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The Change of Women in Status from Passive to Active
Virginia Woolf A Society

*An Extended Essay Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirement for a
Master's Degree in British Literature*

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Dedication

I dedicate this work first to my soul mate and husband, to the one who supported me and taught me how to follow my dreams no matter how big they were, my husband whom I consider as the first to know what I'm capable of doing, I wish all happiness for us two and may Allah always keep love between us with a lot of children

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Abstract

The present work discusses the change of women's status from passive to active in Virginia Woolf's *A Society* (1921) and women harsh conditions in the Victorian Age. The aim of our research is to demonstrate how Virginia Woolf denounces women's discrimination and isolation and the way she illustrates how oppression can lead a woman to rebel in order to call for her rights and dignity. The work is divided into three chapters; the first one entitled *Historical Background* is about the history of British women in the late 19th century and early 20th century and the evolution of their status from being "the Angel in the House" to "the New Woman" who struggles for her independence and autonomy. The second chapter entitled *Women Interaction and Rebellion within Society* analyses the course of women's struggle for their rights in Woolf's *A Society*. The third chapter entitled *Society and Women Revolution between Reality and Fiction* is a comparison between women' emancipation in Victorian society and Woolf's imaginative society.

Key Words: Feminism, Womanhood, Motherhood, Secret Society, New Woman, Modernism, Victorian Era

List of Acronyms

NUSEC: National Union of Societies for Equal Citizenship

NUWSS: National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies

UK: United Kingdom

WSPU: Women's Social and Political Union

WW1: World War One

WW2: World War Two

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General Introduction

General Introduction

Life in Great Britain changes over the course of history. The changes that occur in all fields of life influence history as well as individuals. Moreover, the 19th century witnesses the rise of one of the most important movements that mark Britain' history; the feminist movement. Women all over Britain start calling for their individuality and freedom. Consequently, the number of feminist writers and political individuals increases throughout Britain. The call for women' rights start gaining importance in British people's daily life.

Virginia Woolf (1883-1941) as one of the most famous British modernist and feminist writers, calls for women's emancipation through her novels and short stories by denouncing women's harsh conditions within society and focusing of how women were marginalized in the society. She depicts the different lives of women as oppressed and obsessed by men's authority to demonstrate a clear image of the decline of civilisation during these hard times as Eller Jack David claims in her book *Culture and Diversity in the United States* (2015).

In her short story *A Society* (1921), Woolf tries to represent the different lives of intellectual women seeking autonomy, respect and status within their society. *A society*, one of Woolf's masterpieces, is the reflection of the everyday life of women who are neither acknowledged nor identified in their society the fact that leads them to gather and form their own "secret society" to discuss their different preoccupations with traditions, politics, and ethics.

Compared to the complexity of Woolf's perspective that needs deep researches, our concern is rather modest and limited. It is a thematic study that explores the evolution of thought and the shift in women's social status from an "Angel in the House" to an independent and autonomous "New Woman". Moreover, the motivation behind the choice of such a topic is how the author portrays women who want to challenge men and gain their freedom to achieve a new status among a patriarchal society. Even though the story is out of print yet the intriguing characters, events and the choice of words are more than enough for us to work on how women status changes.

The research questions set in the study are as follows:

1/ To what extent can discrimination and isolation lead a woman to rebel to obtain a better position in the society?

2/ What does Woolf want to prove by choosing such young and intellectual women in her short story *A Society*?

3/ How could Virginia Woolf interpret the effect of such a revolution on the society?

The hypotheses formulated are as follows:

The way women are mistreated and their harsh conditions push them to rebel to get better positions in all the fields of life. Since being pretty and young cannot solve their problems, these women need to be educated and well informed to challenge the difficult circumstances they are facing; the fact that causes a deep change in the society's structure,

The work is divided into three chapters; the first one deals with the historical background of the British society during the late 19th century and the early 20th century. As a result of all the events that mark this era, society changes from a perspective of a conservative environment to an individual freedom. Women's lives therefore evolve and change bit by bit, from being a passive housewife to an active member of the society. The second chapter discusses women's issues in *A Society* and how Virginia Woolf's characters find a group to look for the truth of the world they live in. It also examines the society's reaction toward women's act of rebellion. The third chapter is mainly about the increasing emergence of women's emancipation in the public sphere which affects different fields and changes women's social status. It emphasises the consequences of such a "radical" change on communities that are influenced by a conservative society bounded by traditions and ethics. It also includes reactions of authors, critics and journalists in response to Woolf's short story *A Society*.

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Chapter One

Historical Background

1.1 Introduction

It is commonly known that Britain has undergone several changes on the course of time. Of course those changes that have affected men and women equally, have been tackled by philosophers, writers and scholars all over the years.

In fact, one of the several changes that affected Britain and its people is the feminist movement led by both peaceful and vengeful women looking for equality between women and men in all the fields of life. Therefore the chapter is a depiction of the changes that touched women and changed their lives from the root and beyond, which were ultimately talked by Virginia Woolf in her selected, *A Society*. In fact dealing with these changes drove her into writing one of the stories that depicts the psychological as well as the social life of women in the 20th century Britain.

1.2 From the “Angel in the House” to the “New Woman

A woman in the Victorian era is considered “an angel in the House” as Coventry Patmore (1823-1896) refers to in his well-known poem with the same name. The angel in the house is a shy, withdrawing, unconfident and dependent woman. She is considered a property rather than a human being. Her life is basically centered on getting married, conceive and have no legal or political rights. Throughout time some women tried to change the routine such as writers: however, their efforts were met by underestimating or punishments. Therefore, a lot of female writers tried to hide behind using male’s name is, in fact a trick to escape the societies’ prejudices and do what they like best: writing. By the 20th century everything has changed, the path was hard to pave but at the end they got what they needed: their freedom.

1.2.1 The Victorian Women in the 20th Century

The Victorian era is an era of development and evolvement. However changes did not better women's lives. But it kept them trapped as a housewife and angels in the house. The position of women in the Victorian epoch is often seen as an illustration of the outstanding difference between the United Kingdom's national power and wealth and what many, then and now, consider its dreadful social conditions.

During the era symbolized by Queen Victoria's reign, women did not have the right to vote, sue, or own property. Simultaneously, women participated in the paid workforce in increasing numbers following the Industrial Revolution. Feminist philosophies spread among the educated middle classes, biased laws were cancelled, and the women's suffrage movement gained drive in the last years of the Victorian era.

In the Victorian era women were seen, by the middle classes at least, as belonging to the domestic range, and this stereotype required them to provide their husbands with a clean home, food on the table and to raise their children. Women's rights were extremely partial in this era, losing ownership of their wages, all of their physical property, excluding land property, and all other cash they generated once they got married. When a Victorian man and woman married, the rights of the woman were legally given over to her husband. Under the law the married couple became one unit where the husband would represent this entity, placing him in control of all property, earnings and money.

In addition to losing money and material goods to their husbands, Victorian wives became property to their husbands, giving them rights to what their bodies produced; children, sex and domestic labour. Marriage revoked a woman's right to consent to sexual intercourse with her husband, giving him 'ownership' over her body. Their mutual marital consent therefore became a contract to give herself to her husband as he desired.

Rights and privileges of Victorian women are limited, and both single and married women had lacks and disadvantages they had to live with. Victorian women had had disadvantages both financially and sexually, continuing inequalities within their marriages and

social statuses, distinct differences in men and women's rights took place during this era; so men were provided with more stability, financial status and power over their homes and women. Marriages for Victorian women became contracts, one which was extremely difficult if not impossible to get out of during the Victorian era. Women's rights groups fought for equality and over time made strides to change rights and privileges. However, many Victorian women bore their husband's control and cruelty. Targeted against their wives; including sexual violence, verbal abuse and economic deprivation and were given no way out. While husbands participated in extramarital affairs with other women, wives endured infidelity as they had no rights to divorce on these grounds and their divorce was considered to be a social taboo. (Forman,2000: 131-156)

However all this has changed by the twentieth century and the rise of awareness that shaped the British society and helped women to guarantee their status. Therefore from An angel in the house who lacks the minimum rights to a New stabilized Woman The term "New Woman" has been used by Sarah Grand in her article *The Question of the New Woman in the twentieth century*. Unlike the Victorian woman, the New Woman is independent, educated and confident. She is nothing like the angel and she values her identity, autonomy and status more than everything.

1.2.1 The New Woman in the New Society

As Sarah Grand set the term "New Woman", people started getting all the ideas about this new creature. Since she is liberated and independent, the last thing she needs by her side is a man to diminish her freedom and authority in her own life. The views on the "New Woman" varied from negative to positive. However the common view is that she is no longer the sensitive creature who needs protection.

One of the first goals of the "New Woman" is her independence she pushed the ancient rules aside only to aspire a status for herself. The "New Woman" is viewed more manly and lacking femininity. She is even pictured as men in magazines and portraits at that time. (See appendix II)

From the time that the “New Woman” proclaimed her position in the world, people started seeing her differently; so instead of seeing her body to carry children, she is seen as a governess and an educator. Instead of painting her nakedness, she is painted as the commander of her own fate. A woman is no longer a subject to avoid but actually a subject to listen to.

For almost centuries a woman was deprived of her natural right to experience sexual desires for the simple fact that scholars such as Freud stated that she is a creature with no desire and she could not reach the orgasm and this is about to change because the New Woman’s next goal is to experience desire and sexual abilities.

1.2.2 Sexuality and Individuality by the “New Woman”

The “New Woman” with all the principles and new ideas that were brought by the twentieth century is a creature who is both independent and aware of independency. The independency and autonomy have made the female species to be confident therefore they are not ruled by the society’s norms.

The angel in the house does not exist, not anymore. A woman is free to explore her own individuality, sexuality and identity. People have been criticizing women for generations which led her to withdraw her sexual abilities and desires. Freud himself stated that a woman is not a sexual being. This theory has been worked with ever since first appearance the thing those men considered women as their mistresses and pleasure workers. A woman as stated before is considered a housewife, a child care and most importantly a way to preserve humanity from dying.

With the new views women have of their own individuality she was considered immoral. New woman moreover changed her goal from marrying and establishing a home to make a career and fulfill her goals as men would do. Therefore a woman is no longer a feminine creature. The “New Woman” twisted upside downs the whole world and called forth

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rather opposing and harsh reactions. For example, as Pykett has described the “New women”

The New Woman was the embodiment of a complex of social tendencies. The title named a beacon of progress or beast of regression, depending on who was doing the naming

(Pykett, 1992:140)

She also represented the request for women’s presence in the political life, which was Paired with the feminization and proletarianization of the public sphere (pykett, 1992:140) The” New Woman” refused being a mother, and with her mannish appearance, she threatened to dissolve the existing gender boundaries (Pykett, 1992:140). Illogically the “New Woman” was represented as simultaneously non-female, unfeminine and ultra-feminine. The “New Woman’s” loss of female characteristics was evident in the bearded chin, the bass voice, flat chest and lean hips of a woman who has failed in her physical development (Pykett; 1992:140).

