

A critical analysis of Virginia Woolf's works with particular emphasis on feminism in the social context

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Abstract

Virginia Woolf produced numerous books and articles about patriarchal society and feminism. Her writing had a significant impact on women in her era. In the literature of the 20th century, Virginia Woolf is regarded as a feminist and revolutionary figure. Her art touches on a wide range of significant topics of her era. Her writings have reflected Woolf's views on gender equality. She gives insight into the woman's existence in her era by discussing her writing technique and use of "woman's language." Gender inequity, homosexuality, and feminist viewpoints are major influences on how she portrays women. It is difficult to critique her works from a feminist perspective, nevertheless. Virginia Woolf's most influential works are regarded as "A Room of One's Own" and "Three Guineas." Virginia serves as an example of how women fit within a patriarchal system and how to coexist with it. With an emphasis on Virginia Woolf's feminist viewpoints within the social milieu of her age, this critical examination explores the writings of this influential modernist author. Woolf's complex and multidimensional examination of feminist topics, such as the economic, social, and cultural limitations placed on women, is shown by this study's analysis of her classic books, including Mrs. Dalloway, To the Lighthouse and Orlando. Her utilization of these personas to symbolize her real life makes these two pieces about her views on women and life in general. According to the study, Mrs. Woolf used her books to teach women how to find purpose in life and express who they are. By addressing the precarious circumstances faced by women, Virginia Woolf made a name for herself as a notable feminist author. She gave us a thorough response to the topic posed by women and revealed the reasons behind their persecution. This essay will examine her writing in great detail using a feminist lens, using a few of her books as examples. The patriarchal systems and social mores that Woolf criticized are shown by this critical examination, which also emphasizes her support of rights for females, education, and the arts. Woolf's feminist ideas are further placed in the study's context of the early 20th century's larger intellectual and cultural trends, such as the rise of modernist aesthetics and the suffrage campaign.

Keyword: *Virginia Woolf, literary criticism, feminist theory, modernist aesthetics, social context, the suffrage movement, and feminism.*

Introduction

Using a critical lens, this examination highlights Woolf's support for women's rights, education, and artistic expression while exposing the patriarchal systems and social conventions she criticized. Woolf's feminist ideas are further placed in the study's context of the early 20th century's larger intellectual and cultural trends, such as the rise of modernist aesthetics and the suffrage campaign. From the Victorian era to the Edwardian era, Virginia Woolf (1882–1941) was the most significant female English author of novels, essays, biographies, and feminist works. "Art would have remained formless or marginal without Virginia Woolf at its centre," according to Eliot (1941). The passing of Virginia Woolf disrupts a broad cultural trend. Virginia produced and published a number of books, feminist articles, and letters detailing her personal life until she was fifty-five years old. Because of her distinctive writing style, use of metaphor and similes, and integration of symbolism, Virginia Woolf is a significant writer." Numerous scholars will examine

Virginia Woolf's life, the impact of feminism on it, female identity, and women's status in patriarchal societies, her marriage, and the person she married in this essay. The idea that men and women are equal in society, the economy, and politics is known as feminism. It aims to provide women equal rights in society and in all spheres of life that are dominated by males. Women must identify inequality and combat it in order to establish equality. For literature to stop using sexist language, it must also be critiqued and improved. One method of achieving this is through feminist critique. The term "feminism" refers to a group of movements and ideas that are focused on defining, establishing, and protecting equitable economic, political, and social rights for women, according to the Cambridge Dictionary. It also refers to the collection of actions meant to bring about this situation, or the idea that women ought to be treated equally and have the same opportunities, rights, and authority as men. A loose definition of feminism is a movement that aims to improve women's life by challenging social norms based on male domination and subsequent females, which suggests releasing women from social constraints, conventions, and shackles. Instead of being viewed as passive objects, it calls for women to be recognized as independent subjects.

