both sexes alike, there would be any material difference, or perhaps any difference at all, in the character and capacities which would unfold themselves. (Mill 104)

After Mary Wollstonecraft and John Stuart Mill established the foundations of feminism, other authors analyzed the woman situation as well. Important figures such as Simone de Beauvoir or Betty Friedan also analyzed the importance of education in the process of upbringing of women. Simone de Beauvoir claimed that society made women accept a role of passivity and dependence because they could not enter education and develop themselves as human beings. She also believed that a woman is educated to become a woman, to acquire the idea of femininity imposed by patriarchal society.

According to Beauvoir, submission and goodness in women is not biological but cultural, and women's freedom and happiness is only possible if housework and children upbringing responsibilities are shared by woman and man in equality. Once Beauvoir's work was known internationally many feminists fought to achieve women's access to the highest academic institutions and job positions out home. (Zalbidea 94)

Afterwards, Betty Friedan gives a similar vision when she claims that the lack of knowledge of women -and, as a consequence, the feeling of inferiority- had its roots in the educational system. The type of education that women received paralyzed their intellectual and emotional development, because they could not acquire enough knowledge to define themselves and find their own identity. Women were not supposed to grow up and find themselves because their role is already stated by their biology, by the feminine mystique. They did not have access to normal education, they only received education on how to be good mothers and good wives, that was all that was supposed to be important for them. According to Betty Friedan:

Instead of opening new horizons and wider worlds to able women, the sex-directed educator moved in to teach them adjustment within the world of home and children. Instead of teaching truths to counter the popular prejudices of the past, or critical ways of thinking against which prejudice cannot survive, the sex-directed educator handed girls a sophisticated soup of uncritical prescriptions and presentiments, far more binding on the mind and prejudicial to the future than all the traditional do's and don'ts. (Friedan 180)

They could not learn about any other topics since they were not supposed to worry about their identity. That is why women have been trapped on a basic level, because they cannot fulfil their basic need to evolve and find who they are as human beings. What women

need in order to escape the feminine mystique is to access education and to acquire a significant work that makes them develop a sense of self-fulfilment.

These ideas are inextricably linked with the ideas of Virginia Woolf. Virginia Woolf was a feminist writer who made a deep analysis of the problems of gender inequality and explored some highly discussed topics such as women's education, the role of women during the war, the superiority of men and how women are portrayed in male literature, and women writers and how they should write and portray womanhood in their fiction.

Woolf's family was associated with literature and she met many important artists such as J. M. Keynes, E. M. Forster, Roger Fry and Clive Bell. She was an avid reader and a defender of the rights of women, she even worked for female suffrage. Her writing career covers the period of 1912-1941, coinciding with the years in which the first wave feminism was at its highest. This accounts for the fact that her works are viewed as main works of feminism, and her texts are still read and analyzed nowadays by modern feminist theory and criticism. She runs through English literature and particularly through literature written by women.

Mainly all her works contain, although sometimes in a subtle way, a feminist perspective: from *Mrs Dalloway* and her criticism to the Victorian prototype of women based on the angel in the house, to *Orlando* with her androgynous character defending sexual and gender freedom, or with the allusion from her protagonists to the year in which it was acquired the right to vote for women (1926), or to *Jacob's Room* presented by the female perspective of the women characters. In spite of all the feminist issues in her many different literary works, this paper will focus on her essays *A Room of One's Own* and *Three Guineas*.

2. Virginia Woolf as a Feminist Writer: *A Room of One's Own*

Virginia Woolf wrote *A Room of One's Own* in 1929, becoming one of the key essays of feminism. This essay was one of the first works in which a woman dared to speak up about the situation of women, even daring to explore possible solutions to the problems of inequality. *A Room of One's Own* was perceived by modern critics as the first essay that developed intensively the main ideas of feminist literary theory.

From the very first pages, she indicates some advantages that men have in terms of education. She narrates how women are left outside schools and libraries while men are able to learn whatever they want. Woolf also points out the unequal distribution of wealth, based on the fact that women could not earn money by their own because they could not participate in any profession. However, even if they could, they still would not be able to use it, because their earnings would become part of the income of the family and their husbands would be the ones to dispose it as they wished. This situation did not change until the 1870, in which the Married Women's Property Act allowed married women to dispose their earnings despite of their husbands.

