



WOMEN'S PORTRAIT THROUGH BRITISH FEMALE LITERATURE IN THE LAST THREE CENTURIES

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SCRIPT

Abstract.....	3
0. Introduction.....	4
1. Live and work of British women writers from the 18th century to 20th century.....	7
1.1. Jane Austen.....	7
1.1.1. Historical context (18th century)	7
1.1.2. Biography	9
1.1.3. Works	10
1.1.4. Pride and Prejudice	11
1.2. Virginia Woolf.....	13
1.2.1. Historical context (19th century)	13
1.2.2. Biography	15
1.2.3. Works	16
1.2.4. A Room of One's Own	17
1.3. Daphne du Maurier	19
1.3.1. Historical context (20th century)	19
1.3.2. Biography	22
1.3.3. Works	23
1.3.4. Rebecca	24
2. Analysis and comparison	26
2.1. Analysis	26
2.1.1. Pride and Prejudice	26
2.1.2. A Room of One's Own	30
2.1.3. Rebecca	33
2.2. Comparison	37
3. Conclusions	41
4. Annex	44
4.1. Annex A: Suffragists propaganda.....	44
4.2. Annex B: My work	45
4.3. Annex C: Current events 2022	46
4.3.1. Iran - For freedom.....	46
4.3.2. Roe v Wade.....	47
4.4. Annex D: Resistir cent anys més.....	48
4.5. Annex E: Interview	52
5. Bibliography and webliography	53

ABSTRACT

Based on the interest of understanding why women are in the current situation in this society, being in some cases inferior to men but having progressed in many others, the objective of this work is to check if there really has been as much change as we are told about gender differences, subordinating women.

After collecting information on how women were during the last three centuries (historical context and feminist movement at the time) three female British authors have been selected, one from each century, and one book from each. Based on this, the analysis of these has been carried out and the role of women represented in each has been compared to see if the change really exists or not.

Finally, it has been verified that there are many aspects that have been improved regarding the undervaluation of women by people and society, however, some similarities have been observed regarding the belief that women are inferior to men of past centuries to the present day.

RESUM

Partint de l'interès d'entendre el per què la dona està en la situació actual en aquesta societat, sent en alguns casos inferior a l'home però havent progressat en molts d'altres, l'objectiu d'aquest treball és comprovar si realment hi ha hagut tant canvi com ens és comentat sobre les diferències de gènere, interioritzant a la dona.

Després de recollir informació sobre com es trobava la dona durant els últims tres segles (context històric i moviment feminista del moment) s'han seleccionat tres autores britàniques, una de cada segle i un llibre de cadascuna. A partir d'això s'ha realitzat l'anàlisi d'aquests llibres i comparat el rol de la dona representat en cada un per veure si realment existeix o no algun canvi.

Finalment, s'ha comprovat que són molts els aspectes que s'han millorat en relació a la infravaloració cap a la dona per part de la societat, tanmateix, s'han observat algunes semblances respecte a la creença de que la dona és inferior a l'home tant en els segles passats com a l'actualitat.

0. INTRODUCTION

I have always considered myself a feminist and this is a fundamentally essential issue to me since I have my own mind, can think logically, and have my own opinions and beliefs. Not simply because I am a woman, but because I honestly think that everyone should fight for their rights as well as the rights of others. Not only do I stand out whenever feminism is mentioned, but I also like debating it and creating awareness about it. I feel that raising awareness is one of the most important aspects of overcoming difficulties, particularly cultural and ethical ones. That being said, this research project is for me a way of expressing how I feel about the inequality between the two sexes and also it will be a way of proving to people who don't believe that this inequality is still existent, that it is.

I've always enjoyed reading and seeing current issues portrayed in films and literature since seeing it first-hand might change your mind about a certain problem, such as women's roles in society in this case. People are sometimes unaware of what is truly occurring across the world, and they may not even think that it is a reality, therefore promoting awareness via movies and literature is a vital and beneficial approach for people to recognise the true problems of our society. Writers, film directors, philosophers, etc., they all always express what they believe and feel about what they are writing, directing and talking about. This is why I also wanted to read only women's literature to know what their point of view is and if they maybe they sometimes talk about themselves as a way of self-expression.

This is why I decided to devote my TREC to something literature and feminism. I want to learn about what women had to face in order for us to have what we have now, as well as the rights that they secured for us to participate in. I'd want to go further by reading women's literature and comparing how women had to live for three centuries vs how I live now because of them.

I've chosen to compare the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries because I feel they are the most representative of how women's roles in society developed. They progressed from having no rights to fighting for them and eventually obtaining some. I also want to dig deeper and gain some knowledge of how women struggled in the past, as well as learn more about feminism. After all, I owe it to all of the women who had to live under such conditions and injustices for me to now have an education and, in most cases, work anywhere I choose at an equal wage to men.

I've known about **Jane Austen** and how talented she was as a writer since I was in primary school. I couldn't read her novels because I was too young and they were too difficult for me to understand, but as I got older, I became fascinated in her literature and decided to buy all of her works. I'd previously watched various movies based on her books, but nothing matches reading them. I have always enjoyed reading about period dramas and being able to compare the different way of life that they used to live and how I am living now.

I knew what *Pride and Prejudice* was about because I had heard of it for a long time and I had always wanted to read it and discover her way of writing. I wanted to wait a few years and learn English so that I could read it in the original language and learn new expressions from the old English. I also wanted to discover if English was too different from what is now.

Two years ago I got hooked on learning about significant women throughout history and seeing what women had done to accomplish some changes. While doing some research I discovered **Virginia Woolf**. I saw that she had written this book which my mum had talked about before and recommended it to me, but I had never found the chance to read it, since two years ago I wasn't that good in English and I, again, wanted to read it in English.

When I read what the book was about I got really confused at first, but then it caught my eye and since then I have always wanted to read a *Room of One's Own*.

When I was young I watched a movie called *The Birds* and I actually liked it. It was Alfred Hitchcock style, but what I would have never imagined was for a woman to be the writer of it. My dad told me it was written by her, **Daphne du Maurier**, and so I wanted to learn about her when I grew old, I wanted to read something written by her.

I had heard of *Rebecca* on the radio once, and it caught my attention. I believe I always enjoy reading stuff that is written by women, because it makes me feel proud of them knowing where we come from, what obstacles we have gone through.

It was very hard for me to find a female author from Britain of the nineteenth century, I couldn't find anyone that talked about something related to females. My dad reminded me of her, since we had watched that movie, and I started to research her. I was between the book I chose, which is *Rebecca* and *My Cousin Rachel*. I finally decided to read *Rebecca*, because as I said, I had already heard about this novel and I wanted to get deeper into it.

This paper is generally going to be based on two types of research.

The first is more theoretical and it will focus on researching the historical context in which the female writers that were selected lived, specifically researching which role women had in that time frame. I will be researching all of this information on reliable websites and writing what I believe is most important. I believe that not all information that I find is important since I will be focusing this paper on specific topics

The second research will be the reading. All three books are very different, but still somehow talk about the same issue. What I will be researching while doing the reading will be the similarities and differences, so that I can end with a conclusion. Has there been any progress towards women's role in society or has there not? I want to believe the answer is yes, it has. I will be reading the books at the same time so that I can know what I have to be looking for and what are the most talked about topics and be able to see clearly what the differences and similarities are. Whenever I find what I am looking for I will be writing quotes which I believe are essential for the research and taking notes in different notebooks, one for each book. I will write the page and the sentence so that I can go back to where I read it.

By comparing the three books, I expect to reach the conclusion that there has been progress over the centuries. I expect that women's role in society has changed and prove we are seen differently nowadays through the literature written by women. I have chosen only novels written by women because I believe that reading about our role in society from a woman's point of view is more interesting and truthful than a man's novel. What I also expect to find are the similarities, to prove that some things that happened to women back then still happen till this day.

1. LIVE AND WORK OF BRITISH WOMEN WRITERS FROM THE 18th CENTURY TO 20th CENTURY

1.1. JANE AUSTEN

1.1.1. HISTORICAL CONTEXT (18th CENTURY)

Between the 1670s and the 1750s, both public and private families of British people had major transformations. Literature increasingly led to an increase in public activity among British people (during the Restoration period). There were visible and clear class divisions in areas like social life and education.

Girls from wealthy households went to boarding schools and poor girls were sent to dame schools to learn to write and read, since they didn't have money to go to school. Even though they could attend school, they were not allowed to go to universities in the United Kingdom, and lots of professions were forbidden to them. Most of the jobs needed a lot of physical power during the 18th century, that's why they were mostly done by males. Furthermore, housework took a long time, so married women did not work outside the home. Single women's life was difficult. Some of their professions were spinners, tailoresses and milliners, for example. But most women worked as domestic servants.