It aims to bring men and women into equality in the areas of politics, economics, society, and morality. Giving women a new identity and educating them about their rights are the goals of that movement. In the 20th century, Virginia Woolf was a writer. There was the most severe disapproval of the Edwardian way of life in England during the first ten years of the twentieth century. There was a strong cry for change as Victorian ideas—especially those related to the family, higher education, and political rights—were suddenly criticized. This transformation, however, was also intensifying in the latter two decades during the nineteenth century, particularly with regard to women's status. Human character had altered in the Edwardian period, she declared, bringing with it both fresh beginnings and repudiation of the old. In 1924, Mr. Bennett joined Mrs. Brown. Woolf made money and gained notoriety during this period. Despite her ability to perceive changes, she was aware that societal transformation would need significant effort. She wrote about the experiences of women women suffered in a world ruled by males in a way that made their suffering accessible to everybody. Woolf's feminism encompasses not just her overtly feminist views but also her interest in gender identities, women's lives, histories, and fiction, all of which are evident in her writing (Roe and Sellars 209).

Feminism in Mrs. Dalloway

The criticism of patriarchal society in Mrs. Dalloway is one of the main ways it addresses feminist issues. The story focuses on how women are limited by social conventions and expectations, especially in regard to their duties as mothers, spouses, and caretakers. Mrs. Dalloway is among Virginia Woolf's most significant works. Time—more specifically, the responsibilities of women during that era—is the central theme of the book. For women, Clarissa Dalloway is a symbol of strength. Woolf claims that although she is strong, she is alone. However, she never made this issue public. Mrs. Dalloway, his husband's last name, is her current name; she is no longer Clarissa. The novel's central theme is the predicament of Clarissa and Peter. Clarissa is friends with Peter, who adores her. However, Clarissa wed Mr. Dalloway. Clarissa found love to be complicated. Examining Clarissa's circumstances allows us to assess the government of society and the patriarchal system in general. A day in Clarissa Dalloway's life is the subject of Mrs. Dalloway. One of her spouses is an official member of Parliament. The foundation of a successful marriage is said to be having a decent husband and having money. She loves Peter even though she has committed herself to Richard. She is unable of giving Richard the romanticism that is anticipated in a heterosexual partnership. She feels lonely and imprisoned in this life but can't fight it. Two distinct social scopes—public and private—are distinguished in this book. Generally speaking, males are considered members of the public. Despite this, the majority of women are part of private circles since they are responsible for taking care of the family. Clarissa is a representation of feminine strength, and the lives of women in prison are stressful. She possessed wealth, status, and power. She had been a trailblazer in her era. "She had been friends with the most talented men of her time" (Mrs. Dalloway 82).

A Room of One's Own

The historical and societal obstacles that have kept women from creating and publishing literature are highlighted by Woolf at the outset. She points out that women have always been excluded from financial freedom, property, and education, which prevents them from pursuing careers in writing. The patriarchal culture that has silenced women's voices and inventiveness is another issue that Woolf criticizes. In general, an apartment of One's Own is regarded as a feminist work. "A woman must have resources and a room of own to herself if her intent is to write fiction," Woolf

stated in *A Room of One's Own*, which is where the work's title originates (p.4). Virginia argues that women have historically been prevented from writing due to their relative poverty and that financial independence will allow them to do so; "In the first place, possessing a chamber of her own... was beyond of the question, unless both of her parents were particularly wealthy or very noble". Woolf believed that all women ought to be successful in the areas of reading and writing. Virginia also created a fictitious character named Judith Shakespeare. Shakespeare's sister, Virginia, is referenced. In her phrase, Judith stands for all women. She remained at home while her brothers left for school, much like Virginia Woolf. In the novel, Woolf depicts Judith's predicament. William leaves for school, leaving Judith at home. Being confined to the house, Judith says, "She was just as daring, as creative, and as eager to explore the outside world as he was." She didn't get sent to school, however. Unlike Shakespeare, Judith ended her own life at the end of this chapter. Judith was not as successful as Shakespeare's life. It is believed that Woolf's article was the first significant piece of feminist critique. Woolf was interested in the plight of professional women in a world dominated by males. She wanted to understand why women wrote less than males. Virginia implies in *A Room of One's Own* that the female author is always "an inheritor besides being an originator." Wolf (1929), page 113 Woolf believed that the primary barriers to women's writing were as follows. The first was the significance of financial autonomy. According to her, a woman who wants to create fiction needs her own place. She emphasizes the need for financial power over and over. Without money, Woolf contends, women communicate out of insecurity and rage, which hinders their ability to write well.