After explaining the inequalities between sexes, Woolf continues investigating women in history and how they are portrayed in men's literature. She finds Professor Trevelyan's *History of England* and realizes that there are little references to women, the only chapters

that appear in the book related to women are about wife-beating and marriage in general. That is when Virginia realizes what Simone de Beauvoir realized years after, that women are only mentioned in relation to men, as belonging to men, never described by themselves. Simone de Beauvoir claimed that women are "determined and differentiated in relation to man, while he is not in relation to her; she is the inessential in front of the essential. He is the Subject; he is the Absolute. She is the Other" (26). This theory of "the Other" is based on the idea that women are not autonomous human beings but only "accessories" of men's lives and they are only described as 'the wife of - 'or 'the mother of - '.

However, from time to time, it appears a woman in history that is worth mentioning not in relation to men but because of herself. It could be a queen, or a great lady, but never an average woman. As Woolf commented, "by no possible means could middle-class women with nothing but brains and character at their command have taken part in any one of the great movements which, brought together, constitute the historian's view of the past" (57).

Woolf goes on by describing how women and fiction and how difficult it was for them to write. First of all, they needed to work in order to gain their own earnings. Then, with that money, they could afford to have a place to write, a room of their own; that is, a place in which they could write without interruptions and in which they had the power to think by themselves: "A woman must have money and a room of her own if she is to write fiction (Woolf 6). The truth is, that, for centuries women have been poor, they could not receive an education neither earn enough money to succeed in their careers and had to bear many children. Virginia Woolf expresses with a mixture of shame and irony: "Making a fortune and bearing thirteen children-no human being could stand it." (Woolf 24). Many female writers encountered a lot of opposition by their families because they did not want their daughters to be writers or artists since that was a profession for men. However, those who had all the opportunities and counted with the support of their parents still had to encounter a huge obstacle: the fact that they could not write like men. They could not write like men because men were surrounded by positive thoughts and were never judged by society, unlike women, who were told from their first ages that they were inferior to men. As Woolf claimed, "there would always have been that assertion -you cannot do this, you are incapable of doing that - to protest again, to overcome" (70). In this context, women's spirit was probably diminished, and they were probably insecure about writing about their own experiences.

Paradoxically, women was one of the favorite themes of men's fiction, Woolf uses her sense of humor to comment on some men's criticism towards women: "Have you any notion how many books are written about women in the course of one year? Have you any notion how many are written by men? Are you aware that you are, perhaps, the most discussed animal in the universe?" (28). Some male writers considered that women "had no character at all" (Pope cited in Woolf 31) or were inferior to man as Professor Von X argues in his work entitled *The Mental, Moral and Physical Inferiority of the Female Sex* (Woolf 32). Woolf explains that the angriness of some professors or patriarchs may come from their problem of needing to be superior to others: "Possibly when the professor insisted a little too emphatically upon the inferiority of women, he was concerned not with their inferiority, but with his own superiority" (Woolf 36). Men's education had made them have flaws: "Their

education had been in some ways as faulty as my own" (Woolf 40). As she explains they had obtained richness and power by offering up their lives and their children's lives in wars (40).

Women began to write, but they were full of fears and insecurities because all they received was discouragement and criticism. They needed to find a state of consciousness in which they could ignore all the critics and in which they could write without rage and hatred. Woolf believed that any woman "who was born with a gift of poetry in the sixteenth century, was an unhappy woman, a woman at strife against herself. All the conditions of her life, all her own instincts, were hostile to the state of mind which is needed to set free whatever it is in the brain" (65).