The lack of femininity was signaled by the denial of motherhood and womanly roles, and the hyper-femininity was beacons by her excessive susceptibility to feeling (Pykett; 1992:140). Around the turn of the twentieth century, and especially at the beginning of the 20th century, great changes took place in which women played a central role. Women invaded all The (Im) morality of the “New Woman” in the Early 20th Century fields of life, stretched the boundaries and unhallowed conventions. They took part actively in arts and politics, and contributed immensely to social and political changes (Rudnick, 1991) “New Women” would achieve self-fulfillment through a mixture of meaningful work, love and sexuality. Such personal goals were politically articulated by feminist, Freudian, socialist, and Bohemian movements centered in Greenwich Village. A more Satisfying sexual and personal life was part of their radical vision of a new society (Trimberger, 1991)

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A significant move took place in the emotional culture, as well. While for Romantics and Victorians, sentiment and emotional intensity were highly valued, by the beginning of the twentieth century they lost their significance and physical appearance gained importance. This phenomenon was also signaled by the fact that femininity became a spectacle by this time, meaning that women's bodies were presented and "reproduced" in journals and magazines. The most important feature was to have a thin, mannish and/or sexy outlook and having intense emotions was regarded as something suspicious (Spurlock,1998) Women not only changed but they also left their previous compass of life: the home.

"The New woman", 'the new freedom,' and the 'sexual revolution' all referred to cultural changes that moved young women out of the Victorian home into the public realm that men had long claimed as their own. This also caused serious emotional problems for women because many of them were not able to grip the new situation or they could not match their private and public life in a new and changed world. It was primarily women, who had wanted the change, but it still took time for them to adjust to the new world, as well, and it happened quite often that they did not get what they expected or wanted. Eventually, this crisis reached its peak only in the 20s with the Flapper Wife principally.

However first, let us go back and look at visual representations of the "New Woman". Carolyn Kitch by citing Ernst Gombrich claims that the "New Woman" was not a single image but a series of images changing through time because of the varying factors surrounding them from which they could not be divorced.

While she represented societal change, the image of the "New Woman" varied significantly from the 1890s to the 1920s, expressed through a series of 'types.' Because these images appeared at particular times and in particular order, they functioned not just as individual icons but rather as a symbolic system that visual theorists call 'iconology.' In this view, wrote Ernst Gombrich, an image 'cannot be divorced from its purpose and requirements of the society in which the given visual language gains currency' – in other words, from its social, economic, and historical context – nor can its meaning be divorced from other images in the surrounding culture (Kitch, 2001).

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The role and the situation of women changed greatly during this period and got visual manifestation in the diverse representations. This passage also draws our attention to the fact that images do not exist on their own. If the images of women mostly depicted vamps, party girls, scheming beauties and flappers, then, society needed and created these female figures and stereotypes. The American Woman first appeared on covers as a mature woman, a mother, a nurse, but already she was depicted outside her home quite many times. Then came the Gibson Girl, created by Charles Dana Gibson, who was tall, aristocratic, elegant, and serious-looking and who represented “the life style to which the ‘rising’ classes might Zsófia Anna Tóthaspire”. Then followed the Fisher Girl by Harrison Fisher who was well dressed and, genteel, though, – she pursued sports and might even looked a bit coquettish.

The Christy Girl by Howard Chandler Christy followed her predecessors and also contemporaries with a healthy and sporty look; she was friendly and went to college. James Montgomery Flagg drew vamps, sexy young women who made use of men and ridiculed them. Then, during WWI, women were depicted as nurses, angels, Red-Cross workers, and certainly mothers who were proud to give their sons to Uncle Sam, and to bear new children for the future. With this, all arrived at the period when the flappers ruled, the Roaring Twenties. The major artist of this female figure was John Held, Jr. However, we must not forget about Neysa McMein’s (as well as Jessie Willcox Smith’s and Norman Rockwell’s) modern American wife and mother, either, who was also the product of the 20s with all her ambiguities.

1.3 Virginia Woolf’s View of Motherhood

Virginia Woolf in her memoirs said that: **“For we think back through our mothers if we are women.”** (Virginia Woolf, 1929: 12) Virginia Woolf was one of great the feminist writer in the world her writings were all about women struggle to prove their identity and autonomy, in her saying she is focusing on the fact that no one will feel the women pain just a women like her and that the women have made a big progress to get rid of all the aspects of “Womanhood” and the most importantly “Motherhood”.

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1.3.1 Virginia Woolf's View of Feminism

Virginia Woolf is mostly known as a feminist, a radical feminist. Woolf is also trialling with ideas about gender and relationships between the sexes. Like many members of the Bloomsbury Group, the Woolf's had an open marriage, in which they gave each other permission to pursue outside relationships. In 1922, Virginia met Vita Sackville-West, a poet who also had an open marriage with her husband Harold Nicolson. The two women had a romantic relationship for several years, and even after the affair ended they remained friends for the rest of the Woolf's life.

Woolf was interested in bisexuality, not in the modern definition of wanting to make out with girls as well as boys, but in the more intellectual possibility of fusing both male and female identity in a single person.

Woolf was a feminist; she argued not that women were better than men but that they were equally necessary. To her, a mind that is able to reconcile both its masculine and feminine parts was the most creative. "The normal and comfortable state of being is that when the two [genders] live in harmony together, spiritually co-operating. If one is a man, still the woman part of his brain must have effect; and a woman also must have intercourse with the man in her "Woolf wrote in *A Room of One's Own*." It is when this fusion takes place that the mind is fully fertilized and uses all its faculties. Perhaps a mind that is purely masculine cannot create, any more than a mind that is purely feminine." In 1928, she explored these ideas in the novel *Orlando*.

Spanning English history from the 1500s to the 1900s, the book follows an eternally young man who wakes up halfway through the book to discover that he is now a woman. The book was sort of a love letter to Vita Sackville-West, and was illustrated with photographs of Sackville-West dressed as *Orlando*. Around the time she published *Orlando*, Woolf was asked to give a series of lectures at the women's colleges at Cambridge University. She later expanded her talks about women and art into the 1929 book *A Room of One's Own*. She had never forgotten the university education that was denied her because of her gender. "Intellectual freedom depends upon material things," she explained. "Poetry depends upon intellectual freedom. And women have always been poor, not for two hundred years merely,

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but from the beginning of time. ... Women, then, have not had a dog's chance of writing poetry. That is why I have laid so much stress on money and a room of one's own.

In 1938 she published a second, more polemical feminist tract, *Three Guineas*, in which she argued that it was necessary to boost women's education because if there were more women in positions of power, there would be less war. It seems fair to point out here that when Woolf wrote about the need to educate women, she wasn't talking about all women.

Modern feminism offers a bit broader of an umbrella than the one feminists of Woolf's era used. She was openly disdainful of working-class women, despite the fact that she relied on several such women to help run her home. Her snobbery wasn't unusual for women of her day and upbringing, but it definitely wasn't one of her more flattering qualities.

1.3.2 Womanhood in the 20th century

Edwardian era, from the 1890s to the First World War saw middle-class women breaking out of the Victorian limits. Women had more employment chances and were more active. Many served worldwide in the British Empire or in Protestant missionary societies. As housewives, sewing machines enabled the production of readymade clothing and made it easier for women to sew their own clothes. Moreover, claims Barbara Burman, "home dressmaking was sustained as an important aid for women negotiating wider social shifts and tensions in their lives." (Burman,1999: 34)An increased literacy in the middle class gave women wider admission to information and ideas. Numerous new magazines appealed to her tastes and help define femininity. (Beetham, 2003)

The creations of the typewriter, telephone, and new filing systems offered middle class women augmented employment opportunities(Guerriero R. Wilson,2001: 460)so did the rapid expansion of the school system, and the appearance of the new profession of nursing. Education and status led to demands for female roles in the rapidly expanding world of sports,

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As middle class women rose in status they increasingly supported demands for a political voice. In 1903 Emmeline Pankhurst¹ created the Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU), a suffrage advocacy organization. While (WSPU) was the most visible suffrage group, it was only one of many, such as the Women's Freedom League and the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies (NUWSS) led by Millicent Garrett Fawcett. In Wales the suffragist's women were attacked as outsiders and were usually treated with rudeness and often violence when they demonstrated or spoke publicly. The idea of Welshness was by then highly masculine because of its identification with laboring in heavy industry and mining and with militant union action.

The radical protests progressively became more violent, and included heckling, banging on doors, smashing shop windows, burning mailboxes, and burning of unoccupied buildings.

Emily Davison, a (WSPU) member, unexpectedly ran onto the track during the 1913 Epsom Derby and died under the King's horse. These tactics produced mixed results of compassion and alienation. As many protesters were imprisoned and went on hunger-strike, the Liberal government was left with an awkward situation. From these political actions, the suffragists successfully created publicity around their institutional discrimination and sexism. Historians generally argue that the first stage of the militant suffragette movement under the Pankhurst's in 1906 had a dramatic mobilizing effect on the suffrage movement. Women were thrilled and supportive of an actual revolt in the streets; the membership of the militant (WSPU) and the older (NUWSS) overlapped and was mutually supportive. However a system of publicity, historian Robert Ensor argues had to continue to escalate to maintain its high visibility in the media. The hunger strikes and force-feeding did that. However the Pankhurst's refused any advice and escalated their tactics. They turned to systematic disruption of Liberal Party meetings as well as physical violence in terms of damaging public buildings and arson.

This went too far, as the overwhelming majority of moderate suffragists pulled back and refused to follow because they could no longer defend the tactics. They increasingly

¹ Born Emmeline Goulden in July 14 1858 in Manchester, England and died in June 14 1928 London, England a militant champion of woman suffrage whose 40-years campaign achieved complete success in the year of her death, she founded the women's social and political union (WSPU) in 1903.

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repudiated the extremists as an impediment to achieving suffrage, saying the militant suffragettes were now aiding the antis, and many historians agree. Historian G. R. (2004) Searle stated that the methods of the suffragettes did succeed in damaging the Liberal party but failed to advance the cause of woman suffrage. When the Pankhurst's decided to stop the militancy at the start of the war, and enthusiastically support the war effort, the movement split and their leadership role ended. Suffrage did come four years later, but the feminist movement in Britain permanently abandoned the militant tactics that had made the suffragettes famous. (G.R. Searle,2004: 468)

In Wales, women's participation in politics grew steadily from the start of the suffrage movement in 1907. By 2003, half the members elected to the National Assembly were women.

According to 1977 the most difficult milestone in the women's lives is giving life to children. Although abortion was illegal, it was nevertheless the most widespread form of birth control in use. Used predominantly by working-class women, the procedure was used not only as a means of terminating pregnancy, but also to prevent poverty and unemployment. Those who transported contraceptives could be legally punished. Contraceptives became more expensive over time and had a high failure rate. Unlike contraceptives, abortion did not need any prior planning and was less expensive. Newspaper advertisements were used to promote and sell abortifacients indirectly (Mclaren, 1977:400)

Edwardians Britain had large numbers of male and female domestic helps, in both urban and rural areas. Men relied on working class women to run their homes easily, and employers often looked to these working class women for sexual partners. Servants were provided with food, clothing, housing, and a small wage, and lived in a self-enclosed social system inside the mansion. The number of domestic servants fell in the Edwardian period due to a declining number of young people willing to be employed in this area (Pooley, 2008:405)

The upper classes comprised leisure sports, which resulted in rapid developments in fashion, as more mobile and flexible clothing styles were needed. During the Edwardian era, women wore a very tight corset, or bodice, and dressed in long skirts. The Edwardian era was

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the last time women wore corsets in everyday life. According to Arthur Marwick, the most striking change of all the developments that occurred during the Great War was the modification in women's dress, "for, however far politicians were to put the clocks back in other steeples in the years after the war, no one ever put the lost inches back on the hems of women's skirts". The Edwardians developed new styles in clothing design. The bustle and heavy fabrics of the previous century disappeared. A new concept of tight fitting skirts and dresses made of lightweight fabrics were introduced for a more active lifestyle.