Women could not own property in the 18th century, on the other hand, her family could put some property in trust for her when she was about to get married. She would be entitled to any profits of the land that was kept in trust to her and her husband had no legal authority over it but he had a legal obligation to assist her and his wife's debts were his responsibility as well.

Pregnancy in the 18th century was dangerous since there were no anaesthetics available and women were occasionally forced to give birth. The majority of married women had multiple children even though most of them wouldn't survive. Infant mortality back then was vastly high.

Women wore corsets or "stays" in addition to their linen shirts and chemises. These clothes, very suffocating, were supposed to be necessary for good posture. The "false rump", usually made of cork, was covered by a petticoat and overskirt on a woman's legs. Afterwards "fan hoops" appeared, which pulled the fabric out on all sides. There were both pros and cons reasons for these dress contraptions. Some claimed that they made it difficult for women to get around, while some others claimed that it kept men at a "chaste distance". These looks were adopted by women of all social classes.

Women's hair, while years went by, became more voluminous, curly and wavy. Caps with lace around the brim were popular among the ladies. The norm for women's shoes was high-heeled and pointed toe shoes. Lots of accessories were popular among fashionable women, such as globes, jewellery and watches, which were not as common as they are nowadays.

1.1.1.1. Feminism Movement at the 18th Century

Enlightened ideas about the organization of society, including the position of women, emerged in Europe during the 18th century. Feminism, the social and political movement promoting gender equality, emerged in the 20th century.

The Enlightenment lasted roughly from 1650 to 1800. During this time, there was a significant shift in human thinking in Europe. Rationalistic equality thought was gaining traction. Man's critical thinking and self-development were encouraged. The first critical remarks about women's positions were true.

A *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* by **Mary Wollstonecraft**¹ was a seminal work of literature that continues to resonate in feminism and human rights movements today. Wollstonecraft uses it to respond to 18th century educational and political theorists who did not believe women should receive a rational education. She contends that women should be educated in accordance with their social status, claiming that women are vital to the nation because they educate its children and because they can be "companions" to their husbands rather than mere wives. Wollstonecraft believes that women are human beings deserving of the same fundamental rights as men, rather than ornaments to society or property to be traded in marriage.

In reaction to the 1789 *Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen*, **Olympe de Gouges**² wrote the *Declaration of the Rights of Woman and of the Female Citizen* on September 14, 1791. By releasing this text on September 15, de Gouges wanted to reveal the French Revolution's failings in recognizing gender equality. De Gouges was charged, tried and convicted of treason as a result of her publications, resulting in her immediate execution with the Girondists, making her one of only three women killed during the succeeding Reign of Terror, and the only one hanged for her political writings.

1. **Mary Wollstonecraft** (1759 - 1797) is considered one of the forerunners of feminist literature and philosophy.

2. **Olympe de Gouges** (1748 - 1793) was a French activist, writer and political philosopher who defended equality between men and women in all aspects of public and private life.

1.1.2. BIOGRAPHY

Jane Austen was born on December 16 of 1775 in Steventon, a city in Hampshire. She had six brothers and one sister, she was the seventh child of eight children. Her family was tight-knit, they were all close to each other.

Jane and Cassandra, her sister, were sent to attend school in Oxford when they were just seven years old, but they contracted typhus and were sent back to Steventon. When the girls were nine they went to the Abbey School in Reading, but they were withdrawn because their father could no longer afford the tuition. They continued their studies at home with the assistance of their father and brothers.



1. Portrait of Jane Austen.

Jane and Cassandra return home permanently after completing their formal education at the boarding school, and Jane begins writing *First Impressions*. She had no idea at the time that this single work would go on to become her most famous and enduring work, the story that is now known as *Pride & Prejudice*. The initial draft was finished about 1799.

We've reached the point in the story where Jane's novels collide with actual life. Harris Bigg-Wither, a boyhood friend of the family and Jane's, appears as a real-life figure. Jane receives her only known marriage proposal from Mr. Bigg-Wither in December, this time in 1802. Jane accepts the marriage because she recognizes the practicality of both of their positions. Bigg-Withers is set to inherit a sizable estate and is financially secure. Jane's apathy to the man as a whole appears to be his only flaw. She showed no genuine love towards him, but the ease of being cared for, as well as the future of her family, seemed to dictate her acceptance of the proposal. Jane, in a twist reminiscent of one of her fictional characters, rejected her invitation the next day. Jane offers a pivotal point in her writing that is a compilation of many of her events in a letter to her niece some years later, a family member seeking relationship advice from Jane. Her advice to the niece is simply not to marry if the affection is not there. This revelation is a brilliant glimpse into Ms. Austen's psyche, seemingly plucked from the pages of one of her novels, where her heroines marry for love rather than money or power.

Jane sensed a downturn in her health in early 1816 but ignored it in favour of finishing the task she had begun. Her relatives started to notice. Jane maintained a positive attitude and played down her illness to family and friends. The artwork is eventually completed, and Jane is hard at work on a new project titled *The Brothers* by January 1817. Jane finishes twelve chapters of the book before her condition becomes more serious. At 41, the basic act of walking became a burden, and energy was quickly depleted when completing daily duties. Jane was confined to her bed by April, and her job suffered as a result.

Jane Austen died in Winchester on July 18th, 1817, taking with her the completion of her unfinished writings. Henry used his contacts to have his sister buried at Winchester Cathedral.

1.1.3. WORKS

Austen, who was always attracted by the realm of stories, began to write in bound notebooks. During her adolescence in the 1790s, she began to write her own novels and wrote *Love and Friendship*, a parody of romantic literature organized as a series of love letters. Using that framework, she revealed her wit and contempt for sensibility, or romantic hysteria, a distinct point of view that would come to characterize much of her subsequent writing. The next year, she published *The History of England*, a 34-page spoof of historical writing with pictures by Cassandra.

Austen spent most of her adolescence helping to maintain the family house, playing the piano, going to church, and mingling with neighbours. Her nights and weekends were frequently filled with cotillions, and as a result, she became a skilled dancer. On other nights, she'd pull a book from the shelf and read it aloud to her family, maybe one she'd written herself. She kept writing, honing her style in more ambitious pieces like *Lady Susan*, an epistolary story about a manipulative woman who utilizes her sexuality, cleverness and charm to get her way with others. Austen also began writing several of her future important works, the first of which was *Elinor and Marianne*, a story written as a sequence of letters that would eventually be published as *Sense and Sensibility*. She began writing versions of *First Impressions*, which would eventually be published as *Pride and Prejudice* and *Lady Susan*, which would subsequently be published as *Northanger Abbey* by Jane's brother, Henry.

Austen began anonymously publishing her works in her 30s. *Sense and Sensibility*, *Pride and Prejudice* (a work she described as her "darling child", which also gained great praise), *Mansfield Park* and *Emma* were all published under her pen name between 1811 and 1816.

1.1.4. PRIDE AND PREJUDICE

Pride and Prejudice is the love story of Elizabeth Bennet and Mr. Darcy, who must overcome their prejudices in order to be together. Throughout the narrative, both characters learn to overcome their pride and prejudice in order to recognize the other's character qualities.

Austen's tale takes place in a world where both expectations and reputation are important. Austen casts a sarcastic eye on this eagerness to determine a person's character based on their social standing. In fact, the working title of the book before it was released was *First Impressions*, which communicates even more forcefully her desire to criticize individuals who judge only on the accidents of class.

Elizabeth, the second of five sisters, is a bright young woman whose tendency to make fast decisions keeps her from understanding Darcy for who he truly is. Hearing him describe her appearance as "tolerable, but not handsome enough to tempt *me*" does not improve her opinion of him (*Austen, 1993, p. 13*). Darcy has the riches and social standing that Elizabeth's family lacks, which adds to her reluctance to give him the benefit of the doubt. However, as she grows more acquainted with Darcy's conduct and motivations, she comes to believe that Darcy is a wonderful guy in general. Elizabeth's pride is palpable at the start of the story, though not to the extent that Darcy's prejudice is. Elizabeth's pride grows as she assesses Darcy's conduct without completely comprehending his intentions.

It reaches a climax in her rejection of Darcy's marriage proposal, when she reveals some of her wrong snap judgments about him. Elizabeth accuses Darcy of two things: attempting to separate her sister, Jane, from her lover (and Darcy's best friend), Bingley, and treating the attractive Officer Wickham unfairly.

It isn't until Darcy later sends Elizabeth a letter explaining his motivations that she realizes her prejudice. Yes, he attempted to break up Jane and Bingley's romance, but he argues that this was partly due to Darcy's fear that she didn't truly love him (she does; she's just a little shy).