Moreover, it was impossible for them to write like men because they did not go through the same experiences. While men were travelling and experiencing the world, women were constrained to be at home learning how to be a good wife or a good mother. They had not any opportunity to read, go to school or write. To show that this was the case, Woolf masterly presented the figure of the fictitious sister of William Shakespeare, Judith Shakespeare. Even if she had had the ability of her brother, she still would not have been able to explore it. She would have been laughed at and judged by men. She would not have been able to access education, and she would have been expelled from libraries. She would not have been able to experience life as a man would have, she would have remained at home. Moreover, even if she loved art in all its forms, she still could not have participated in theatre, she could not have written plays or poetry, she could not have published her works under a female name. Virginia Woolf's description of Judith Shakespeare illustrates clearly the injustices of being a woman:

She was as adventurous, as imaginative, as agog to see the world as he was. But she was not sent to school. She had no chance of learning grammar and logic, let alone of reading Horace and Virgil. She picked up a book . . . but then her parents came in and told her to mend the stockings or mind the stew and not moon about with books and papers. (Woolf 60).

Woolf claimed that it was impossible for any woman at that time to be as good as Shakespeare, even if it was his sister Judith Shakespeare. She claimed that "it is unthinkable that any woman in Shakespeare's day should have had Shakespeare's genius. For genius like Shakespeare's is not born among laboring, uneducated, servile people. . . It is not born today among the working classes" (62). Therefore, it was impossible for women to be as renowned as men writers. Those women who dared to write decided to write under pseudonyms with androgynous names -like George Eliot- to appear like men and not be judged, and to demonstrate that they could write as good as men.

Women still encountered one last problem when writing fiction: the lack of a tradition of women to look up to. Women do not have any female figure to follow their example, since there were not many women writers. The problem, according to Betty Friedan, is that: The mystique says they [women] can answer the question "Who am I?" by saying "Tom's wife... Mary's mother" But I don't think the mystique would have such power over American women if they did not fear to face this terrifying blank which makes them unable to see

themselves after twenty one. The truth is—and how long it has been true, I'm not sure, but it was true in my generation and it is true of girls growing up today—an American woman no longer has a private image to tell her who she is, or can be, or wants to be. (Friedan 95)

Virginia Woolf believed that women, in order to write, must look at other women, not at men. This connects with the theory of *écriture féminine*, a French feminist theory of the 1970s, developed by some important women such as Luce Irigaray, Hélène Cixous and Julia Kristeva. Women no longer conformed with the legalization of women's suffrage, they also wanted to be sexually, intellectually and economically independent. In order to achieve these goals, many women tried to create awareness of their situation through writing. Thus, it became a common thing for women to write about their experiences from their own point of view, away from the portraits of women in the literature of men or from what men have enforced women to think or write.

This is how *écritures féminines* began. Women took the important role of writing about women and bringing women to write. Although their writings were not necessarily feminist texts, the only act of writing about their womanly experiences was beneficial for feminism. It inspired other women to write, to break taboos about women created by the patriarchal society and to open up about their emotions. It was useful for future women writers and for other women that could for the first time feel understood and identified with other women. What Irigaray, Cixous, Kristeva and many others intended by "*écritures féminines*" was the idea that female writers must have a literature and a language of their own, differentiated from men's literature and from the world men constructed for women.

This language of their own is what strikes Woolf in *A room of One's Own* when she reads *Life's Adventure*, a book by the fictional character Mary Carmichael. In this fictional book, Carmichael writes something never seen before: "Chloe liked Olivia". This strikes Woolf because up to this point, no woman had ever dared to write something like that, to describe women relationships without taking into account their relation to men. In men's literature, women relationships were based on rivalry and jealousy, it had never been described a friendship between women. Woolf is shocked about how much literature changes when these relationships are portrayed. She wonders what would have happened if men relationships were the ones left outside literature: "Suppose, for instance, that men were only represented in literature as the lovers of women, and were never the friends of men, soldiers, thinkers, dreamers; how few parts in the plays of Shakespeare could be allotted to them; how literature would suffer!" (108).