The two pieces dress came into fashion. Skirts hung tight at the hips and flared at the hem, creating a trumpet of lily-like shape. Skirts in 1901 had decorated hems with ruffles of fabric and lace. Some dresses and skirts featured trains. Tailored jackets, first introduced in 1880, increased in popularity and by 1900, tailored suits became popular. By 1904, skirts became fuller and less clingy. In 1905, skirts fell in soft folds that curved in, then flared out near the hemlines. From 1905 to 1907, waistlines rose. In 1901, the hobble skirt was introduced; a tight fitting skirt that restricted a woman's stride. Lingerie dresses, or tea gowns made of soft fabrics, festooned with ruffles and lace were worn indoors (Edward, 2012:34).

The First World War advanced the feminist cause, as women's sacrifices and paid Employment was much valued. Prime Minister David Lloyd George was clear about how important the women were:

It would have been utterly impossible for us to have waged a successful war had it not been for the skill and ardour, enthusiasm and industry which the women of this country have thrown into the war.

(Whitfield,2001:34)

The militant suffragette movement was suspended during the war and never resumed. British society credited the new patriotic roles women played as "earning" has to be put close to "them" the vote in 1918. However, British historians no longer emphasize the yielding of woman suffrage as a reward for women's participation in war work. Pugh (1974) argues that empowering soldiers primarily and women secondarily were decided by senior politicians in

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1916. In the absence of major women's groups demanding for equal suffrage, the government's conference recommended limited, age-restricted women's suffrage. The suffragettes had been weakened, Pugh argues, by repeated failures before 1914 and by the disorganizing effects of war mobilization; therefore they quietly accepted these restrictions, which were approved in 1918 by a majority of the War Ministry and each political party in Parliament. More generally, Searle (2004) argues that the British debate was essentially over by the 1890s, and that granting the suffrage in 1918 was mostly a byproduct of giving the vote to male soldiers. Women in Britain finally achieved suffrage on the same terms as men in 1928.

There was a relaxing of clothing restrictions; by 1920 there was negative talk about young women called "flappers" flaunting their sexuality. The vote did not immediately change social conditions. With the economic recession, women were the most vulnerable sector of the workforce. Some women who held jobs prior to the war were obliged to forfeit them to returning soldiers, and others were exceded. With limited franchise, the United Kingdom (UK) National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies (NUWSS) pivoted into a new organization, the National Union of Societies for Equal Citizenship (NUSEC), which still advocated for equality in franchise, but extended its scope to examine equality in social and economic areas. Legislative reform was sought for discriminatory laws (e.g., family law and prostitution) and over the differences between equality and equity, the accommodations that would allow women to overcome barriers to fulfillment (known in later years as the "equality vs. difference conundrum").

Eleanor Rathbone, who became a member of parliament MP in 1929, succeeded Millicent Garrett as president of NUSEC in 1919. She expressed the critical need for consideration of difference in gender relationships as "what women need to fulfill the potentialities of their own natures". The 1924 Labour government's social reforms created a formal split, as a splinter group of strict egalitarians formed the Open Door Council in May 1926. This eventually became an international movement, and continued until 1965. Other important social legislation of this period included the Sex Disqualification (Removal) Act 1919 (which opened professions to women), and the Matrimonial Causes Act 1923. In 1932, NUSEC separated advocacy from education, and continued the former activities as the

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National Council for Equal Citizenship and the latter as the Townswomen's Guild. The council continued until the end of the Second World War. (Edwards,2012: 100)

Annie Besant had been tried in 1877 for publishing Charles Knowlton's *Fruits of Philosophy*, a work on family planning, under the Obscene Publications Act 1857.(Besant, 1877) Knowlton had previously been convicted in the United States. She and her colleague Charles Bradlaugh were convicted but acquitted on appeal, the subsequent publicity resulting in a decline in the birth rate. Not discouraged in the slightest, Besant followed this with *The Law of Population*.

Britain's total mobilization during the Second World War proved to be successful in winning the war, by maintaining strong support from public opinion. The war was a "people's war" that enlarged democratic aspirations and produced promises of a postwar welfare state. Salvage put out your paper, metal, and bones. Artist Yates-Wilson Historians credit Britain with a highly successful record of mobilizing the home front for the war effort, in terms of mobilizing the greatest proportion of potential workers, maximizing output, assigning the right skills to the right task, and maintaining the morale and spirit of the people. Much of this success was due to the systematic planned mobilization of women, as workers, soldiers and housewives, enforced after December 1941 by conscription.

The women supported the war effort, and made the rationing of consumer goods a success. In some ways, the government over planned, evacuating too many children in the first days of the war, closing cinemas as frivolous then reopening them when the need for cheap entertainment was clear, sacrificing cats and dogs to save a little space on shipping pet food, only to discover an urgent need to keep the rats and mice under control. In the balance between compulsion and voluntarism, the British relied successfully on voluntarism. The success of the government in providing new services, such as hospitals, and school lunches, as well as the equalitarian spirit of the People's war, contributed to widespread support for an Munitions production rose dramatically, and the quality enlarged welfare state. remained high. Food production was emphasized, in large part to open up shipping for munitions. Farmers increased the number of acres under cultivation from 12,000,000 to 18,000,000, and the farm labor force was expanded by a fifth, thanks especially to the Women's Land Army. Parents had much less time for supervision of their children, and the

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fear of juvenile delinquency was upon the land, especially as older teenagers took jobs and emulated their older siblings in the service. The government responded by requiring all youth over 16 to register, and expanded the number of clubs and organizations available to them.

(Guerriero R. Wilson,2001)

Food, clothing, petrol, leather and other such items were rationed. However, items such as sweets and fruits were not rationed, as they would spoil. Access to luxuries was severely restricted, although there was also a significant black market. Families also grew victory gardens, and small home vegetable gardens, to supply themselves with food. Many things were conserved to turn into weapons later, such as fat for nitroglycerin production. People in the countryside were less affected by rationing as they had greater access to locally sourced irrational products than people in metropolitan areas and were more able to grow their own.

The rationing system, which had been originally based on a specific basket of goods for each consumer, was much improved by switching to a points system which allowed the housewives to make choices based on their own priorities. Food rationing also permitted the upgrading of the quality of the food available, and housewives approved—except for the absence of white bread and the government's imposition of an unpalatable wheat meal "national loaf." People were especially pleased that rationing brought equality and a guarantee of a decent meal at an affordable cost.

Feminist writers of that period, such as Alva Myrdal and Viola Klein, started to allow for the possibility that women should be able to combine home with outside employment. 1950s' form of feminism is often derogatorily termed "welfare feminism." Indeed, many activists went to great length to stress that their position was that of 'reasonable modern feminism,' which accepted sexual diversity, and sought to establish what women's social contribution was rather than emphasizing equality or the similarity of the sexes.

Feminism in 1950s England was strongly connected to social responsibility and involved the well-being of society as a whole. This often came at the cost of the liberation and personal fulfillment of self-declared feminists. Even those women who regarded themselves as feminists strongly endorsed prevailing ideas about the primacy of children's needs, as advocated, for example, by John Bowlby the head of the Children's Department at the Tavistock Clinic, who published extensively throughout the 1950s and by Donald Winnicott who promoted through radio broadcasts and in the press the idea of the home as a private

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emotional world in which mother and child are bound to each other and in which the mother has control and finds freedom to fulfill herself.

The 1960s saw dramatic shifts in attitudes and values led by youth. It was a worldwide phenomenon, in which British rock musicians especially The Beatles played an international role. The generations divided sharply regarding the new sexual freedom demanded by youth who listened to bands like The Rolling Stones.

Sexual morals changed. One notable event was the publication of D. H. Lawrence's *Lady Chatterley's Lover* by Penguin Books in 1960. Although first printed in 1928, the release in 1960 of an inexpensive mass-market paperback version prompted a court case. The prosecuting council's question, "Would you want your wife or servants to read this book?" highlighted how far society had changed, and how little some people had noticed. The book was seen as one of the first events in a general relaxation of sexual attitudes. Other elements of the sexual revolution included the development of The Pill, Mary Quant's miniskirt and the 1967 legalization of homosexuality. There was a rise in the incidence of divorce and abortion, and a resurgence of the women's liberation movement, whose campaigning helped secure the Equal Pay Act and the Sex Discrimination Act in 1975. The Irish Catholics, traditionally the most puritanical of the ethno-religious groups, eased up a little, especially as the membership disregarded the bishops teaching that contraception was sinful.

1.3.3 Womanhood vs. Motherhood in the 20th Century

In a very touching letters dedicated to the mother Virginia Woolf tries to shade the light on the scarifies of a mother to raise her beloved children:

‘She has always haunted me, partly, I suppose, her beauty; and then dying at that moment, I suppose she cut a great figure on one’s mind when it was just awake, and had not any experience of life – Only then one would have suspected that one had made up a sham – an ideal’.

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(Letters III 383, 5/25/27)

Woolf's mother, Julia Duckworth Stephen, died in 1895 when Virginia Woolf was Thirteen years old. For Stephen family and its patriarch, Sir Leslie Stephen, Julia was the essence of maternal perfection and wifely duty. Leslie recorded these ideals in the *Mausoleum Book*, laying the groundwork for Woolf's reminiscences of her mother. Both Woolf and her father fell prey to the temptation to idealize the beauty, grace, and superlative femininity of Julia Stephen. The quotation above, however, suggests Woolf 'misgivings about the idealization of her mother. Having lost Julia at such a young age, Woolf often examines her own memories of Julia and the difficulty of representing her. She writes to Vita Sackville West, "As my mother died when I was 13 probably [the depiction of Julia in *To the Lighthouse*] is a child's view other" (Letters III 374, 5/13/27). Woolf addresses the subject again in a letter to Vanessa, writing, "But what do you think I did know about mother? It can't have been much –What would Quentin have known of you if you had died when he was thirteen?" (Letters III379, 5/22/27).

Woolf's struggle between the inherited myth of her mother and the actual experience of her creates ambiguity in the mothers Woolf creates in her fiction. In an effort to demythologize maternity, Woolf allows all of the mothers in her works to have flaws. Woolf's anxiety about the mythologization of motherhood reveals itself through her insistent depictions of failed, imperfect maternal characters in her fiction.

1.4 *A Society and the New Woman*

Virginia Woolf's *A Society* is a story about a group of women who formed a "secret society" vowing that they won't get married or ever have children until they figure out what men has been doing and whether it is fair for women to just be patient with them.

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The story is merely a depiction on Woolf's view towards men. Being a woman and more importantly a feminist is a decision that she made upon what she witnessed in the British society at that time. And creating such a group is her way to say that women have the right to hold secret meetings just like men do, and make reports and discuss what is happening in the

society just like men and that was illustrated in her Short story through one of the protagonist

We have gone on all these years assuming men were equally industrious [as their mother and grandmothers who have had ten or more children], and that their works were of equal merit. While we have borne the children, they, we supposed, have borne the books and the pictures. We have populated the world. They has civilised it. But now we can read, what prevents us from judging the results?

(Virginia Woolf, 1921:2)

1.4.1 Virginia Woolf's Touch on the Short Story *A society*

the impact of Virginia Woolf left after writing *A Society* is mostly on "feminism" and how women should be viewed by men in particular and the society in general. In her short story that oddly is out of print, she is stating that women have the same rights as men. They are human beings, and being a woman is not for the purpose of having a wife and a house keeper but she is way more important than this and she is as rightful in expressing her opinion as any man is.