To the Lighthouse

A primary focus of the book is the intricacy of interpersonal connections. While on vacation in their Scottish summer house, the Ramsay family is the main subject of the book. The family is shown to be incredibly dysfunctional, with each member battling their own personal issues. The book examines the interactions between the family members, exposing the underlying tensions and disputes. Two people, Mrs. Ramsay daughter her daughter Lily, were created by Virginia Woolf in "To the Lighthouse." Lily, a female painter, is the supporting heroine, while Mrs. Ramsay is the main heroine of the book. To comprehend the entire narrative, one must analyse the two ladies. Although there are numerous differences between the two ladies, they also have a commonality. The family's ideal wife and mother is Mrs. Ramsay. According to Virginia, a woman only draws attention if she is attractive. When describing herself to others, she frequently uses the word "beautiful." Despite being characterized as a greedy and impolite guy, she constantly makes an effort to treat her spouse with extra respect. Even worse, Mrs. Ramsay chooses to be a victim of patriarchy. Lily is the complete antithesis of her mother. She is seen unattractive by Mrs. Ramsay, and Lily feels sorry for men likes her father. He doesn't hesitate to voice her opinions on males, and she is against marriage. She finds serenity in painting, which is the most significant aspect of her tale. For quite some time, women were taught they couldn't paint and never felt good enough. "Mr. Tansley was murmuring in her ear, 'Women cannot write or paint.'" (Wolf, 1994) She may be lonely since no one can relate to her thoughts or art, but simply additionally ranks as the bravest because she chooses to be yourself.

Three Guineas

The article makes the case that feminine education is essential to averting conflict. Woolf contends that historically, women have had limited access to education, which has hindered their ability to fully engage in public life. According to Woolf, women might provide a distinct viewpoint to society that emphasizes empathy, collaboration, and nonviolence if they were given more knowledge and authority. Feminism, war, and social criticism are all interwoven in Virginia Woolf's provocative novel *Three Guineas*. Originally intended as a "novel essay," Woolf wrote *Three Guineas* to wrap up the unfinished business from her previous book, *A Room of One's Own*. The book was designed to alternate between chapters of non-fiction essays and fictional narratives, giving Woolf the opportunity to discuss women and war at the same time. But when the "novel-essay" method failed, she divided the two sections. Her well-known work, *The Years*, was the fictional element, and *Three Guineas* was the nonfiction component. An insightful critique of patriarchal systems may be found in *Three Guineas*. Woolf contends that militarism and men's authority under patriarchy go hand in hand. She promotes financial independence and education for women as vital means of bringing about peace. The reasons of gender inequality are examined in Woolf's bold articulation of pacifist politics.

She pushes for active resistance and questions social conventions by presenting women as essential to averting conflict.

Conclusion

In summary, this critical examination has illustrated the importance of Virginia Woolf's writings within the framework of social criticism and feminist theory. By closely examining Woolf's novels, essays, and correspondence, this work has brought to light her complex and multidimensional examination of feminist issues, such as the social, cultural, and economic limitations placed on women. I stress that Woolf wrote concerning women and their challenges in this research. In order to express her feelings and those of other women, she developed a number of female characters. Most of these characters are victims of Victorian racial ideals and the patriarchal society. Woolf, however, did so in order for women to be the masters of their own circumstances rather than the victims. to allow them to observe what was happening. Women need to be financially independent in order to be able to write anything they want, as she says in *A Room of One's Own*. Her life's central theme was feminism. Her inability to identify her identity in society led her to write about feminism. She penned novels on women's circumstances. Shakespeare's sister was one of the genuine people she utilized. "What could be Shakespeare's demise if she had a sister?" she wrote. Women had no opportunity to compose or publish their works since they were confined to their homes for generations. We must take use of this chance to accomplish our objectives, such as reducing gender disparity. Because books and language have the ability to transform people and ideas. And Virginia's comments truly altered the course of history.

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