However, when exploring the writing of women, Woolf realized that female writers and their own language could be positive, but still something lacked in their writings: the androgynous state of mind. Woolf believed that "it is fatal for anyone who writes to think of their sex. It is fatal to be a man or a woman pure and simple; one must be woman-manly or man-womanly" (136). With this she meant that in a man's brain, the thoughts of men predominate over those of women, and vice versa. However, Woolf believed that in order to write, both states of mind must be balanced, and the male or female writer must have both a male and a female part of the brain. Therefore, women do not need only a language of their own, they also need to pay attention to their male part of the mind. She agreed with Coleridge's idea of the androgynous mind:

Coleridge perhaps meant this when he said that a great mind is androgynous. It is when this fusion takes place that the mind is fully fertilized and uses all its faculties. Perhaps a mind that is purely male cannot create, any more than a mind that is purely feminine." (Woolf 97).

Before delving into a different scholarly perception of the androgynous mind, it should be noticeable that Virginia Woolf was, from our humble interpretation, trying to support both sides that every individual has: the feminine and the masculine, no matter how one decides to express the qualities of one of the sides or not, and without caring about if the others would consider it masculine or feminine. She stated: "Perhaps, to think, as I had been thinking these two days, of one sex as distinct from the other is an effort. It interferes with the unity of the mind" (Woolf 95). Therefore, there would be two possible hypothesis: 1. Both men and women's minds are equal. 2. The mind is always changing and considering it only masculine or feminine and making an effort to reject the masculinity or femininity characteristics of a writer would be useless. Despite having criticized the injustices that women have suffered in history: poverty, invisibility, violence and being considered inferior to men throughout her essay, Woolf encourages readers to promote the possibility of cooperation between sexes:

[...] it is natural for the sexes to cooperate. One has a profound, if irrational, instinct in favour of the theory that the union of man and woman makes for greatest satisfaction, the most complete happiness. But the sight of the two people getting into the taxi and the satisfaction it gave me made me also ask whether there are two sexes in the body, and whether they also require to be united in order to get complete satisfaction and happiness? (Woolf 96)

Woolf embraces the qualities of both sexes and invites readers to stop insisting on paying attention to women and men and being more self-conscious and observing the reality. Best writers do not only have male or female attributes but free themselves from gender chains and show empathy with the other sex.

Other authors, such as Elaine Showalter, Marylin Farwell and Jane Marcus, have criticized the idea of the androgynous mind, believing it to be too utopian. For instance, Elaine Showalter claimed that:

The androgynous mind is, finally, a utopian projection of the ideal artist: calm, stable, unimpeded by consciousness of sex. Woolf meant it to be a luminous and fulfilling idea; but, like other utopian projections, her vision is inhuman. Whatever else one may say of androgyny, it represents an escape from the confrontation with femaleness or maleness. Her ideal artist mystically transcends sex, or has none. One could imagine another approach to androgyny, however, through total immersion in the individual experience, with all its restrictions of sex and anger and fear and

chaos. A thorough understanding of what it means, in every respect, to be a woman, could lead the artist to an understanding of what it means to be a man. (Showalter 289).

From Showalter, Farwell and Marcus's view that androgyny would diminish women's authority (Lockhart 9). Nonetheless, as this analysis has pointed out, it is our contention that Virginia Woolf's approach to the androgynous mind shows an attempt to pacify the gender tensions and advocate for a productive gender fusion.

3. Virginia Woolf and the Inclusion of Women in Political Life: *Three Guineas*

Virginia Woolf built *Three Guineas* on the ideas she had previously developed in *A Room of One's Own*. However, here Woolf moves away from women's fiction to a further analysis of the political and economic life of women. In this essay, she focuses on the presence of women during war and their contributions to economy. She develops further the importance of education being the root of all differences between the sexes and the entering of women in the professions.

According to Elaine Showalter, her essay was irritating for many people because of the "class assumptions in the book, as well as by its political naiveté" (Showalter, *A Literature of their Own* 294). The main problem was that the essay was devoted only to a little part of the female audience: the white daughters of educated men. Woolf, as a woman belonging to a privileged family, was only familiar with the issues that concerned women of her class, barely mentioning women of lower classes. Moreover, her political view was often categorized as naïve because her ideas to stop war from happening seemed to be too idealistic even for a pacifist writer. However, she was aware of the complexity of her desires, and was well-informed about the political events that were taking place during that time. She read biographies, newspapers and books of social theory in order to develop her political view and her understanding of the situation of women, making this essay a kind of anti-war pamphlet, and was highly concerned with the rise of fascism and how to prevent war.