The fictional society created by the women in the story is just another way for Virginia to state that they were treated unjustly, which means they are deprived of their right to be human beings. The rules set by them defy all the norms of the society set by men at that period

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of time. When supposed to get marry and have children to ensure that life goes on, the women in the fictional society defied those norms and claimed that they have all the rights to behave the way they pleased.

The short story is a depiction of one of the rebellions set by women at that time which means it is a way for a woman who considers herself more than the society gave her right to be and most importantly to claim her right to be treated equally like men.

In the story the women are in search of questions related to men and the way they behave whereas in reality the women who created the society are in search for their identity and freedom to be whoever they want to be. Being a feminist is a big deal for Woolf since her one and only goal is to ensure the well fare of women all over Britain therefore her own well fare.

1.4.2 From a Dependent to an Independent Woman

Women have been considered Angels in the house for decades. They were deprived of the simplest rights such as expressing their political views which led them by the late nineteenth century to rebel in order to change this.

The fact that the feminist waves doddered in action they were all looking for the same results which were granted only after the Second World War which means that their goal is finally within reach and which also means that some women were not satisfied with the little income that was insured by men. The rights were granted however their thirst for more was even bigger and higher and they were in search for more and more by the twentieth century.

Only then the “New Woman” appeared and became a depiction of everything a woman could not be. She is more capable of taking care of herself than the typical woman the thing that ensures her freedom and independence on one hand from the society that kept her under strict norms that are outdated and on the other hand by men in her life who deprived her from her right to be a human being within the household therefore the society.

1.5 Conclusions

The “New Woman” is unlike any other woman before; she is not shy or withdrawn. She knows her potentials and chances in life. She is independent and confident, sporty and

comfortable with her body and sexuality. The latter was a big issue in earlier centuries. Now a woman does not a man to feel pretty or sexually satisfied but women are free to grant themselves satisfaction any way they liked, therefore other groups appeared in the world claiming more rights other than the right to be equal to men.

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Chapter two

Women Interactions and Rebellion within the Society

2.1 Introduction

Virginia Woolf (1882-1941) is a famous modernist writer who incorporated feminism and art into her writings. In her short story *A Society* (1921) which is from her collection of short stories *Monday or Tuesday*, she is discussing the major issues that are related to women struggle in the society to prove their selves as an affective members that should have rights and opportunities as men, the story talks about the women's effort to get rid of those aspects of oppression and discrimination that make them the victims of the society. This chapter would discuss the gender relation, women's role and status within the short story relating to the research questions

2.2 Virginia Woolf's Characters Experiences of Marginalization and Discrimination in the Imaginative Society

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The beginning of the twentieth century witnessed the emergence of a new generation of writers whom in their turn are against the old mentality, beliefs and the applied traditions, among these writers Virginia Woolf who is considered as a woman who is against the principles of the Victorian society and its norms where the male is the dominant gender, and the one who has the final say in all the matters that concern the warfare of the individuals in a society and the women status in the society which was marginalized and discriminated .this was exactly portrayed in her short story were the characters are living the same case.

2.2.1 Why creating a group?

Virginia Woolf's anger and hatred toward the Victorian Society is transcript in her writings she always tackle such interesting topics that mostly are relating to women's role in the society, For example in her short story *A Society* she depicts through the female characters the portrayal of women at that time. She demonstrates the miserable situation with all its troubles and how women were living as less than human beings whereas the impact of the Victorian Society and its faults still exist.

The group is formed by educated young women, each one from them search for independency, autonomy and creativity to get rid of traditionally domestic role (angel in the house). The group is formed by a number of girls that devoted years from their lives to resolve questions that are related to their status and their role in the society. The group makes a decision that none of the members will marry or have children until they determine what men have been doing all this time

It all begins when" Clorinda" blamed herself and the other ladies to not have the capacity to help Poll to accomplish her father condition to take the heritage, which requires reading all the books in London library while every one of them could read: **It's our entire fault," she said. "Every one of us knows how to read. But no one, save Poll, has ever taken the trouble to do it.** (Virginia Woolf, 1921:1), in her saying "Clorinda" seems to be said and angry in the same time, she is said for "Poll" who is suffering to not have the capacity to realize the condition the moment when she should be happy with her friends she was crying that was proved in Virginia's words on poll when she said that Poll, had said nothing and burst

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into tears, returning to the thing that makes “Clorinda” angry was the father’s trick in suggesting such condition which is reading all the books in the London library which through it he is preventing his daughter from taking the heritage because, she know that it is impossible for Poll to finish all the books because in every year thousands of books are published besides the library books that their numbers is bigger the mind can imagine.

Another important fact that consolidate the idea of the foundation of the group besides “Clorinda’s” saying about “Poll’s” suffering, was “Jane’s” question, which she asked after hearing what Poll was reading from her books which is about the gender inequality and the Victorian society principles that still existing that obliges women to sacrifice her life

Bearing children and spend their youth in raising them to write books that the ladies were not satisfied when listing to it:

” she asked, “If men write such rubbish as this, should our mothers have wasted their youth in bringing them into the world?”... I, for one, have taken it for granted that it was a woman’s duty to spend her youth in bearing children I venerated my mother for bearing ten; still more my grandmother for bearing fifteen; it was, I confess, my own ambition to bear twenty

(Virginia Woolf, 1921:1)

“Clorinda” was basing on the fact that it is unfair for women to bring children and spend their lives raising them while men are giving birth to books and pictures and civilizing the world that the women have populated and considering that their works is for equal merit the women populated the world while men have civilized it .

The girls set off, each with a different topic to investigate and discuss by making regular meetings and make reports as it is mentioned in the story in “Clorinda’s” saying:

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But now that we can read, what prevents us from judging the results? Before we bring another child into the world we must swear that we will find out what the world is like.

(Virginia Woolf, 1921:1)

“Clorinda” depending on “Jane’s” question about, if men deserve such a sacrifice, and relaying on the fact that the new women can read and judge takes decision that no one of them will marry or bring children until they will understand the truth or some think that will convince them to change their minds in order not to pass through their mothers and grandmothers path, that in order to bear children they supposed to bear books and pictures like men.

2.2.2 Finding the Truth

After founding the group and deciding to find out the truth of the world where the women are living with a marginalized and discriminated status while the men are continuing to bear new book and pictures

So we made ourselves into a society for asking questions. One of us was to visit a man-of-war; another was to hide herself in a scholar’s study; another was to attend a meeting of business men; while all were to read books, look at pictures, go to concerts, keep our eyes open in the streets, and ask questions perpetually

(Virginia Woolf, 1921:2)

The girls spread into the society to make their observations and write their reports each one went to a place to make her research , for example “Rose’s” visit with the captain was her method to find the truth , “Rose” was dressed like a man because at that time it was not allowed for women to be aboard a royal navy ship: **Rose read her notes upon “Honour” and described how she had dressed herself as an Æthiopian Prince and gone aboard one of His Majesty’s ships.**(Virginia Woolf, 1921:3) . The ship “Rose” wanted to be treated equally

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and wanted to be canned as men , the captain was unsure about “Rose” situation but what was sure is that she was treated gently which means that “Rose” has not been treated like a man would have been treated. The case of “Fanny” is different; she visits the law court and makes her observations, from her report we realize that all the judges are men but writing a report is not what “Helen” does in her visit to the royal academy ,in order to write a report she write a poem that it is written by men .All the girls are spread into the society and they are making their research to find whether or not the men are the dominance in all the society’s field that the women should be a part of.

The girls were unhappy with the information founded, in each reading of an account they come with the conclusion of the male dominance in the society and the inequality. Treatment between the genders which is due to the old mentality that requires women to stay at home and be the angel in the house and take care of the man who should by their turn take car and occupy the society, what the girls found after their research means that men view the female as an object rather than as an equal, and they are forced to live their lives at the command and instructions of the males.

2.2.3 Solving the Problem

The girls’ research to find the truth was very difficult for each one in the group, in the last meeting the girls were convinced that the men are the dominant in the society relaying on the report that they made. The research did not stop at this limit; they continue their research to find out some new information each with a different topic to investigate.

After five years they meet to analyze the situation and if the things have changed or not and whether or not they are justified in continuing the human race .the messengers start one after the other and delivered their reports (Virginia Woolf, 1921:7). The idea that men are the dominant in the society and to what extend this make them proud of themselves pushed the girls to think about their mother’s sacrifice to come to the conclusion that they are proud too by their mothers who scarified their youth in raising their children from which those men are. (Virginia Woolf, 1921:8)

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In fact the ladies were tired of that entire struggle and problems that they were obliged to face during their research. Some members of the society wanted just to give up and live the same life as their mothers' lives; getting married, bearing children and raising them. Introducing "Castalia" pregnancy was for a purpose which was the new woman can have children and live her life, some members from the group were not very happy with that because they were focusing on their goal and relying on what they decided in the beginning with "Clorinda". "Elizabeth" also made her report; she was dressed like a man and was taken as a reviewer **"She had dressed as a man and been taken for a reviewer"** (Virginia Woolf, 1921:9), her role was to read books written by the most popular authors for the last five years, the girls wanted to know if the men's books were good enough to take them as a reference to judge men; if the men writers have surpassed the known one such as Jane Austen and George Eliot, in fact the

ladies press her demanding the truth:

**The truth!"We demanded.
"Oh, the truth," she stammered, "the truth has nothing to
do with literature,"**

(Virginia Woolf, 1921:10)

When answering the group she did her best to show them that what is written in the papers has nothing to do with the reality. "Castalia" and in her meeting with Cassandra she tackled Poll's case and how her father prevented her from the heritage all that he did and his condition all was for a purpose, he wanted to punish her for being educated because if she was a traditional woman he would not put such a condition at this point she has come with a conclusion that the women were better off in their ignorance.

**Ann was playing with her doll very happily, we solemnly
made her a present of the lot and told her we had chosen
her to be President of the Society of the future—upon
which she burst into tears, poor little girl.**

(Virginia Woolf, 1921:12)

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The struggle continue but the girls were not able to fight any more, so they give up it was like a cop out, they have passed the succession to the next generation (Ann) who is asked to continue the fight and put a conclusion to the case. However the new generation is not happy about the life that she is going to live and that was illustrated when “Ann” burst into tears. Virginia Woolf’s choice of such young women is for a purpose, because a young person have the idea that he is able to solve the problems and that was the case of the ladies, they wanted to change the society as whole as they were relaying of their education which gave them more trust, but in the end they give up they could not change the reality or come with a convincing conclusion about the truth of the world and why the women are continuing bearing children and spend their youth bearing them while they will have nothing in response except the discrimination and the oppression by their children and the fathers of their children.

2.3 Poll vs. Womanhood

The short story is about a group of girls who are meeting to talk about the women situation in the society and how they are facing the discrimination to prove their identity and autonomy by getting rid of all the aspects of being a victim of the society in this title the case of “poll” will be analyzed because her problem was the case of all the women in that period to know to what extend did the woman suffer.

2.3.1 Womanhood in A Society

Virginia Woolf’s short story is an example of what women were living at that time in the real society she gathered all the issues and demonstrate them through the characters. Each woman was facing a particular problem in her life as it is said by Martin Robert in his article in 2009 the short story of Virginia Woolf is a commentary of the social contract between two genders. Feminism as we know it today was non-existent in the 19th century which makes it hard to define womanhood according to that era's scholars. However by the time passing and

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women gaining their own freedom and even have some political rights that are equal to men's, scholars became aware of the importance of womanhood.