Wickham, on the other hand, had a questionable past, and Darcy was attempting to safeguard Elizabeth's family. Elizabeth's dignity begins to dwindle after receiving the letter, reaching a low point when she learns that Darcy assisted Wickham in marrying Elizabeth's sister Lydia. It begins a little increase from here and concludes almost at the same level where it began.

Meanwhile, Darcy's prejudice gradually diminishes throughout the story. When he first sees Elizabeth at a ball – when he mumbles his "tolerable, but not handsome enough" remark – his prejudice is at an all-time high (*Austen, 1993, p. 13*). His genteel reputation is essential to him, and he has no desire to be in a love connection with someone who could tarnish it. Darcy's prejudice, like any good romantic comedy, eventually fades, and his barriers are gradually lowered following his initial meeting with his future sweetheart. Darcy reveals to Elizabeth that he is more taken with her than he would want to be by the time of the Netherfield ball. But it isn't until his proposal to Elizabeth that his prejudice is shattered: she rejects him. Elizabeth's rejection of Darcy's proposal no sure damages his pride, which is probably a good thing, because it follows him throughout the story.

1.2. VIRGINIA WOOLF

1.2.1. HISTORICAL CONTEXT (19th CENTURY)

In the 19th century, European and American women lived in a time marked by gender inequity. Women had few legal, social or political rights: they couldn't vote, couldn't sue or be sued, couldn't testify in court, had very limited control over personal property after marriage, were rarely granted legal custody of their children in divorce cases, and were barred from higher education institutions. Women were expected to be submissive to their husbands and fathers. Their career options were likewise severely limited. Women from the middle and higher classes typically stayed at home to care for their children and run the family. Lower-class women frequently worked outside the home, but usually as low-wage domestic workers or factory and mill labourers.

Corsets, bonnets, top hats, bustles and petticoats were what women wore in the 19th century. Full skirts dominated women's fashion during the Victorian era, progressively moving to the back of the silhouette. However, at the end of the era, the less restricted Aesthetic style developed.

Industrialization, urbanization, the rise of the market economy, the middle class, and longer life expectancies all changed European and American society and family life. Families worked together for the majority of the eighteenth century and the first few decades of the 19th century, splitting farming responsibilities or supporting themselves through small-scale family-owned companies. After 1830, however, the family home as the focus of economic activity was increasingly supplanted by employees who made their livelihood outside the home, thanks to fast commercial growth, big business and migration to larger cities. Men were typically the major "breadwinners", with women supposed to stay at home to raise children, clean, cook, and provide a safe refuge for returning husbands. Women were supposed to adhere to a rigorously defined domain of home and moral duties, which women increasingly challenged in the last two-thirds of the century, according to most researchers.

1.2.1.1. Feminism movement in the 19th century

The characteristics of a female political movement became obvious in the 18th century. Feminism became an established idea in 1850, and the first feminist wave began. The women's movement was led by equality in education, work and voting rights.

The term "first feminist wave" refers to a time period that spanned from roughly 1850 to 1940. The wave was distinguished by the pursuit of legal equality for women. The focus was on the right to an education and to work for a living. Later, emphasis switched to political rights, with a concentration on women's suffrage – the pinnacle of the first feminist movement from 1890 to 1920.

The early feminist reformers were disorganized, and they included important persons who had been victims of injustice. Individuals such as **Caroline Norton**³, whose personal tragedy of being unable to obtain a divorce and being denied access to her three sons by her husband, inspired her to a life of intense campaigning that resulted in the passage of the *Custody of Infants Act* (1839) and the introduction of the Tender Years doctrine for child custody arrangements. For the first time, the act granted married mothers the right to their children. However, because women had to petition in the Court of Chancery, few women could afford to plead for their rights.

The *Langham Place Circle* was the first organized campaign for English feminism in the 1850s. The organization advocated for a variety of women's issues, including increased female employment and education rights. Through the *Married Women's Property Committee*, it also advocated for women's property rights. The *English Woman's Journal*, founded in 1858 by Barbara Bodichon, Matilda Mary Hays and Bessie Rayner Parkes, was the first feminist British journal.

During World War I, more women found employment outside the house. Because of the wartime experience of women in the workforce, the *Sex Disqualification (Removal) Act* 1919 allowed women to enter professions and civil service and marriage was no longer a legal impediment to women working outside the house. Jessie Boucherett, Barbara Bodichon and Adelaide Proctor founded the Society for Promoting the Employment of Women in 1859 to encourage women's training and employment.

3. **Caroline Norton (1808 – 1877)** was an active English social reformer and author.

1.2.2. BIOGRAPHY

Virginia Woolf was an English author, feminist, essayist, publisher, and critic, considered as one of the foremost modernists of the 20th century.

She was born on January 25, 1882 into a great family. Before marrying each other, both of her parents had been married and widowed. Woolf had four half-siblings: Laura Makepeace, Stephen and George, Gerald and Stella Duckworth, and three full siblings: Thoby, Vanessa, and Adrian. The eight kids shared a house at 22 Hyde Park Gate in Kensington.

Two of Woolf's brothers had attended Cambridge, but the girls were all educated at home and benefited from the family's magnificent Victorian library. Furthermore, both socially and artistically, Woolf's parents were exceptionally well connected.



2. Virginia Woolf in 1902.

Virginia was a curious, light-hearted, and playful young girl. She founded the *Hyde Park Gate News*, a family newspaper, to record her family's amusing experiences. Early traumas, such as being sexually molested by her half-brothers George and Gerald Duckworth, darkened her youth, which she wrote about in her pieces *A Sketch of the Past* and *22 Hyde Park Gate*. She also had to deal with the abrupt death of her mother from rheumatic illness when she was thirteen years old, which caused her first mental breakdown, and the loss of her half-sister Stella, who had become the household's head, two years later. Woolf completed her studies in German, Greek, and Latin at King's College London's Ladies' Department while dealing with her personal losses. During her four years of studies, she met a group of radical feminists who were leading educational reforms. Her father died of stomach cancer in 1904, causing another mental setback that resulted in Woolf being institutionalized for a short time.

Virginia encountered various *Bloomsbury Group* intellectuals and artists during this time, including art critic Clive Bell, who married Virginia's sister Vanessa, novelist E.M. Forster, painter Duncan Grant, biographer Lytton Strachey, economist John Maynard Keynes, and

essayist Leonard Woolf, among others. Leonard Woolf and Virginia became closer, and eventually they were married on August 10, 1912. The two shared a passionate love for one another for the rest of their lives.

Woolf wrote *A Room of One's Own* in 1929, a feminist essay based on lectures she gave at women's colleges and examining the role of women in literature. Woolf (2020) writes in the piece "a woman must have money and a room of her own if she is to write fiction" (p. 1).

Leonard Woolf, who was always by her side, was well aware of any signs that indicated his wife's despair. He noticed her sliding into great depression as she worked on what would be her final manuscript, *Between the Acts*. World War II was raging at the time, and the pair resolved to commit suicide together if England was attacked by Germany, knowing that Leonard, who was Jewish, would be in special danger. During the Blitz, the German bombing of London in 1940, the couple's house was destroyed.

On March 28, 1941, Woolf, unable to cope with her despair, put on her overcoat, stuffed its pockets with stones, and strolled into the River Ouse. The torrent carried her away as she waded into the water. Three weeks later, authorities discovered her body. Leonard Woolf had her cremated and her ashes dispersed at Monk's House, where they lived.

Woolf's work resonated with a new generation of readers during the feminist movement of the 1970s, despite her reputation declining after World War II. Woolf is still considered one of the most significant writers of the 21st century.

1.2.3. WORKS

Virginia had started writing her first novel some years before marrying Leonard. *Melymbrosia* was the initial title. After nine years and numerous drafts, *The Voyage Out* was released in 1915. Woolf experimented with a variety of literary devices throughout the work, including captivating and unusual narrative perspectives, dream-states, and free association prose. Two years later, the Woolfs purchased a used printing press and launched Hogarth Press, their own publishing firm based at Hogarth House. Virginia and Leonard had some of their work published, as well as works by Sigmund Freud, Katharine Mansfield, and T.S. Eliot.

In 1919, a year after World War I ended, the Woolfs bought Monk's House, a home in the village of Rodmell, and Virginia wrote *Night and Day*, a novel set in Edwardian England. *Jacob's Room*, her third novel, was published by Hogarth in 1922. With its modernist features and based on her brother Thoby, it was deemed a dramatic departure from her previous books. That year, she met **Vita Sackville-West**⁴ who she formed a friendship with that blossomed into an affair. Despite the fact that their affair ended, they remained friends until Virginia Woolf's death.

Mrs. Dalloway, Woolf's fourth novel, garnered excellent reviews in 1925. The captivating novel intertwined private monologues and addressed feminism, mental illness and homosexuality in post-World War I England. *Mrs. Dalloway* inspired *The Hours*, a 1998 novel by Michael Cunningham and a 2002 film adaptation. *To the Lighthouse*, her 1928 novel, was another critical hit and was considered ground-breaking for its stream of consciousness storytelling. The modernist classic investigates the subtext of human connections through the Ramsay family's holiday on the Scottish Isle of Skye.