In this essay, Woolf presents her ideas in epistolary form, replying to three letters that she received from different institutions asking for her financial support, giving her an occasion to analyze with irony and criticism the patriarchal institutions that sustain the oppression of women.

The first pages are a response to a letter sent by a barrister asking her to join a society and her political view on how to prevent war. This is an important event because it is presumably the first time that an educated man asks a woman about war issues. However, Woolf cannot respond easily to that question. Women did not have enough knowledge about politics or economy to understand what led men to go to war, and they had been brought up differently. She explains that war is used as a way to earn money and provide satisfaction: "Here, immediately, are three reasons which lead your sex to fight; war is a profession; a source of happiness and excitement; and it is also an outlet for manly qualities, without which men would deteriorate" (Woolf 15-16). What she does have clear is that she wants to stop war, considering it inhuman and abominable. Yet, being a woman, there is not much

she can do to prevent war. She complains, again focusing only on educated women, that working-class women have more influence on war since they can stop making munitions and that would affect war, but that they as educated women cannot do more than try to influence the ideas of the men that surround them. But this influence is only useful if it is combined with wealth and rank, and, therefore, the year 1919 is fundamental as it is the year in which women were finally allowed to join the professions and began to earn their own livings. Since women no longer depend financially upon their families, they can now express their opinions disinterestedly and have a disinterested influence on men.

Woolf focuses now on the importance of education to teach the young the inhumanity of war, but reaches the conclusion that education fails on this attempt. Women in education will not find intellectual freedom but rather competition: "Again, if we help an educated man's daughter to go to Cambridge are we not forcing her to think not about education but about war? - not how she can learn, but how she can fight in order that she may win the same advantages as her brothers?" (Woolf 195). Education makes the young use force rather than hate it, so it is not useful for preventing war. What is needed is a new type of education: an education based on poverty. It should not have museums or libraries, and the arts taught should not concern ruling, earning money or obtaining land but to teach arts that can be practiced by the poor such as medicine, music, literature, etc. As Woolf comments, "if the college were poor it would have nothing to offer; competition would be abolished. Life would be open and easy. People who love learning for itself would gladly come there" (200). With the creation of this new college, she is trying to "burn down the old male-structured colleges of "Oxbridge", representative of all oppressive cultural institutions, and substitute instead an egalitarian and feminist new college" (Showalter, *Speaking of Gender* 301).

In the second chapter, Woolf focuses rather on the entering of women in the professions. Woolf is afraid that, by joining the professions, women would enter in capitalist professions and would acquire the same characteristics as men: greed, jealousy and competitiveness. Women should maintain their difference and not adopt the attitudes that they needed to change in the first place. She claims that: "Behind us lies the patriarchal system; the private house, with its nullity, its immorality, its hypocrisy, its servility. Before us lies the public world, the professional system, with its possessiveness, its jealousy, its pugnacity, its greed" (Woolf 261). In order to get rid of those qualities and remain uncontaminated by the professions, there are four principles that must be taken into account: poverty, chastity, derision and freedom from unreal loyalties. Woolf believes that women need to gain enough money not to depend upon other person -poverty-, to not sell their brain because of money -chastity-, to refuse all methods of acquiring fame and merit -derision-, and to get rid of any type of pride -freedom from unreal loyalties-.

In the third chapter, a letter asks Woolf for the support of women in order to protect cultural and intellectual liberty. By 'cultural and intellectual liberty' it is meant reading in English language and the right of writing their own ideas with their own words. It appeals to women that are capable of not committing adultery of the brain, that is, women capable of writing what they want in spite of not selling their private life or of not obtaining money and fame. They must resist to the hypocrisy and to the competition that already dominates the cultural and intellectual life of men and write their own ideas.