Robert Stanley Martin, who states in 2009 in his feminist critic that **“A Society was a commentary on the "social contract", but goes on to say that Woolf's story wasn't traditionally feminist”**. It means that the short story tackles all what the women's problems and struggle to gain their freedom, but in a new style which do not talk about those problems and how the women rebel directly she mentioned many things in an implicit manner, Virginia Woolf as one of those scholars tackled the subject in her writing one of those writings is *A Society* a story that is basically about “womanhood” and women's role to change their status in their actual society. And that is confirmed by Naomi Black in her book *Virginia Woolf as a feminist (2004)* **“Woolf's changing representation of feminism in publications parallels her involvement with the contemporary women's movement”**.

In *A Society* women struggle from the existing mentality that women are angels in the house and their mentality that they should obey men in everything as a result of these women are oppressed and asked to blindly follow the rules which eventually would cause them to try to overcome the old mentality. in the story Poll as an example of a woman who is struggling to get her heritage which is a basic right, because of her father's will that is nearly impossible to fulfill.

“Womanhood” according to Judith Butler in her book *Gender Identity (1999)* is of a big interest since women were once upon a time considered less than human beings. In matter fact womanhood is the basic of the society, a woman is a mother therefore the reason humanity is going to spread, women are the careers which was proved in the (WW2) World War Two after the huge contribution of women therefore their gain of the simplest rights which were supposed to get by just being citizens and humans before anything.

The women's role in society has been greatly overseen in the last few decades but now is coming to a more viewpoint to people. In the early days women were seen as wives who were envisioned to cook, clean, and bear children and spend their youth raising them as it is mentioned in the story on the tongue of “Clorinda” when talking about her mother and

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grandmother. They were not allowed to vote while men took care of having jobs and paying any bills that had to be paid.

Soon enough it caught on that women should have a bigger role than what other people thought women should have. They would have strikes and go on marches to prove that they should have rights just like everyone else. They faced judgment like and other race that faced it. Women would voice their opinion in any way possible so that they could reach their goal and they did that is exactly what the women in the story wants, they want to face the old mentalities, the traditions and broke the boundaries that prevent them to be an affective member in the society.

Women have made vast improvements in their lifestyles in the past few decades from holding positions in governments to simple things like getting a job and supporting themselves. Men have a bent to leave their wives due to the fact that they had their child and the father was not committed enough or not ready to be a "father."

Women are faced with more responsibly than men but also are faced with a lot more problems than men because they are looked at like a woman a bearer of children. It is a fact that men shouldn't abuse their wives and its true, but they still are. Thousands of legal cases of domestic violence are seen throughout the country.

Virginia Woolf's short story is about those roles that women endure in a society, and the changes she makes to improve the society as well as finds her identity and autonomy to gave importance to her status that she is doing her best to evolve it and was shown throw the characters struggle, and then making the rebel to gain their rights and that was shown through the research that the group made inside the society to find out the source of the problem to fix it.

2.3.2 Poll as a Woman

The story *A Society* (1921) is a depiction of one of the plain days that women used to have in their lives as women first and as human beings second. As mentioned before the group

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is formed to follow the flaws of men and how they are supposed to change. After that meeting, Poll is seen crying because of her lacks in the society that she lives in.

“Poll” is a woman with a heritage which she is not allowed to get unless she completes a task that is given to her by her dead father which is reading all the books in London library **“He left her a fortune in his will, but on condition that she read all the books in the London Library** “(Virginia Woolf 1921:1). This act is completely against what the New Woman was looking for because it is completely opposite to what men have as rights as it show how vain men were toward anything that is related to women.

Poll is no beauty; leaves her shoe laces untied; and must have been thinking, while we praised men, that not one of them would ever wish to marry her

(Virginia Woolf 1921:1)

Of course” Poll” is described as a non-pretty woman, with all the characteristics that could describe a man instead of a woman. Though she is sensitive because the first contact with

her is as a woman who cries but she is described as though she is a man.

After reading the story one may conclude that the insecurity and lack of confidence surrounding Poll is due to the restrains of the society. Those ties limit women and urge them to praise men rather than themselves. It is odd that a father would leave a heritage but with a condition that is nearly impossible since the library is getting filled with new books every single day which only shows the lack of respect men have towards women as we may say that the father was clever to prevent his daughter from the heritage because he knew that every year millions and millions of books are published and that will be the cause that “poll” will never stop reading and she will never accomplish her father’s request and she will never take the heritage.

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Virginia Woolf through her character “Poll” is giving an example of the oppressed woman who is lacking the respect of the society as well as men in her life; also she is showing the sense of inequality between genders. Her low self-esteem drove her to think that she is not worth a husband simply because she does not fit the society’s norms.

Poll as a woman is depicted as though as opposite to the angel in the house who is supposed to be pretty and have all the qualities that lack men. However she is more masculine and is more like a New Woman with her lack of feminine charm, poll as a woman is young as it was confirmed by Martin Robert (2009) in his article “**The attendees are all young women**” and well educated but she was not praised in her society and especially by men and the main example of that is her father, who his act is considered as a punishment more than a condition. If poll was a man for maybe the father will give his fortune to his son to prove the male dominance in the society and to what extent the society still influenced by the Victorian’s society principles.

2.3.3 Poll’s Relation with Men

All the group’s member are all young women, they cannot wait to get married and have children of their own, between the girls there were “Poll” her father turned her life to night mare, after his death he gives her a task that is impossible to accomplish, the task requires Poll to read all the book in London library.

This was the only condition that prevent “Poll” from taking the heritage if it is not accomplished, “poll’s” relation with men begin with her father and from what is mentioned in the story it seems bad because if it was not so her father will let her the heritage without any condition to accomplish the only interpretation according to the ladies in the group her father was vain and what he did was a concrete example because he knew that this task will never be accomplished , another thing that can be say on “Poll’s” relation with her father that being a “New Woman” was not allowed for women in that period so maybe her father wanted to fight her by her weapon which is education

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From the story events we assume that “Poll” is not beautiful she is the opposite of what an angel in the house should look like her qualities are more suitable to a man than a woman, it is true that a new woman should be educated but also beautiful to accomplish the term of the new woman, “Poll’s” lack of beauty is the main cause of her bad relation with men because as it is known in all the societies of the world a man like to marry a woman that he see her beautiful and that is not the case of “Poll”:

Poll is no beauty; leaves her shoe laces untied; and must have been thinking, while we praised men, that not one of them would ever wish to marry her. At last she dried her tears.

(Virginia Woolf, 1921:1)

As it is reported in the short story that she know that she is not beautiful and she will not marry any man in her life and that was shown the time that the girls were praising men she had tears in her eyes because she was thinking about her situation she was not beautiful and her father prevent her from the heritage that maybe the solution of her problems.

Another case of” Poll’s” relation with men was her relations with the writers throw their books and was expressed implicitly in the story. “Poll” was oblige to read all the London library’s books due to that she knew many writers of the period from their books, but their relation were bad and that was shown when she use to jump from a book to another which was all written by men to show to the group’s member that all what they write was not valuable for them as new women and especially from “Poll” who argued that books are not what she thought them, and all what they write was rubbish as it is said by “Jane”. She considered them as if they are wasting her time and her life throw what they have write and that was not applied on all the writers for example Shakespeare and Milton from whom the girls learned from their books.

2.4 Society Reaction toward Women’s Act of Rebellion through the Short Story

What women did was because of what she experienced years ago from being marginalized, oppressed and discriminated, all these fact have lead them to make a revolution to get rid of all those aspects of being a victim in the society where she have to leave equally

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with men and be an affective member and have the opportunity to occupy all the field in the society as men do. The society's was not positive all the time since there were some negative reactions that were discussed through the short story

2.4.1 The Society's Influence on the Members

In *A Society* by Virginia Woolf we have the theme of domination, control, oppression, equality and change. Taken from her *The Complete Shorter Fiction collection* the story is narrated in the first person by a woman called "Cassandra" and from the beginning of the story the reader realises that Woolf may be exploring the theme of control or dominance, particularly male dominance.

Through the introduction of "Poll" we learn that before she can get her father's money she first has to read every book in the London library which for any person would be an arduous task. However for "Poll" the task brings confusion as the majority of books she is reading are written by men, "Poll" discovers that the determining of an individual's mind through reading is predominately driven by the male writer. This would further suggest an element of control or a sense of variation. It is also interesting that the narrator does not consider "Poll" to be physically attractive. The benefit of this information to the reader is that it is possible that the narrator realizes that men rather than judging women by their character or their achievements views a potential wife by how physically attractive they are. Which suggests the male may view the female as an object rather than as an equal. Poll and other ladies may be oppressed, forced to live their lives at the command and instruction of the male

Rose's visit with the Captain is also being interesting as Woolf may be exploring the ridiculous. The Captain appears to not only demand restitution but through his administration of it the reader senses that Woolf may be mocking the Royal Navy, a bastion of male dominance. At the time that the story was written it would have been unusual for a woman to have been aboard a Royal Navy ship. There is also a sense that Rose wishes to be treated equally and as such wants to be caned, as a man would be. This causes confusion to the

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Captain. It is possible that Woolf is suggesting that when confronted by a female seeking equality (as Rose appears to be doing) those in authority (the Captain) are unsure of what to do.

If anything Woolf may be suggesting that those in authority really do not know what they have to do when confronted by a determined female. It might also be worth noting that the Captain remains unsure of how he should treat Rose yet the reader do not suspect he would incur the same difficulty should the encounter have involved a man. Rose has been treated gently by the Captain as many women at the time the story was written would have been by men. In essence Rose has not been treated as a man would have been. There is a sense of inequality. Fanny and Helen's encounters are also interesting as both highlight how dominant the male is in society. Castalia's role in the story may also be important. Particularly the fact that she becomes pregnant, it is obvious that she is happy though there are some within the Society who do not share Castalia's happiness or at least her pregnancy causes some confusion for them.

It is possible that Woolf by introducing Castalia's pregnancy into the story is suggesting that inevitably women will get pregnant though they do not necessarily have to take on just the role of a mother. They can live their lives still doing things that they would like to do regardless of society's opinion of the role of a mother .Something that is a little clearer to the reader when Poll suggests that Castalia should be President of the Society. It might also be important that the goal of the Society was to decide whether the female is justified in continuing the human race. The very fact that Castalia is pregnant answers that question for Castalia. While the remainders of the Society remain undecided till each Society members report is heard.

What is also striking about the story is the fact that when the women asked questions about the value of money and power they were met with silence. This may be important as by questioning others about money and power the women may have unknowingly raised the guard of the individuals who were being questioned. If anything these same individuals (male) may not have wished for the status quo to change. This would further highlight the idea of inequality and the continued acceptance of this inequality.

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The brief introduction of (WWI) world war one and the Society's inability to foresee its occurrence may also be important. Throughout the story none of the women made any visits to the House of Commons where the decision to go to war would have been made. What was probably the most important institute in the land had been forgotten about by the women. Whereas one would expect the Society to have ventured to an institute that makes the laws of the land and as such has the capacity to change the role of women in society. The women remained for the main focused on books. It is also possible that by introducing the war into the story and the women's inability to visit the House of Commons that Woolf is suggesting that the women have focused on the past while the present passed them by, though it is the present that they have to live with.

The ending of the story is also interesting as both the narrator and Castalia appear to have a moment of realization and it is through this epiphany that they blame themselves for the state that society (and men in general) are in. How defeated both the narrator and Castalia feel is noticeable by the fact that they decide to make Castalia's young daughter Ann the President of the Society. This act is important as it can be viewed several ways. One way to look at it is to suggest that both the narrator and Castalia realises all their efforts over the years with regard to the Society have been futile or in vain and as such everything they have written is more suitable for a child to read.