Woolf wrote *A Room of One's Own* in 1929, a feminist essay based on lectures she gave at women's institutions that addresses women's roles in literature. In her next work, *The Waves* (1931), Woolf pushed narrative boundaries, describing it as a "play-poem" written in the voices of six different characters. Woolf's final novel, *The Years*, was released in 1937, and it was about a family's history across a generation. *Three Guineas*, an article released the following year, explored the feminist themes of *A Room of One's Own* while also addressing Nazism and war.

1.2.4. A ROOM OF ONE'S OWN

Woolf's essay looks at the educational, social, and economic hardships that women have faced throughout history. It contains Woolf's famous argument that "a woman must have money and her own room if she is going to write fiction" – although Woolf describes it as "opinion on one minor issue" and the essay explores the "unresolved issues" of women and fiction. Literature "to show you how I came to this opinion about room and money". Through the fictionalized character of 'Mary', Woolf argues that literature and history is a male-dominated construct that has traditionally marginalized women (*Woolf, 2020, p. 1-2*).

4. Vita Sackville-West (1892 – 1962), wife of an English diplomat, Harold Nicolson, a novelist, poet and landscape gardener.

Women, for example, are prohibited from attending school and university, or are excluded by law from inheritance rights, or are required to marry, during which time their time is spent on housework and raising children. Woolf imagines what kind of life "Judith Shakespeare" – Shakespeare's brilliant, talented sister – could have lived, concluding that she "would have been so thwarted and hindered by other people, so tortured and pulled asunder by her own contrary instincts, that she must have lost her health and sanity to a certainty ", Woolf insists (*Woolf, 2020, p. 40*).

Woolf ends with an appeal to the audience to write all kinds of books, without hesitation on any subject however trivial or vast: Judith will come again if we work with her, for work, even in poverty and obscurity, is worth the time.

1.3. DAPHNE DU MAURIER

1.3.1. HISTORICAL CONTEXT (20th CENTURY)

Women achieved equal rights to males during the twentieth century. Women would inevitably be granted the same privileges as males as a result of technological and economic advancements. By 1884, the majority of men in the United Kingdom had been granted the right to vote. As a result, in 1897, local women's suffrage societies banded together to form the *National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies* (NUWSS). The group was moderate, and its members were referred to as suffragists (4.1. Annex A: *Suffragists propaganda*).

The *Women's Social and Political Union* (WSPU), a more radical organization, was founded in 1903. It was led by **Emmeline Pankhurst**⁵, and its members were known as suffragettes. Arson and vandalism were among the crimes committed by the suffragettes. Women achieved equal rights to males during the twentieth century. Women would inevitably be granted the same privileges as males as a result of technological and economic advancements. The WSPU, on the other hand, only wanted votes from women who met a property requirement. When World War I broke out in 1914, the suffragettes put an end to their campaign. Women over thirty were allowed to vote in the United Kingdom in 1918 if they met certain property requirements. At the age of twenty one, all women were able to vote in 1928 (the same as men). **Nancy Astor** was elected to the House of Commons in 1919. She was the first female Member of Parliament to be elected to the House of Commons. **Margaret Bondfield** was the first female cabinet minister in 1929. **Margaret Thatcher** became the first female Prime Minister of the United Kingdom in 1979.

During the 20th century, more jobs became available to women. In Los Angeles, the first policewoman was appointed in 1910. In 1914, the first female police officers were commissioned in the United Kingdom. The *Sex Disqualification (Removal) Act* of 1919 allowed women to enter specific professions. Solicitors, barristers, veterinarians, and chartered accountants were all permitted. They were also permitted to serve as magistrates and jurors. In 1920, **Mary Harris Smith** became the first chartered accountant in the United Kingdom. In 1922, **Carrie Morrison** became the first female solicitor. **Irene Barclay** became the first female chartered surveyor in 1922.

5. Emmeline Pankhurst (1858 – 1928) was a political activist and leader of the UK suffrage movement.

During World War II, women in the United Kingdom played a critical role. They functioned as anti-aircraft gunners and ambulance drivers. Many enlisted as Women's Royal Naval Service or Women's Auxiliary Air Force. As part of the women's land army, others worked in factories or on farms. Dust women were also present. There was a women's auxiliary fire department, and many women worked as nurses. Most married women did not work outside the home in the mid-twentieth century (except in wartime).

Women wore long dresses in 1900. It was considered impolite for ladies to expose their legs. Women wore hobble skirts starting around 1910. Women could only "hobble" along in them because they were so narrow. During World War I, however, women's clothing became more utilitarian. In 1925, women's clothing underwent a transformation. Women began to wear knee-length skirts at that period. It was trendy for women to appear boyish in the mid and late 1920s. In the 1930s, however, women's clothing became increasingly conservative. Because it was vital to save material during World War II, skirts were made shorter. Rationing of clothing lasted until 1949. Meanwhile, in 1946, the bikini was created. Christian Dior introduced the New Look in 1947, which included long skirts and tight waistlines to create an 'hourglass' figure. Women's clothing of the 1950s was full and feminine. However, when Mary Quant created the micro skirt in 1965, clothing became even more casual.

1.3.1.1. Feminism movement in the 20th century

Women were oppressed in a variety of ways in the early 20th century. The denial of the right to vote was both a manifestation and a cause of their oppression. Women, on the other hand, were far from passive victims of oppression. To challenge the status quo, two major campaigning organizations emerged: the *National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies* (NUWSS) and the *Women's Social and Political Union* (WSPU). Between 1905 and 1914, these societies dominated the suffrage movements. It seems reasonable to speculate that the activities of women in these societies shaped the modern agenda for women, and that without their efforts, women's lives today would be far worse. Women's participation in society and politics had been and still is severely restricted during the Victorian and Edwardian eras. This was primarily due to the existence of patriarchal systems and, for many of the women involved in these two groups, class relations.

Every major suffrage bill introduced in Parliament in the years since has been defeated. This was primarily due to the fact that neither of the leading politicians of the time, William Gladstone nor Benjamin Disraeli, wanted to offend Queen Victoria's staunch opposition to the women's movement. However, in 1869, Parliament granted women taxpayers the right to vote in municipal elections, and over the next several decades, women became eligible to serve on county and city councils. Despite significant support in Parliament for legislation to that effect, women were still denied the right to vote in parliamentary elections.

Following the Liberal Party's return to power in 1906, seven suffrage bills were defeated in Parliament in the years that followed. As a result, as time passed, many suffragists became involved in increasingly violent actions. These female militants, known as suffragettes, were imprisoned and continued their protests by going on hunger strikes.

When World War I broke out, the woman suffrage organizations shifted their focus to assisting the war effort, and their success did much to sway the public's support for the cause of woman suffrage. Most members of Parliament from all three major parties finally recognized the need for women's enfranchisement, and the resulting Representation of the People Act was passed by the House of Commons in June 1917 and by the House of Lords in February 1918. All women over the age of thirty were granted the full franchise under this act. Soon after, an act allowing women to sit in the House of Commons was passed. The voting age for women was reduced to twenty one in 1928 in order to put female voters on an equal footing with male voters.

1.3.2. BIOGRAPHY

Daphne du Maurier, born in 1907 in Regent's Park, London, was a well-known popular fiction author of her generation. She established herself as a master storyteller through her novels, but she also wrote plays, short stories and biographies.

Du Maurier and her two sisters, who were mostly home-schooled by governesses, were extremely close, bound together in a world of imagination, stories, and fantasy. This rarefied early life, as well as her close relationship with her volatile father and her uneasy feelings around her mother, were to have a huge influence on Daphne du Maurier's future creative work. During family vacations at the du Maurier country house in Bodinnick by Fowey, she developed a life-long love of Cornwall, which served as the backdrop for many of her stories.



3. Young Daphne du Maurier.

The Loving Spirit, Daphne du Maurier's first novel, was published to critical acclaim in 1931. In 1932, she married Major Frederick Arthur Montague Browning and had her first child, Tessa, in 1933. Her candid biography of her father, *Gerald: A Portrait* (1934), shocked some of her father's admirers while also establishing her as a talented writer. The publication of *Jamaica Inn* catapulted her to the top of the best-seller lists in 1936.

Rebecca, Daphne du Maurier's best-known novel, was inspired by an unhappy period as an army wife in Egypt (1938). *Rebecca*, an intense study of female jealousy, was adapted into a successful film by Alfred Hitchcock in 1940. Following that, *Frenchman's Creek* (1941) and *Hungry Hill* (1943) were both successful films. She had another daughter, Flavia, in 1937, and a son, Christian, in 1940, and while her husband was away at war, she returned to Cornwall with the children to live in 'Menabilly', a house she had loved since she was in her early twenties.