Broadly speaking, Woolf goes on by rejecting the word 'feminist'. According to her, it is a "vicious and corrupt word that has done much harm in its day and is now obsolete" (302). She argues that feminism is a narrow movement that is only concerned with winning more rights for women. Instead, she proposes a radical movement in that time in which both men and women fight together against patriarchy. Woolf's arguments about the word 'feminist' have caused a lot of controversy. Years later, our contemporary Nigerian feminist writer, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie has explored the meaning of this word:

Some people ask: "Why the word feminist? Why not just say you are a believer in human rights, or something like that?" Because that would be dishonest. Feminism is, of course, part of human rights in general—but to choose to use the vague expression human rights is to deny the specific and particular problem of gender. It would be a way of pretending that it was not women who have, for centuries, been excluded. It would be a way of denying that the problem of gender targets women. That the problem was not about being human, but specifically about being a female human. (Adichie 9)

Woolf does reject this word, but what she defends is still close to the contemporary feminism. Woolf's ideas of men fighting along with women for human rights is not against feminism, the only thing that changes is the way of naming it. It is possible that at that time, for Woolf, the word 'feminism' meant that the movement must have been carried out only by women. However, she directly addresses men and informs them that they are fighting for the same cause: "The daughters of educated men who were called, to their resentment, 'feminists' were in fact the advance guard of your own movement. They were fighting the same enemy ... they were fighting the tyranny of the patriarchal state as you are fighting the tyranny of the Fascist state" (Woolf 303).

To conclude, Woolf analyses the principle of patriotism in men. Patriotism means love for England, for how they have been trained in schools and universities and treated well in England, creating in them the desire to defend their country. However, for women, patriotism means nothing since they have not enjoyed the same privileges: "But the educated man's sister – what does 'patriotism' mean to her? Has she the same reasons for being proud of England, for loving England, for defending England? Has she been 'greatly blessed' in England?" (Woolf 162). Women have not been trained in schools and universities, nor have they been protected by the laws of the country. Under these circumstances, women refuse to join any male society or to be part of the country since it has never benefitted women, and decide to create a society of their own: the Outsiders' Society. This society is formed by the daughters of educated men looking for new ways to obtain liberty, equality and peace. Their aim is to continue earning their own livings and to foster the appearance of new professions in which they can earn the right of having an independent opinion. Moreover, they must not be concerned with war or with preventing it: they must adopt a position of complete indifference. They should neither make munitions or weapons for the war nor cure the wounded. Men must decide freely whether they want to fight in the war or not, and their opinion must be respected since women cannot understand their deep motifs.

Finally, it is worth adding that, both the Society of Outsiders and the societies of men must fight for the same cause, the main difference is that men will use all the public means that their position possess, whereas women will "experiment not with public means in public but with private means in private" (Woolf 321). They will remain outside of leagues and conferences, but they will find their own methods in order to achieve liberty, justice, peace and equality.

4. Conclusion

Throughout this essay, feminist theory has been explored in order to analyze women's situation in the past and even nowadays. Therefore, the main purpose of this work has been accomplished: to create awareness about the subjugation of women and about how the patriarchal society has aggravated their situation.

The main feminist essays of Virginia Woolf -*A Room of One's Own* and *Three Guineas*- have been analysed in order to try to solve the problems and injustices that women have had to suffer from the beginning of times. Exploring topics such as the importance of women in creating fiction, or the presence of women in political life, some major conclusions have been drawn. For instance, the fact that women can help other women by writing their own experiences and by speaking up about their feminist ideas in order to inspire other women to fight for their rights. Another important idea is the fact that women need to escape from the patriarchal society in which they live in and create their own society of Outsiders from where they can fight against injustices. Furthermore, the importance for women to be financially independent for men in order to achieve their own goals.

This article has aimed, not only to raise awareness of the situation in order to point out its main defects, but also to raise the curiosity of others in order for them to continue wondering about these important problems that have always surrounded our society. However, these strategies are not as useful as it was to be expected, since women's oppression is still a problem nowadays. The broadness of this topic accounts for the fact that it is not easy to find a definitive solution to female subjugation. It is clear that further analysis needs to be done in order to fight against patriarchy and find new approaches which will help women's political, social and economic life. With deeper analyses, there exists the possibility that women's oppression and subjugation will finally be resolved and it will be possible to live in a society based on freedom, justice and equality.

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