However another way to look at the narrator and Castalia's actions is to consider that rather than continue their research themselves. They are passing the baton over to the next generation. Allowing Ann pursue what was once the Society's cause. If anything it is possible that the women who started the Society are prepared to accept the status quo and leave any element of change to the next generation of women (Ann).

What you may conclude from the summary, is the different roles that every character has and the way they see this role is actually the influence of the outside society? Therefore the society they created is just a way for them to find solutions which by the way they left for the next generation of women. As simple as men can seem to be, they are hard to get also.

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2.4.2 The influence of women in their society on the light of the short story

The problems tackled in the group were not solved instead they were left to be solved by the next generation of the new women. However changes occurred according to Virginia Woolf's story. So instead of showing the changes in the story itself, Virginia Woolf made it clear that the story is inspired by real life society and according to her in the Memoirs, the society created in the story is a mere translation of what was going on in the late nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century. In a matter a fact, women were trying hard to change the society's view towards them. They tried to gain their freedom and their rights but most importantly their status and their equality with men since they are just human beings alike.

As mentioned before women have suffered enough to gain their rights and their position in the society. So just like the women in story were frustrated to change men, women in real life were doing the same only using new and improved methods.

The influence of women to a society's flat transition from preliterate to literate, from a relatively autonomous community to a member of a nation tangled in a world economy, has received too little attention from social scientists and policy makers. When the economy and political organization of a society change, families who can adjust to the new conditions will fare the best. In as much as women the world over are the primary caretakers of young children, they play an important role in facilitating or hindering changes in family life. (Hartsock,1990:162).And this is exactly what Virginia Woolf implied in her story. Politics are as important in the improvements of the society as anything else.

How difficult is it for families to adjust to these new institutions? There are two major consequences that affect women - the loss of child labour and the need to make changes to help children master new skills. Working in a village in that is undergoing rapid social change, **“I have been able to observe the consequences of the introduction of schools and some of the adjustments women have made”**. (Yoder, 1992:16-381-388) Of course all this somehow or another was introduced in the story, the issue of money and politics are the problems tackled by the author herself.

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. Men were responsible for the supervision and care of all livestock. (Gutierrez, 1990:35(2), 149-153) Which may seem a bit new and refreshing, but it is not mentioned in the story whether the women in the virtual or fake society have any issues with work and skin colour. However it is obvious that because of the writer's own issues with sex she is more tolerable with all the odd categories in the society and was happening in the ancient society without her belonging to the feminist movement that help the women whatever their situation was.

The Key point for the increase of women's influence in the society seemed to be education, because if the women were not educated they will never have the power to change their faith, some exclusively women have the opportunity to have a much of education and that was by the second half of the nineteenth century yet the education was reserved for the upper class only. The idea was that if nowhere else, in education women and men could be equal. For a long time and after struggle with the society's old mentality women could get degree for some professions as doctors or lawyers, but they did not have the opportunity to exercise them.

As Kimberley M. Radek claims, it was thought that the important thing that bring the changes is women's suffrage since women "**believed that voting would allow them to get into other areas of influences of society**" (Radek, 2001) However, once free education was introduced, and once it became obvious to the families that subsistence agriculture and cash cropping on small holdings was no longer viable, that literacy and school diplomas or even university degrees were essential for success in the modern world, most fathers and mothers decided that all children should attend school. (D.G, 1985:53-355).

In the story the issue of education is directly related to the prestigious women of the society .and instead of just granting women the same rights as men, the father in the story grants his daughter the money if she fulfilled an unfulfilled task which is again related to education and the use of this example by the writer have two explanation the first one was because he want her to learn more or it was a way to punish her because he have an old mentality which requires women to be illiterate.

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How did mothers appraise the results of schooling? What are the realistic opportunities for young men and women who have earned high school and university diplomas? In the early 1960s high school graduates from the community we studied were able to get work. However, by the 1970s even college graduates were unsure of their futures. In 1975 the village's children we had observed were in their teens. None had made the university. A few were enrolled in technical schools. Most had returned to the villages with no promise of employment in the white collar jobs that they and their parents believed were assured to those who earned a diploma. Both young and old were perplexed by the false promises that they felt had been made to them. They did not know who was responsible for their failure.

The education have played a big role in changing the women's status through helping the women to open their eyes on what was happening for them from discrimination and isolation that make their lives bad, the male dominance requires that women live under the control of men and that only men have the right to define the women life.

But by the beginning of the twentieth century women start to be aware of their situation and how they have to fight to gain their freedom and shed the light on elevating their status to get rid of all the aspects that make a woman a victim of the society, and that was exactly the case of the women in the short story in which Virginia Woolf is illustrating the real case that women were living within their daily life , the influence of women in their societies is when the women spread into the societies to make their research and the manner that how every woman deals with her case, the manner that each one of them focuses on a particular topic in the society that was wrong in its rules for women for example the case of Rose who was oblige to wear man dress to have the right to get into a royal navy ship and the use of such illustration was because women were not allowed to get into a royal navy ship and the way that the writer introduce such topic is because she wanted the problem to be solved and that will be so in only the women get equality between genders .

The importance of education was introduced in the short story with it importance in the real society, this topic represented the turning point in the real and imaginative society and the introduction of such important topic by Virginia Woolf is because she is aware of the importance of education for a women which it is her weapon to fight the illiteracy that makes

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her the prisoner of her house. In the short story education represented the main fact that changes the events for example the education was introduced in Poll's case when she was asked to read all the London library books to maintain her father's fortune, the education was the main cause that lead "Clorinda" to think about their situation and what makes them spend their whole life rising the children that will not sacred education and apply it with it exact definition.

In the book the *woman's Hour* () the British women were living in total inequality that make the women living with no equal access to education but by 1944 the education act established the principles of free education for all from primary to secondary until the university.

Oppression for women was when they were oblige to answer such questions that force them to define their roles as wives, mothers, workers or lovers and that was relaying on their experience in the society rather than through men's definition, In her book, *Sexing the Millennium*, Linda Grant reports that some of the women felt the sexual revolution of the sixties had given them the right to say yes, feminism told them it was OK to say no this power that the feminist movement give them was through education since the movement requires a woman to be educated which makes her aware by all what is happening in the society.

The first and important question that was asked by the New Woman was what the real definition of a woman is and whether or not the old men's mentality changed toward women and whether or not the men accepted the idea of the New Woman to be an affective member in the society who have rights and duties as much as men and whether or not she could go hand in hand with men to influence the society positively and stop thinking about the gender race to gain the dominance in the society and start focusing on helping each other to make progress in the society

From politics, to economics, skin and sex genders to education, women have played a huge role changing the society to the best. The story does not mention the changes occurring in the society because of a society created by women but it tells us exactly the importance of women in making a change and how a women and trough education could change the old rules

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of the society, which is what the story is all about in first place that means that the use of Virginia Woolf such characters in her short story that tackles the problem occurred in the British society and how women could change their destiny through the revolution that they made to prove their selves as “New Women”

The short story tackles different issues in different places in the society through a specific character and all that to demonstrate to the reader that the “New Woman” position in her society is no more at home only she can be the house holder and the worker in the same time and that the main influence of the woman, she wanted to be present in all the field that were occupied by men before, what motivate her the most was the men’s embracement arguing that they have such ridiculous hope that will never be true.

For a way or another Virginia Woolf show the link between the real society and the imaginative one however the imaginative society give up arguing that being educated is not enough to change the world all perspectives toward women which by her turn come with plenty of advantages to the society.

2.5 Conclusion

As a conclusion from all the information sited in this chapter women played a big role in civilising the society thanks to education that makes it possible also the changes occurred for women was due to the fact that women know how to use their brain to create a place for their selves and influence and be influenced by the society, the influence exchanged was positive for both of them as the woman elevate her knowledge that lead her status to elevate the society eliminate those old mentality and traditions that ruled centuries before and causes

Chapter Three

Society and Women Revolution between Reality and Fiction

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Chapter three

Society and women revolution

3.1 Introduction

Modernity brought to humanity all the innovations that changed life forever, it made it faster and easier, yet more complex in terms of human relations. despite the fact that population's reactions were based on either fear , anger or determination , they had different ways to express their confusion , early modern times are distinguished by the protests ,oppositions thus communities' split .However it gave to literature a new shape , which allows reader to experience the current of early times and understand the shifting that it resulted .

3.2 The Consequences of Women Revolution

The achievements that the late nineteenth century woman realized through time and the numerous struggles she experienced in quest for emancipation .Exposed her firstly to the public sphere , after she long been imprisoned in domestic life .Then by more efforts she gained access in the public sphere within society .Until she came with a new figure as a new woman who became an active member of society .This shifting process is considered as a striking change that has shaken an entire nation .Testimonies that took place throughout history carried a lot of accusations to emancipated women making of her liberation the reason of social system disorder

To take a young woman out of the domestic setting and train her to think and feel as a man was to encourage her to succeed at a career , indeed to place it before marriage which violated virtually late Victorian norms

(Smith-Rosenberg, 1985:252)

Illustrates the blame to put on women's behalf due to their liberation that allowed them to exercise other professions, the parenting or taking care of household. But at the same time, history witnessed women cooperation in the making of nations, which created

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controversy among societies that disputed the good impact of such change and the bad aspect of it.

3.2.1 Family Degeneration, the Decline of a whole Nation

The determination of women of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century led them to get most of the rights they were calling for, to get a recognizable status among society .Which was in great part beneficial to them, yet in the other hand it was an indignation that kept staining their reputation: among the loyal historians and critics to the conservative social norms set by the Victorian epoch.

Women were accused and blamed for the decline of social values which according to them occurred as a result of their liberation .Especially after their blatant protests against ideologies that bounded them in a specific social status, limited their importance in the world and totally put them aside every social activity, and made of their home and family their only society that they had to take care of at every second of their existence. As women liberal movements were of a great influence and much stronger than it seemed to societies that instinctively dismissed women abilities .their protests took parts almost everywhere in the world including for instance in Dublin, Germany, The united States and even India .Where women crossed the limits in expressing their discontentment using verbal , physical and gestural attacks against men , besides of addressing messages of complain on signs they held while protesting , indicating mainly their discontentment from being treated like baby machines or sex objects , or even to express their willing not to bear children .

These liberal movements created confusion on the role of woman in society now that she is liberated from patriarchy and male domination .And imbalanced the social system. Thus the refusal of marriage due to financial independence that women benefited from when started to work outside the home , paved the way for more freedom to have different experiences in terms of carnal relationships , that led to bring into surface new unusual sexual orientations to a conservative way of living that implanted these latter with the idea of being meant to be with the same person for ever , to whom sacrifice her life and offer loyalty , such as homosexuality , bisexuality which was one of the main reasons of the decline of social values

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.That resulted later on many social flaws , especially in the case of having children out of marriage and let them to be raised in poverty or exposed to danger in the streets that is sexual harassment and rape .

Married woman also took their part of the blame and were accused of neglecting home, children and husband care, while being out for work. When to their refusal of child bearing, it is believed that it was the main reason for social disorder in terms of class and race. When a great part of the range of aristocratic intellectual women decide to make an end to procreation they will contribute to the decline of this range of society.

Besides of birth controlling abilities thanks to contraception, women education improvement that the modern times witnessed, and career making possibilities, led women to put all their efforts and attention to these new fields neglecting family units, what cooperated in family conventions disorder in the other hand was the long-term cohabities, where couples rarely make children, rather than registered marriage, which witnessed a visible decline along side with divorce cases that raised constantly, with eventually the increase of single parenting in the other hand, that are headed by women who take care of children and home besides of working outside home at the same time, which destroyed the traditional family unit. Thus the patriarchal British family is considered the most important of all institutions; it tends to maintain elevated positions in response to all political parties.