Daphne du Maurier was deeply affected by her husband's death in 1965, and her unease was compounded by a growing sense that her imaginative talent was fading. When she was unable to renew her lease on her beloved Menabilly, she relocated to Kilmarth, Par, where she wrote the well-received *The House on the Strand* in 1969. Following that, she went through a period of creative and personal decline, culminating in a nervous breakdown in 1981. She died in 1989, at the age of eighty one, at her home in Cornwall.

1.3.3. WORKS

Though not as widely known as other of du Maurier's more famous works, *The Loving Spirit* is featured here since it was her first and established her remarkable career. *The Loving Spirit* narrates the narrative of the Coombes family in the early 1800s and is mostly set in Cornwall, where the author spent much of her childhood. Janet Coombes marries her cousin, shipbuilder Thomas Coombes. For four generations, the narrative explores the exploits and hardships of this family. This work, according to a modern edition, "established du Maurier's name and style with an incomparable combination of romance, history, and adventure".

Jamaica Inn is a period piece set in 1820 Cornwall, England. A crew of "wreckers" – killers who drive ships aground, kill sailors, and steal cargo – is central to the plot. Following her mother's death, Mary Yellan relocates from the farm where she was reared to live with her mother's sister. Her Aunt Patience is married to a violent drinker who intimidates her. Mary quickly discovers that something isn't quite right at this inn, which seldom has visitors and isn't available to the public. *Jamaica Inn* is one of Daphne du Maurier's best-known books, filled with interesting and scary characters. Alfred Hitchcock directed the film adaptation of *Jamaica Inn*, which was released in 1939.

Rebecca is perhaps du Maurier's most famous novel. In 2018, it marked its eightieth anniversary of publication, and it has never been out of print. "Last night I dreamt I went to Manderley again" is one of English literature's most famous introductory lines (*du Maurier, 2015, p.1*). Alfred Hitchcock also directed the film adaptation of *Rebecca*, which was released in 1940.

My Cousin Rachel, like *Rebecca*, is a romantic suspense novel. It is mostly set on a vast estate in Cornwall, England, where du Maurier took inspiration from Antony House in real life. The creative spark was ignited when she viewed a painting of a woman called Rachel Carew.

Told by Philip, a young man heir to his uncle's fortune. The uncle, who marries the enigmatic Rachel, declines and dies suddenly and strangely. Has his young wife poisoned him? Rachel, like the eponymous Rebecca, remains a mystery until the end. Is she an angel or a devil? The reader must make a decision. The first and extremely well-received film adaptation of *My Cousin Rachel*, starring Olivia de Havilland and Richard Burton in his debut film appearance, was released in 1951. Since then, there have been various modifications.

1.3.4. REBECCA

Rebecca's narration takes the form of a flashback. The unnamed heroine lives in Europe with her husband, Maxim de Winter. They travel from hotel to hotel, and she remembers a beautiful home called Manderley. We learn that the home was destroyed by fire. The story starts with memories of how the heroine and Maxim first met, in Monte Carlo years ago. In her memory, the heroine is working as the young traveling companion to a wealthy American woman named Mrs. Van Hopper. In her flashback, Maxim is staying at the same hotel as the heroine and her employer, and after knowing the heroine for only a few weeks, he proposes marriage. Maxim has fallen in love with the heroine, and he wants to marry her. She agrees, and he marries her and takes her back to his Manderley ancestral home. But a dark cloud hangs over their marriage: Maxim's first wife, Rebecca, drowned in a bay near Manderley last year, and her ghost haunts the newlyweds house.

Rebecca's loyal housekeeper, the sinister Mrs. Danvers, is still in charge of Manderley, and she terrifies and intimidates her new mistress. Despite the support of the caretaker of the house, Frank Crowley, and Maxim's sister, Beatrice, the heroine struggles for her new life in Manderley. Everyone is talking – and soon she feels that Maxim still loves his dead wife. Manderley is gearing up for its annual costume ball, and it is soon time for the festivities to commence. The heroine's spirits begin to revive as preparations for the ball progress. But the ball ends in disaster when Mrs. Danvers suggests that the heroine wear the same dress that Rebecca wore at the last ball. Upon seeing the heroine, Maxim is visibly repulsed, and the heroine eventually comes to believe that Maxim will never love her, that he is still devoted to Rebecca. Mrs. Danvers almost convinces her to commit suicide the next day, and she only breaks free from the old woman's spell when rockets fire over the cove, signifying that a ship has fallen aground. Divers swimming near the stranded ship discover the wreckage of Rebecca's

sailboat, complete with Rebecca's dead body in the hold. This revelation drives Maxim to reveal the truth to the heroine: Rebecca was a cruel, vicious lady who had a double life and had several relationships, including one with her cousin, Jack Favell. Maxim had wanted a divorce the night before she died, and she had refused, telling him she was pregnant with Favell's kid.

He snatched a rifle and shot her, then sailed out to the port in Rebecca's boat and sank it, the body safely stored inside. This discovery saves the heroine's marriage and allows her to finally let go of Rebecca's spirit. Meanwhile, the noose of justice tightens on Maxim: first, holes are discovered in the bottom of Rebecca's boat; fortunately, the coroner reports suicide rather than murder. However, Rebecca's cousin Favell, certain that Rebecca did not commit suicide, accuses Maxim of the crime. Colonel Julyan, the local judge, investigates and discovers that Rebecca travelled up to London on the day of her death to see a Doctor Baker. Favell, Maxim, and the heroine accompany Julyan to London; the heroine believes Baker will divulge Rebecca's pregnancy, exposing Maxim's spiteful reason for murder. Instead, it was discovered that Rebecca was dying of cancer and was infertile; she had lied to Maxim about her pregnancy. Maxim is spared because Rebecca's incurable sickness provides a reason for her alleged suicide. He and the heroine travel back to Manderley all night, pausing only briefly when Maxim phones home and discovers that Mrs. Danvers has gone missing. As they reach the top of the ridge near the mansion, they see it in flames.

2. ANALYSIS AND COMPARISON

2.1. ANALYSIS

2.1.1. PRIDE AND PREJUDICE

People were still getting used to the concept that women would do anything so immodest and exhibitionist as having others read what she wrote for money when **Jane Austen** released *Pride and Prejudice* in 1813. Because of this, the work, like her previous novel *Sense and Sensibility*, was published anonymously. Not only was it a great thing for women to be authors, but it was also a given certainty that their works would be dismissed as stupid and chick-lit, not like man-novels, with their profound thoughts and important issues. Particularly when your story, like Austen's, is fundamentally about marrying off such a quantity of sisters.

Pride and Prejudice was published in the early 18th century and is described as a romance book, historical fiction, or coming-of-age story. The aspects of love and marriage, which are repeating themes throughout the story, are the features of the book that allow it to be labelled as romantic fiction. Many of the characters' love travels give much of the storyline and the chance to address subjects such as marriage, cultural change, gender expectations, and the concept of prejudices within society. Although *Pride and Prejudice* is not considered a comedic novel, it is a book written with wit and humour, as evidenced by Mrs. Bennet's determination to marry off all five of her daughters, her concern about Jane and Elizabeth becoming old maids, and Mr. Bennet's teasing, which she is mostly unaware of. Lydia and Kitty's frantic flirtation and sly ways to be married sooner, as well as their infantile, immature ideas on life, love, and what is essential, demonstrate Austen's sense of comedy. Austen used a variety of literary tropes to demonstrate the hypocrisy of prejudice, as well as sarcasm to express her opinions about society at the time.

Through Elizabeth's eyes, we observe how her vision of the world around her changes over time, and how her ideas and perspectives on life advance, develop, and alter. A coming of age novel begins with the protagonist embarking on a path of personal development in order to become more mature and open-minded.

2.1.1.1. Characters

Elizabeth is not only pretty, but she also has a wonderful personality. She is constantly guided by her common sense, something few of the novel's female characters share. She is confident, talkative, and authoritative, yet she is never unpleasant or harsh. Elizabeth's boldness and outspokenness might have surprised novel readers when it originally came out. Although Jane Austen has been criticized for writing characters who enhance gender stereotypes, it is obvious that the character of Elizabeth Bennet breaks gender standards of the time especially when compared to the other ladies in *Pride and Prejudice*. Elizabeth is fearless in expressing her beliefs wherever she goes, and she has the ability to openly criticize the views of others of higher social status. Elizabeth even has an unusual attitude regarding marriage, and in a culture where a woman's reliability is dependent on a happy marriage, and in a family where choosing a spouse is a matter of social and economic survival for at least one of the daughters. She rejects two favourable propositions. In doing so, she violates the established assumption that women have a social duty to marry as soon as possible.