What brought fear about family degeneration, is women occupations in the public sphere in opposition to domestic life, longing for a long -term single life .Since commitment to family is considered as a source of national unity .Besides of the religious aspirations put on the Victorian family in case of the decline of religious influence , it is up to the family moral influences to replace it in order to maintain social stability .Social anthropologists in the twentieth century called it “**nursery of citizenship**” (Storry Mike 2003:116)

The British royal family for instance symbolizes the ideal of British family unit, referring to the Queen as “**the mother of common wealth**”. (Storry Mike, 2003:116).By the current times like British country was once viewed as “**the mother country**” (Storry Mike,

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2003:116). relatively to the family ideal of the precedent times that can be seen in the present time mostly on the royal family.

Many issues of another kind took part after women went outside home to exercise activities, for instance, sexual harassment and rape that witnessed an obvious increase, since the law took quiet light procedures to punish rapists, since women were considered culpable for such behaviour towards them .Prominent members of the judiciary expressed this by comments aiming the new clothing style or the behaviour of theirs as it is mentioned by Judge Raymond Dean (1990)‘‘**As the gentleman on the jury will understand, when a woman says no, she doesn’t always mean it**’’. Referring to such situation as if women accept male’s abusive behaviour toward her, yet they pretend they feel harassed.

This was not the only difficulty or form of discrimination that women faced even after their liberation. Judiciary were tolerant towards men that committed domestic violence acts, yet showed no mercy towards women who reciprocate. These acts against women indicate blames and culpability that the society expressed against them, because of the new status they gained among them publicly.

However the British society witnessed another range of issues that occurred after sexual orientations liberties, after the rates of the Aids phenomenon, it was obvious for responsible that it increased rapidly due to the sexual practices that resulted of these liberations .Such as homosexuality, but what made it worse is censorship policy that Britain adopted to maintain the discipline, when cinema grew up and started to exhibit stereotypical allusions about British sexual both eroticism and reserve , which reduced awareness about such diseases that came from moral decomposition .

3.2.2 Womanhood Moralities as Revolutionary Feminists

The ideal of ‘‘Womanhood’’ that reigned the Victorian era relayed on their appearance as the angels of the house, who take care of every single member of the family constantly and without complain. But more importantly they were supposed to maintain a tidy appearance, always smiling, acting with good manners, being loving and caring, they had to be soft, quiet such angels.

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They were imprisoned in domestic life yet had to be happy with it, they were brain washed with this ideal, and with ideas convincing them that if they act differently that would lead them out of their nature. Outside life was considered the enemy of their femininity, since for the Victorians the outside life is a masculine life. Furthermore all what is related with the brain was also manly, women had to be emotional, and had to think with their hearts; they had to be fragile in front of men and always showing their need for their protection, also their total dependence on them. It was up to men to manage women's lives, and that was the exact ideal of "Womanhood" to the Victorians.

All of that was followed with fashion styling that long tortured Victorian woman's bodies, for the only reason to beautify her in order to please men. They had to look beautiful, to put much effort for that. Even if their clothing prevented them from breathing correctly, since they had to tighten their corsets to appear in a good shape in one hand, and in the other their long heavy skirts prevented them from walking comfortably to travel in transportations .Yet otherwise they won't be considered as good wives, or if single they diminish their chances to marry.

But after a while, during late nineteenth century, women started to have different convictions, they refused to yield to such norms, they came to change visions of "Womanhood" when time started to modernise which awakened their consciousness ; thus they started thinking , if the Victorian social norms imposed to them ideologies indicating that they were meant to maintain social discipline, According to Victorians women are those who spread morality inside home, they are considered to be the pillars of moral strength and virtue. Women thought then that they should do this in the public sphere and have direct influence on the whole nation rather than influence only their children.

They started then to extend their duties down to church as the angel of the house, women's activities within the church communities was seen then as an extension of women's role within the home"

(Wilson 188.1999).

Many middle and upper middle class women were active as volunteers in charitable

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actions .Yet during the war they went out to occupy different fields as teachers that cooperated to the education of generations , as nurses who helped heal wounded men , but even different sport activities , for “Modern Women” these achievements that allowed women to be useful even outside home are the criteria that society should emphasise on to distinguish “Womanhood” ideals ,rather than to refer to them according to superficial criteria based only on external beauty and etiquette that soon got left over . “New women” changed views towards working and married women .To them educated women are a better choice for educated men in terms of compatibility .Besides of the fact that working women can help financially in their marriages. Women willing then to be a public influence, led them to get in the cultural world, where they became great literary writers and proved their position in a traditionally male’s dominated domain.

Knowing how to write was beneficial for women and was argued by Tompkins XI:”**Writing professionally not only enabled women respectably to earn an income, but also enabled them to do important cultural work** ” (Tompkins XI, 1985) .This also cooperated in their financial independence, but also let their works to be considered influential in the public sphere and recognizable among masculine views. This created a sort of astonishment that in great part recognize women’s powerful potential.

Without a full understanding of the role played by the novel , because this genre provided an essential link between purely private expression and the public world .Moreover it gave women authors and readers both , a voice for the self-representation, which had been made possible by the valorising of female subjectivity

(Mathiew, 1992:73)

Literature became women’s voice that tells the public about their concerns against the social experiences they had, including their sufferings from restrictions and oppression. They explain their willing for change and reveal their aspirations through fiction that advocated social change, denoting their denial of the true women Victorian ideal and calling for real woman new ideal of their own, that indicates the modern active woman.

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By the emergence of the new woman during the 1880s and 1890s as the daughters that witnessed their mother's struggles to get in the public sphere, their(s mother's aspirations boosted their determination but toward a radical change.

They were the daughters of the new bourgeois matrons, and their dreams were heralded by the clubs and organisations their mothers had created , and the role expansion those mothers had secured .Yet ironically , their mother's achievements only spurred the daughters' determination to create radically different roles for themselves

(Smith-Rosenberg 274. 1985)

That is to say that they followed their mothers path, but to more different directions. Changing womanhood ideal among the Victorian society was not enough; their aspirations went way beyond this, to totally emancipate women from all social norms, so they become a global influential power .Thus they started to call for civil rights, for positions and occupations equal to those of men, in more vast fields, political and economic for instance that put them in direct contact with governmental issues, where they proved their abilities in leadership. The new women did not only change womanhood ideals but it gave it a new figure, an elevated position , a life time recognition among the public sphere .The new woman does not have only public access but she has opinions as an active member in society .

3.3 Society's Reaction on Women Emancipation

As a striking change, the new woman phenomenon is a controversial subject, long disputed among critics or even the common population. Yet appreciated or rejected the new woman remained a force for change not willing to renounce.

3.3.1 From an Icon of Etiquette to a Daring Woman

The change has not only affected the position of the Victorian women , granting her different rights that makes her contribute to social, economical, political and educational, actions and activities .But it also affected her image and attitude as a whole .

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Women liberated themselves from the etiquette and fashion that was imposed to them at the time, they forget about the corset and long dresses, which were essential elements that gave them elegance and grace, and replaced it with more comfortable and more daring cloths , such as short skirts and even pants later. The social critic Max Nordau uphold this shift of tradition in the first chapter entitled *The dusk of nations* from his influential book *Degeneration* (1982), which according to him, led to the feminisation of men, which includes the emergence of the dandy as a new masculine fashion at the same time, when women started to take new directions in styling themselves, this fashion shows in great part a more feminine side of men by the use of softer materials and softer colours. In the other hand the increasingly Manish attitude of women .Which eventually led them to even smoke in public or even drink alcohol but even kissing men in front of people's behold .Which displeased old and religious people .

She has been long criticised through press and by different critics, since in one of the New York Times articles (april8,1896), they were pointed out with satiric comments like looking horrible while dressing like men, or even claiming that the next step will be to wear her hair short and adopt a mustache. Denoting their willing to get equal job opportunities alongside with men when they remain asking to be treated with chivalry by them .Which reflects a discontentment toward the new woman figure, claiming that when seeking for equality in liberties as men, women lost their femininity.

3.3.2 From Passive to Active

The emerging of the new woman phenomenon , went on an increasing evolvment , she could gain an important status within the society that long rejected her .This resulted many reactions from critics , historians , scholars ,common population or even politicians, as it is not easy for a population who was always influenced by a conservative society to accept change , especially when it is concerned with women who wants to compete alongside with men even for employment opportunities or a recognizable place among politicians.

The determination of the “New woman” was able to liberate herself from the domestic ideology that the Victorian era designated for her and expected her to maintain as her

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supporters assume, she is considered to be the cause of decadence and decline of social values in the eye of her oppressors .”New woman” chose independence instead of bearing children and refused marriage so she can have many relationships and experiences taking different sexual orientations , instead of remaining loyal to the same person for a life time as the Victorian social norms dictates , while advocating political consciousness and career making .Which caused her a wide range of social problems since it was considered as threatening for the middle class range who wants to preserve their genetic reproductivity and most importantly to maintain their aristocratic posture .But from the Marxist and Engel’s perspectives the important role of women’s reproductivity , relays on the fact that in capitalist societies , women were meant to reproduce heirs , to maintain family heritage , when working class women , reproduces generations of labor to maintain the power of the system .From where it comes their restriction through the social rigid norms that imposed marriage and household to them.

Women’s financial independence and possibility to make a career was seen then as a danger to an instinctively patriarchal society that started to lose control over what they made a domestic being for decades, since their interactions within the streets gave them a sense of the importance of their existence, and their collaboration on the making of a nation and of a society. Yet job missions were kept chosen carefully for women especially for middle class single women, who were still bounded by etiquette demands, they worked on respectable activities, for instance working in the warehouse even though it is law paid, it remained preferable over machine work only because it was clean .Yet it was still believed to be more decent for married women not to work.

3.3.3 The Masculine Reactions

The increasing women emancipation became male’s concern, as they started to lose control over a being they long dominated .Yet their first reactions did not lack of satire , since they instinctively underestimate women’s abilities , yet the strong steps these latter took and the striking turn of the events was alarming for men .They assumed that women’s liberation movements were a total negation of femaleness, “womanhood” or femininity , as their main aim

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was legalisation with men in all fields of life .Men thought that women went on this liberation movements in the sake of immoral practices , that were meant to destroy social values.

Despite of the fact that women started to be viewed as good for leadership, yet they are always regarded with a satirical manner among men. Margaret Thatcher for instance was described as the “**the best man for the job**” (Storry Mike, 2003:117) .And in the same time she was called “**the iron lady**” (Storry Mike, 2003:117)

As the first female prime minister during her eleven-year reign proved she is a brilliant female leader. Yet in the satirical puppet show *spitting image* (1984-1996), she was always showed using men’s toilet, this image meant to indicate the confusion provoked by the presence of a female leader in a traditional male’s domain from their view.

3.4 The Role of the Short Story in Enhancing Feminist Views within the British Society

The new woman in society, is a social reformer, a poet or an author in literature it is represented as a character in a play or a novel reflecting the attitude of society towards her, denying the image that male writers belonging to the same restrictive Victorian society that is of an over-sensitive intellectual having difficulties to accept its completely natural vulnerability, since their idea of femininity relies on being a loving and submissive wife and a caring mother.