Darcy is the son of a wealthy, well-established family and the master of the large property of Pemberley. Because the narrator provides Elizabeth's point of view on events more frequently than Darcy's, Elizabeth appears to be a more compassionate person. However, the reader finally understands that Darcy is her ideal match. He, too, is smart and honest, but he has a propensity to judge too quickly and harshly, and his high birth and riches cause him to be excessively arrogant and aware of his social position. Indeed, his arrogance causes him to mess up his relationship at first. When he proposes to her, he focuses on how inappropriate a match she is rather than her virtues, attractiveness, or anything else nice.

Mrs. Bennet is an extremely annoying figure. She is a mom obsessed by the desire to see her daughters married and appears to care about nothing else in the world. Ironically, her single-minded pursuit of this objective fails, as her insufficient social skills separates the individuals she tries to impress (Darcy and Bingley). Austen repeatedly uses her to emphasize the need for marriage for young ladies.

2.1.1.2. Quotes

Selection of some fragments of *Pride and Prejudice* in which it is evident how the only role of woman in society is to get married:

AUSTEN states (1993) *"It is a truth [...] that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife. [...]. This truth is so well fixed in the minds of the families, that he is considered as the rightful property of their daughters."* (p. 3)

This is the opening statement in *Pride and Prejudice*, and it provides a look into the plot, which focuses on the marriage of various characters. The phrase relates to the arrival of Bingley, which is seen as a golden chance for many of the neighbourhood's desirable women. As we can see from the sentence, if a single man "must be in want of a wife," a single woman "must be in want of a husband".

It represents the idea of marriage as a way for social advancement for women.

AUSTEN states (1993) *"It is sometimes a disadvantage to be so very guarded. If a woman conceals her affection with the same skill from the object of it, she may lose the opportunity of fixing him; and it will then be but poor consolation to believe the world equally in the dark. There is so much of gratitude or vanity in almost every attachment, that it is not safe to leave any to itself. We can all begin freely—a slight preference is natural enough; but there are very few of us who have heart enough to be really in love without encouragement. In nine cases out of ten a women had better show more affection than she feels."* (p. 20)

On the one hand, Charlotte's realistic vision of love contrasts sharply with Elizabeth's (and, presumably, Austen's) more romantic worldview. Charlotte's viewpoint, on the other hand, represents the unpleasant reality that the ladies in *Pride and Prejudice* must face. They are part of a patriarchal culture. Loneliness is the greatest risk for a man who remains unmarried. An unmarried woman, on the other hand, may risk financial insecurity. In Charlotte's opinion, socioeconomic inequality implies that a woman must consider manipulation for the sake of her future. Charlotte follows her own advice by showing "more affection than she feels" towards Mr. Collins in order to get a proposal.

AUSTEN states (1993) "*Happiness in marriage is entirely a matter of chance*" (p. 21)

Because marriage was a political and economic duty, happiness was a secondary concern. Some people couldn't afford to marry for love, but they had to marry someone wealthy in order to be granted a bright future and be financially taken care of, because women couldn't work or receive an education. They had no right to possess property, and any money earned in the household went to the male. If the husband died, the entire inheritance passed to the nearest man in the family. Women did not have the right to possess or earn money.

Since women may now work and earn, in most situations, the same wage as men, they can marry whoever they choose. Women don't have to marry since they do not need a man to support them financially, therefore they can stay single if they so want. Women couldn't afford it back then.

AUSTEN states (1993) "*She will be married at sixteen!*" (p. 254)

Lydia, one of the youngest sisters of Elizabeth's, got married at sixteen years old. I wanted to put in contrast what she did at her sixteen's and what women now are doing when they have that age.

Since we are very young we first go to primary school, we have the right to an education since we are children. We are never told how to act towards men that our duty is to marry as soon as we can so that we can be guaranteed of a prosperous life. We then attend secondary school so that we can choose a career path and get a job. That is our duty, study and work to support ourselves financially and if we want to get married and have kids, support our kids. It was very different from then. We never think about marriage until we get to our twenties, if we are thinking of marrying young, and our thirties, which is the most typical age for people to marry. At sixteen years old you are thinking of anything but having kids and finding a man.

This quote is stated by Mrs. Bennett, the mother. It has shocked me, while reading, how parents are thinking of nothing but getting their children married. Mrs. Bennett is a clear example of it, she only talks about engagement and she feels very excited when their daughters get so. Mothers nowadays do not think about their kids getting married at such an age, they would even prohibit it.

2.1.2. A ROOM OF ONE'S OWN

Money, according to **Virginia Woolf**, is the principal factor preventing women from having their own room, and so having money is essential. Women's creativity has been systematically oppressed throughout history because they lack power. The narrator says:

"Intellectual freedom depends upon material things. Poetry depends upon intellectual freedom. And women have always been poor, not for two hundred years merely, but from the beginning of time ..." (Woolf, 2020, p. 88).

She uses this quote to explain why so few women have succeeded as writers. She argues that because the writing of novels lends itself more easily to many starts and stops, women are more inclined to create novels than poetry: women must struggle with frequent interruptions because they are frequently deprived of their personal writing space. The narrator indicates that without money, women will stay second to their creative male counterparts. The gender wage gap at the time of Woolf's work maintained the misconception that women were less effective authors. Virginia Woolf believes that even history is subjective. What she seeks is "the essential oil of truth", but it eludes her, and she finally concludes that it does not exist. Later, the narrator writes: "When a subject is highly controversial – and any question about sex is that – one cannot hope to tell the truth. One can only show how one came to hold whatever opinion one does hold" (Woolf, 2020, p. 2).

To demonstrate the concept that a person's opinion is the only thing that can be "proven", she fictionalizes her presentation, stating "Fiction here is likely to contain more truth than fact" (Woolf, 2000, p. 2).

Reality is not objective; rather, it is determined by the circumstances of one's life. This argument confuses Woolf's narrative: she causes her reader to doubt the authenticity of everything she has given as truth so far, while also telling us that the fictitious aspects of any story contain more vital truth than the factual parts. With this observation, she rewrites innumerable literary works' accepted facts and viewpoints.

The speaker expresses throughout *A Room of One's Own* that women are treated unfairly in her society, which is why they create less remarkable works of literature than males. To demonstrate her argument, the narrator invents Judith Shakespeare, William Shakespeare's fictitious twin sister. The narrator used Judith to demonstrate how society constantly discriminates against women.

2.1.2.1. Characters

The narrator is the only important character in *A Room of One's Own*, which is an anonymous female. In chapter one of the narrative, she asks the reader to call her "*Mary Beton, Mary Seton, Mary Carmichael or any other name you please*" (Woolf, 2020, p. 2).

Throughout the book, the narrator takes each of these titles at various moments. The fact that her identity is continually changing complicates her story even more, as we must question who she is at any particular time.

Her changing identity, on the other hand, offers her a more universal voice: by adopting numerous names and identities, the narrator emphasizes that her comments apply to all women, not just herself.

2.1.2.2. Quotes

WOOLF states (2020) "*A woman must have money and a room of her own if she is to write fiction*" (p. 1)

This quote from chapter one is maybe the most famous phrase from *A Room of One's Own*, and it stands as the work's thesis. Our culture has gotten so accustomed to the expression "a room of one's own" that it has nearly become a cliché. Woolf's statement, and the book as a whole, set off one of the most fundamental affirmations of feminist literary criticism. The widely held belief that women generate lesser literature must be modified by the fact of women's circumstances. In contrast to men, they are frequently denied the time and space to make creative works. Instead, they are burdened with domestic responsibilities and are financially and legally tied to their husbands. Women have little options for resolving the matter because they are denied their own rooms. Despite the fact that this is indisputably a historical fact, Woolf's argument was revolutionary at the time. It recast women's accomplishments in a new and far more positive light, yet it also pushed people to face the brutal realities of their society.

WOOLF states (2020) *“One can only give one’s audience the chance of drawing their own conclusions as they observe the limitations, the prejudices, the idiosyncrasies of the speaker”* (p. 2)

This quote helps the reader comprehend what this female writer believes and why she writes the way she does. Because of the prejudices formed in society, everyone has a first impression of everyone the first time we look at them. So, back then, women were classified as being inferior, unable to have an intelligent conversation, or just incapable of achieving as much as men could.

Woolf would write the conclusion she did at the end of the book because she can feel these limitations and idiosyncrasies, just as a man would have an entirely different conclusion if asked to write this essay. Her being the one who wrote it, since she can describe how she lives and her point of view on this topic as a woman, is what makes this work so unique and brilliant.