3.4.1 Virginia Woolf’s Influence as a Modern Feminist Writer

Modernism paved the way to a new era of writing ,literary works of the time targeted mainly social rigid norms and the changes that occurred by the time , where novelists had conflicted emotions and shared differed views about the new woman phenomenon. Thus it focuses on the inner life of the individuals, with a remarkable fascination of the urban life after the industrial revolution, as the new twist that led them to deny the social boundaries that restricted their emotional and cultural life besides of their intimacy, and awakened their desire to liberate themselves.

Following the trend Virginia Woolf introduced controversial themes , such as gender , women’s rights , homosexuality and even suicidal inclinations besides of open criticism of social governmental issues .Her narrative features lies in the consciousness of the characters ,

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since the character of hers is involved through his feelings , opinions , ideas and awareness about life thus she represents the self-reflexivity which is innate in modern writings in one hand , and in the other hand it made of her literary works, the mirror of the events that British society experienced in the epoch when she lived, as she was not only an author but a critic as well and as most writers in the era she was influenced by the advancement of psychology, more precisely the most courant at the time the Freudian psyche.

Virginia Woolf through her narratives is concerned mainly with the absolutely mental world of a woman ,her aspirations and imagination of a better life in a better world, which reflects her alienation from the way of living she was forced to exercise, and put the reader in the picture of their sufferings due to social injustices and inequality, it illustrates also their struggles while seeking for recognition, which is the case of her short story *A society*, it is powerful because it gives a voice to the everyday hidden, oppressed experiences of women , which started to be heard among the public sphere through literary works .Fiction in the other hand collaborates in the power of Virginia's writings, since it allows a profound vision of political , personal and cultural terms within society; being the mirror that reflects social crisis of the time , fiction incorporates also emotions which is linked to law and methodically excluded from it, which eventually made of Virginia's fiction a persuasive language as the language of law is .Besides of that fiction permitted women to imagine new relationships, and life choices .

Virginia Woolf disputed the responsibility of the novelist toward the future of the novel in affecting the reader in her essay *Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown* (1924), she assumed that since the human character has changed in modern times, the novel also has to be changed, if it is to be a true representation of human life .Which became an inspiration to many historians now writing about the social and cultural changes that occurred then .Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown in addition to Woolf's other essays like modern fiction, served as inspiration to other literary critics , since it was regarded as a platform for the new novel of sensibility following Virginia's perspectives .

In her debate with Bennett she argued the difficult issues of what is real human life and how the novelist is meant to represent it. Bennett's view lead him to give a more personal and interior view of individual consciousness .When to Virginia Woolf shades light into society

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.Bennett claimed that fiction is meant to present characters , yet young writers do not present it the way they used to , Virginia then agreed with his claims yet she responded to them , that fiction is distinguished by forming characters , pointing out that the Victorian novel introduces characters and their society's interactions , experiences of love , laughter , marriage , and all of these to her are revealed to the reader .Yet by the modern times literary current has taken a new turn .

Fiction presented characters as generalized by their social psychological modes perception and representation .Thus the Edwardians as she names them , are concerned by affecting social changes rather than be worry about character or art of fiction.

Virginia Woolf believes that the change in personal life is linked automatically to the change on the public life; the one influences the other She states:

All human relations have shifted those between masters and servants, husbands and wives, parents and children, and when human relations change there is at the same time a change in religion, conduct, politics, and literature

(Essay, I, 1977:321)

That is to say, the human being, his perceptions, beliefs and way of thinking are to be changed, when influenced due to his interactions within society and personal environment that put him in several experiments which affect his inner aspirations and pushes him toward a change in his life that is already experimented in the outside within the public sphere. She is all the way concerned with the social changes and links that to the representation of the reality of the character in the novel. Her fiction *A Society* introduces the illustration of each character in the short story and every sentiment of disappointment, anger, grief or fear, is meant to illustrate the different struggles women suffered from, but that they realised when witnessing all the changes occurring around the mat that period.

3.4.2 New Woman and Literature

The new woman a generalized expression indicating economically independent women , that crossed a long and challenging path , seeking , social , political and educational equality among men .

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Historians and writers like Thomas Hardy as being among the most important feminist influencers along side with Virginia Woolf, introduced their awareness through their writings of the late Victorian era changing world, by portraying the struggles women went through in their transition from submissive beings in response to the demanding norms set by the Victorian patriarchal society, to the empowered new woman figure. As the main discourse approached mainly, women emancipation, especially in social terms, their refusal of maternity or even their pregnancy out of marriage .Targeting also women who are determined to free themselves.

Yet Thomas Hardy has a paradoxical perspective, willing to keep the Victorian comfortable idea about the docile woman, while being eager to highlight the freedom of woman in the modern time. His female characters for instance are portrayed as being passive instinctively , which shows their vulnerability yet without being inferior , even though he believed on that there was a natural difference between men and women , but he urged for equality between both sexes .Which is the case of several other modern writers who witnessed the radical change concerning the women subject .

A close examination of the fictional heroines of Hardy's major novels and a study done on his personal experiences besides of his philosophy revealed that Hardy's dissatisfaction went toward the artifice of artificial relationships, since according to him society would have no future, with the oppressing treatment of women. Thomas Hardy 's writings illustrates his love for the intelligent and strong minded women, yet this did not diminish his concern regarding the power of the emerging new woman figure, acknowledging at the same time their importance in the world.

Thomas Hardy believes that women with an emancipated spirit , so called the "New Woman" is a natural and innate phenomenon long suppressed and suffocated by the social expectations of the Victorian society .

There are different perspectives coming from different critics or even the same one, concerning the new woman subject. Among them there was who are seduced by the new posture of women, being confident, strong and independent besides of being determined. But at the same time they still wanted to see their delicate and fragile side , which led some other

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critics such as Margaret Oliphant in an article titled *The anti-marriage league* in 1896 edition of Black wood's magazine regarding Thomas Hardy's works to oppose perspectives of the kind .She asserted that Hardy's male characters are victims of "seductions of sirens" and "remorseless ministers of destiny", these determined operators , managing all of the machinery of life so as to be secure in their own way .(Cox260)

Oliphant opposition to perspectives like Hardy's is typical of Victorian society's rigid code, that is women should remain submissive to men without complaining, otherwise they will be seen as controlling. Even though many critics disputed the new woman subject, each defended or denied their new status among society, yet the new woman defeated critic's expectations by gaining a large space in literary works of the era therefore the empowered figure of the new woman impressed many feminist influencers and imposed their recognition among critics even though by negative remarks, since their initial aspirations were to be exposed to the public Sphere.

3.5 Conclusion

As much as change brought to women positions they were looking for among society and freed them from the restrictions that the Victorian era imposed to them. Thanks to their determination, persistence and resistance, besides of the influence of modern literature, feminist authors and critics cooperation in dragging the public's attention towards them .It put them in the other hand in many troubles within society, since they had to face numerous accusations for all the bad changes that happened in British society, assuming that this disorder is only a result of women liberation .Further more it brought them many rights that permitted a better life for them.

General Conclusion

General Conclusion

Women's willing to free themselves from patriarchy that marks the Victorian era, reinforces their determination to compete alongside with men to get equal positions in society. Despite the fact that it is a pivotal move, yet it does not capture male's attention from the first insight. It is only when women start to take serious steps towards emancipation, through different movements qualified as feminist or liberal by means of aggressive protests or even through influential literary works, that women's liberation comes true.

However, critics and authors dispute women's liberation by expressing controversial emotions toward this growing phenomenon. The idea of women empowerment and independence seduces quite a lot of them, yet it worries a wide range of them too, since it can cause a sudden change in the social system and disrupts gender roles especially in the active sphere, where woman shifts from being man's successor at home, to his competitor in different career fields. On the other side, literature pictures and narrates, through modern fiction literary works, the changes that affect the whole nation. It is the mirror that reflects and tells about the events that occur in the so called the "fin de siècle" to push the reader to feel the transition to a more liberal way of thinking.

Authors like Virginia Woolf, a modernist feminist fiction writer, tend to make the reader a part of their past personal experiences through the characters of the stories. Hence, modern fiction readers can value the characters' willing to achieve freedom by being able to get self approval and recognition as productive and active persons in society. In addition, Woolf's main focus is women's issues and their calls for rights and emancipation. Through her writings, she tries to eliminate the stereotypes attributed to women such as their natural vulnerability and emotional delicacy that fit her profession as an "angel in the house". She also denounces the political restraints on women procreation, either to maintain aristocratic legacy,

heritage or social class, when expecting the working class women to bear a child constantly so as they bring to labour more children to become future workers for the system.

Modernity, on the other hand, creates new horizons, which lead people toward totally different and innovative activities, based on sciences, technical and technological facilities that lead to the creation of new professions and more job opportunities. Therefore it helps to awaken people's consciousness to push them move forward change. It also provides people with a large space for both sexes to practise their skills, and cooperate in the development of modern life; the fact that threatens male's influence and turns it out to a "complicated" gender conflict.

Literary works like Virginia's are most adequate to portray the battlefield that witnesses female struggle for their liberal principles as it is clearly illustrated in her short story *A society*, that reflects the rise of "misogyny" as a result of women's integration into the public sphere. However, the fierce polemic against the new "Liberal Woman" is in a great part an important success toward recognition, since it proves that men feel threatened and decide to react in order to preserve their authority. Thus the controversy that results as a consequence of women's movement and the dichotomy that expands among literary authors, social critics and historians, all help women's voice to be heard and exposed to the public sphere whether as a national problem or as an essential element that takes a major part in social innovation. Virginia's characters give up their aspirations to the next generations , which is not a renunciation but to say that every range of the society's members especially the most faithful to the Victorian social norms has to accept the change and to adapt with young and intellectual women calling for change .Therefore change requires determination but also new generations .

Further avenues of research beyond Master time constraints could include: the effects of women's new status on all fields of life, and the limits and the consequences of "gender conflict".

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Appendices

Appendix I Biography of Virginia Woolf



Adeline Virginia Stephen, born in London on January 25, 1882. The daughter of Sir Leslie Stephen who is a famous scholar and philosopher. And Julia Jackson who died when Virginia was twelve or thirteen years old. Her parents are known as an ideal Victorian parents.

Virginia Woolf and her sister were educated at home in their father's library. Virginia soon fell deep into the world of literature, to become novelist, critic and an essayist. She got married to Leonard Woolf, who is a prominent writer and critic from Cambridge England eight years after her father passed away in 1912. Virginia mothered her brothers after the death of their both parents. She suffered from frequent mental breakdowns when her half sister died and her brother after that. She was a member of the Bloomsbury group along side with her siblings where they lived independently from their half brothers and a number of intellectuals included writers, philosophers and artists. She was determined in 1908 to form the novel by creating a holistic form introducing aspects of life that was elusive from the Victorian novel. She wrote her famous *The Voyage Out* in 1913, where she based many of her novel's characters on real life prototypes. Yet surrealism introduced in this novel began Virginia's voyage beyond the conventions of realism. Most famous in the other hand, of her novels *Mrs Dalloway* (1925), and *The Waves* (1931) she wrote also head essays on artistic theory, literary history and women's writings besides of politics of power, biographical writings and also picturesque short fiction. Woolf's manic depressive worries, of being a bad writer and a bad woman let her to commit several suicide attempts until she succeeded ending up her life on 28, March 1941

Source: www.Britannica.com (2016)

Appendix II Stereotype of New Woman



The picture shows a woman wearing knickerbockers and knee socks, traditional male attire, and smoking a cigarette, supervising a man who appears to be wearing a dress and apron as he does the laundry with a tub and washboard. This was the society's view toward the new woman.

Source: the United States [Library of Congress's Prints and Photograph division](http://www.loc.gov/pictures/resource/cph.3b44488/) <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/resource/cph.3b44488/>

Thank you