WOOLF states (2020) *“It would have been impossible, completely and entirely, for any woman to have written the plays of Shakespeare in the age of Shakespeare.”* (p. 37)

This passage from chapter three is one of *A Room of One's Own's* most important conclusions. While the more typical viewpoint holds that the lack of significant literary works by women demonstrates that they are less talented than males, the narrator takes the opposite stance. She chooses to go back in time and challenge the environment in which women are judged. She recognizes that the playing field is extremely uneven. Given the treatment of women at the period, there is no way females could have competed with men in literary achievements. To demonstrate this idea, the narrator creates the character of Judith Shakespeare. She relates the story of a fictional Shakespeare twin sister who is as talented as her renowned brother but, because she is a woman, her genius has a totally different outcome.

2.1.3. REBECCA

This novel is built around love and marriage. Marriage is where the narrative begins, as the protagonist and Maxim fall in love and marry soon after. Marriage, according to the young couple, is a social and economic duty that must be kept. However, with enormous weight on both sides, the marriage gets off to a difficult start, and the young couple's love for each other is constantly put to the test.

Death is also a very subject in *Rebecca*, from the title (which is the name of a dead lady) to the haunting air of Manderley home. Mrs. de Winter, a genuine breathing woman, is captivated with the memory of her husband's deceased wife to the point where she scarcely exists. Mrs. Danvers, the housekeeper, keeps the memory of her beloved Rebecca alive long after she has died. Maxim is plagued by the crime he committed, and his ex-wife imposes a black shadow over his family land. This is emphasized when Rebecca's body is discovered washed up on the coast in her old yacht. Finally, we find that Rebecca was nearly dead from a deadly disease even when she was alive.

From beginning to end, neither the characters nor the readers are aware of the truth. The novel's tone is defined by the untrustworthy first-person point of view, and the entire plot is filled with falsehoods no matter which direction you turn. Whether it's Maxim lying about the facts behind his ex-wife's murder Mrs. Danvers trying to scam the heroine into attempting suicide, or Rebecca lying about her pregnancy to Maxim, this novel is one huge lie. Not to mention that Rebecca's entire existence had been a fraud, as she won the hearts of those around her while successfully hiding her cruel side.

Rebecca is not only a study in trickery, but the entire tone of the work is manipulative as well. Throughout the work, the reader is never sure what is going to happen or what the reality is. **Daphne du Maurier** has beautifully made the tone of her story to be disruptive – and to trick the reader into making judgements that they would not have made otherwise.

Rebecca's writing style is rich with nostalgia, which the protagonist recalls in precise detail. The author's great attention to detail creates an intense and real vision of the environment as well as the events that happened in the past. **Daphne du Maurier's** writing style also includes lyrical prose.

2.1.3.1. Characters

The protagonist and narrator of the story is a nameless person, we never discover her name. She begins the story as a hired companion to Mrs. Van Hopper, a wealthy American woman. She is a quiet, self-conscious young woman from a lower-middle-class family. She marries the older, wealthier Maxim de Winter. They met in Monte Carlo and she then became Mrs. De Winter.

Maxim de Winter is an educated, clever elderly man who owns Manderley, a prestigious mansion on the English coast. He had lately lost his wife, Rebecca, in what the world assumes was a terrible drowning when the story begins. In reality, he killed her himself.

Rebecca despite being a dead person in the book, controls everything, from Mrs. de Winter's uneasy thoughts to Maxim's tragic background. Rebecca remains the focus of Mrs. Danvers' love even after her passing. She doesn't seem to leave anything alone, as she continues to stalk the shadows of Manderley House.

Mrs. Danvers is Manderley's creepy housekeeper. She was dedicated to Rebecca and continues to be so despite her death. She detests the protagonist for stepping in for her mistress. The housekeeper appears to be capable of all manner of evil and dark actions, even driving Mrs. de Winter to commit suicide. Mrs. Danvers, on the other hand, fully demonstrates her malicious character at the novel's end by setting fire to Manderley.

2.1.3.2. Quotes

DU MAURIER (2015) *“Ill-fitting flannel suit, and how the skirt was lighter than the coat through harder wear. My shabby hat, too broad about the brim, and my low heeled shoes, fastened with a single strap. A pair of gauntled gloves clutched in a grubby hand”* (p. 30)

Throughout the narrative, she describes the clothing she wears and the outfits other women used to wear, which is summarized by this quote. She never refers to ladies wearing trousers; only dresses and skirts are mentioned.

Another item she keeps mentioning is heels, which are now very unusual for young women to wear unless they go to a special event or workplace, as well as dresses and skirts, which young women do not tend to wear.



4. November, 1900. THE DELINEATOR, Vol. LVI, № 5, 573. Internet Archive

DU MAURIER (2015) *“I would be Mrs de Winter”* (p. 60)

This line was repeated by her throughout the page, demonstrating how important marriage was in a woman's life. This phrase and page, since she continues repeating it, make the reader understand how important it was to be married, to receive the husband's name. Women used to adopt on the surname of their husbands. She would be his wife. She would be his. It still happens in certain locations, however changing your last name and getting married are no longer as significant as it once was.

DU MAURIER (2015) *“Most women think of nothing but clothes”* (p.70)

There has always been the idea that women only care about their clothes and looks, but is this because they like thinking about it or because it has been taught to them that they must be concerned about their appearance?

Women have always been under pressure to look well, as if their looks is the only thing that matters. There is nothing inside their heads, which used to be because they were not permitted to receive an education, but why is this still happening now? Why should women continue to be concerned about how they present themselves in public?

People are judged based on the first thing that catches the other person's eye, their looks. This is why it is so vital for both men and women to seem respectable, though women are more affected.

DU MAURIER (2015) "*It was my room now*" (p. 156)

This quotation has been added to prove that what Virginia Woolf asked throughout her whole essay finally came true, women finally have their own rooms. Women can write in peace, as Mrs. de Winter did, women can be alone and not have interruptions all the time since it is their own room.

This minor detail, which some may regard as foolish and meaningless, was a significant advance over the nineteenth century.

Mrs. de Winter did marry a wealthy elderly man, which may have led to her getting her own room. Maybe the middle-class ladies didn't, but it's preferable to believe that it has nothing to do with money and that they genuinely achieved what Virginia Woolf wished for.

2.2. COMPARISON

Many people believe that women's status in society has improved in a variety of ways. We are told that we are equal to men and that this century is known as "The Century of Women." Is it? Has the status of women in our society improved over the years? We will address this question by analysing how female authors have written about women and what their challenges have been throughout the previous three centuries.

Marriage is very present in all three books. *Pride and Prejudice* plot is finding a husband for the sisters. Marriage during Jane Austen's time was fundamental, women couldn't afford living by themselves since they couldn't have a job and they weren't allowed to own property. Men had to support them financially, this is why **Jane Austen** emphasises the marriage topic so much, it was the only goal women had. As we talked about previously, the mother of the Bennett sisters is the clear example of what society was like back then. Her only wish throughout the whole novel is to get her daughters married. On the other hand, **Virginia Woolf** doesn't talk much about marriage in *A Room of One's Own*, however, we can assume it was still necessary since she talked about how they earned much less money and that some jobs were restricted from them. Again, *Rebecca* is all about the controversial marriage of the protagonist with Mr. de Winter. Marriage, however, is not shown in the same way as in the other two books. It is no longer as important as it used to be. There are a few female characters who are not married, being middle aged, showing that women do not need men as fundamentally as they needed them during the previous centuries.

According to **Mrs. Throsby**, having a kid in the 18th century without being married and raising it by yourself, which **Mary Wollstonecraft** did, was quite courageous. If a woman got pregnant, she had to marry as quickly as possible to hide it, which is significantly different from how people live in the 21st century. Being a single mother or not being married at all is now very common. It used to be all about marriage; it was important for women to present themselves with her husbands and provide a good image to society. She also mentioned that divorce was not an option; you had to live with that person for the rest of your life. (4.5. Annex E: Interview)

Education was not allowed for females during the 18th century. It is mentioned many times how their only acknowledgments have to be music, singing, drawing, dancing, learning the modern languages and being polite and seductive. This is stated on the thirty fifth page of *Pride and Prejudice*. Those were the only requirements women had to have. Men were allowed to

have an education, but women weren't. They also weren't allowed to work as a result of not having an education. But even the simpler jobs, they weren't permitted to do them. This changed a little bit on the 19th century, even though **Virginia Woolf** states that very few women were graded at the universities and that "chieve occupations that were open to women before 1918" (Woolf, 2020, p. 29). Mrs. de Winter, in *Rebecca*, mentions how she attended a lady's school. Even though she didn't go to college and throughout the whole story she is seen as a little stupid girl. Nevertheless, we must keep in mind that she came from a poor family and became an orphan from a young age, so that might have influenced the fact that she couldn't afford having a great education. But as we had seen in the historical context, there was a phenomenal change and women began to attend school, although universities and colleges proved to be more opposed to accepting women. Women faced many barriers towards employment and their access to the professions.

According to **Mrs. Throsby**, opportunities for an education, as were mentioned before, were very few. **Mrs. Throsby** stated how women didn't have the opportunity of having a proper education, they had a particular one, women learned things that "were right for women", she said. (4.5. Annex E: Interview)

Money is mentioned often in all three works. Starting with *Pride and Prejudice*, money is clearly something that only men could have. All money earned in the household went directly to the father, husband or brother. Women did not have the right to earn any kind of money since they could not work. Just as property, all properties belonged to the men. In *A Room of One's Own*, the narrator explains how "all those women working year after year found it hard to get two thousand pounds together" (Woolf, 2020, p. 15). The narrator talks throughout the whole essay how women have to fight with the poverty of their sex. In *Rebecca* this didn't change that much, women did have jobs, but nothing like the one's men had. They had less prestigious jobs, so their earnings were not as much as men had.

Women were not only submitted to men financially but they also ***needed them to go to places***. In *Pride and Prejudice* there has been no time when some female character has travelled alone or left the house without permission from the husband or without him. The only character that had it was Elizabeth, and when she did she was criticised and believed that it was dangerous regarding her situation in life, which is being a woman. In *A Room of One's Own*, the narrator explains how "ladies are only admitted to the library if accompanied by a Fellow of the College or furnished with a letter of introduction", she can't even go to a library freely (Woolf, 2000,

p. 5). "She never travelled; she never drove through London in an omnibus or had luncheon in a shop by herself", also explains the narrator (*Woolf, 2000, p. 55*). Women did not have freedom to do anything by themselves, they were submitted to men. In *Rebecca*, the late Mrs. de Winter did sail by herself, meaning that she did have the freedom to escape home and go wherever she wanted. She did go to London by herself and she wasn't seen as a fool, she was brave. Moreover, our protagonist also goes for walks by herself and whenever she wants. This gives us the hint that women didn't need a man to go to places anymore. They were given the unwritten right to go out alone, without a man or someone to protect them.

Clothing is another topic which I wanted to include since I believe it is the one that has made the most radical change in the last few years in comparison to previous centuries. In *Pride and Prejudice*, women only wore dresses. It also seemed that women only dressed to please men and to make a good impression, since their only role was to marry. We can see that when one of the sisters, Jane, says "I hope Mr Bingley will like it", she was dressing for a ball and all she was thinking was for him to like what she was wearing (*Austen, 1993, p. 5*). **Virginia Woolf** doesn't talk about what they wear, but we suppose that there hadn't been much of a change and what women wore in the 19th century were either dresses or skirts, but not trousers. In the 20th century that didn't change much. Mrs. de Winter talks about their clothing several times and what women wore was not very different. Even though their clothes were not as uncomfortable as they once were. What she described, I could see some people nowadays wearing it, but it is not as typical and not demanded.

Mrs. Throsby pointed out the importance of appearance and how it influenced women's lives, which it still happens today. Women face great pressure from society, not just in terms of clothing, but also in their physical appearance and beauty standards. (4.5. *Annex E: Interview*)

Pride and Prejudice was easy to find the types of statements that were looked for to make and analysis and to be able to make the proper comparison and conclusion since the main topic is marriage and how it affects women. The language used is a very formal one, which was the one used in the 18th century.

A Room of One's Own has been the easiest to find the type of quotations that were wanted to be found, since the whole novel keeps talking about the role women take in the 19th century. The vocabulary the narrator used was easy to understand but very tricky, she used lots of metaphors and philosophical arguments which made it more difficult to understand.

Rebecca was the hardest book to compare since it talks about a woman who marries a rich man, so her life is on the whole easier regarding financially and with her opportunities. Furthermore, it doesn't talk as much as the other one's of what women's struggles are and what her role in the 20th society is, which gives an idea that they might not have to fight for some of them anymore since in the 20th century there had been an improvement with those. The narrator used a very formal language which was more difficult to understand, which makes it easier to understand that she had the opportunity to study and to properly write a novel and have more of an intellectual vocabulary.

3. CONCLUSIONS

Based on my main goals and after completing all aspects of my project, I have learnt enough to make the following conclusions.

I am pleased to confirm that I have been able to verify that there have been significant improvements in women's role in society during the previous three centuries. What I've discovered is that the majority of the changes have been political and in the workplace. Women have achieved written rights, such as the ability to vote and an education, allowing them to work as equally as men. Although this is not stated in any of the novels I have read, I am able to explain that women can in the society I live in. Women are no longer financially dependent on men; as I previously stated, women have the right to work and earn the same wage as men, allowing them to support themselves.

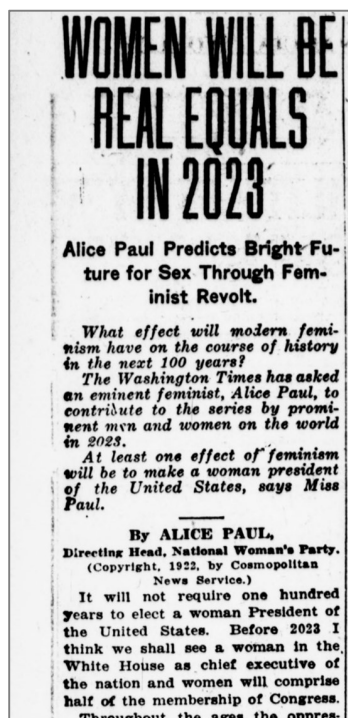
The unwritten rights are the ones that are not included in any legislation but can be found in court rulings. As I previously stated, there have been several advancements in the area of written rights. However, women continue to be disadvantaged in society. I've read several quotes that say women are simply an object to men, and I'm sorry to report that women are still considered as an object in the 21st century. Women are sexualized and yet have difficulty of going out alone for fear of being raped. Women do not have such types of rights. Women do not have the freedom to choose what they do with their bodies, nor do they have the right to say no. This is one of the most basic rights that women lack, the right of saying no. The right to wear anything she wants because she will be catcalled outside and may even be called a "whore". However, I haven't found many quotations that say what I just did. This is why I concluded that women have achieved written rights but have degraded in the social context, and how women are now viewed as sexual objects.

To complete my analysis and indicate what has changed and what has not, I decided to write a novel myself. I believe that the majority of changes affecting women's lives occurred in the 21st century, because prior centuries' changes were not as obvious. What I intended to portray in my work were these unwritten rights that women do not have today, because these are the most evident issues that women face on a daily basis. I decided to tell the story of a woman who is the victim of domestic violence by her partner. Furthermore, I wanted to mention the pressures that women face as a result of society's expectations of what women should look like, as this affects a large number of women and leads to eating disorders. I tried to portray what the

protagonist thinks and experiences during this relationship, as well as what is going on in her life, and what she has to deal with as a woman in the 21st century.

What surprised me the most when reading the novels was how women did things just to please men. I knew they were at the disposal of men since I'd frequently said that they couldn't work or earn money, but I didn't expect them to be so concerned with his approval of her. It reached to the point where women would make any effort to please him. They dressed only thinking if he would like the clothes she was wearing or just overthink about the way they looked because they wanted to be good enough for them. I believe this was the thing that shocked me the most. I imagined seeing some of these behaviours, but not to such an extreme point.

Mrs. Throsby came to the conclusion that there are many ways in which women are still held back, but we have made significant progress thanks to all of the women who fought for us to have the rights they did not. She also discussed how the concept of "feminist" evolved, as well as the hatred directed towards it. She described how, ten years ago or so, women were afraid to admit they were feminists when applying to university because they feared it would affect their admission. In contrast, she stated that there has been a change and that younger girls are proud to embrace the label of being a feminist, and I couldn't agree more. (4.5. Annex E: Interview)



Furthermore while doing some research, I came across this essay written in 1922 and published in the Late Financial, a newspaper in the United States.

I wanted to include it in this project because I found it very interesting that one hundred years ago they expected women to have equal rights. Having read what I had previously stated and how women are still disadvantaged in several areas, I believe it is sadly evident that this will not be done by the time we reach 2023.

5. December 28, 1922. LATE FINANCIAL,
Page 24, Image 24. The Library of Congress

We should ask ourselves the same question: will women have equal rights to men in a hundred years?

Somehow I wish to believe that this will be the case, that we will achieve this equality, but the other part of me feels that it will not be the case. I feel that we are getting closer to it, but men must join us in our fight. Men are essential in this. We are attempting to achieve equal rights, but this will be impossible without the participation of the other half of the population. This is why I don't believe it will happen in a hundred, two hundred, or more years, since males are unwilling to fight with us. And I sincerely hope I'm wrong, but from what I've seen so far, men aren't joining and fighting for and with us.

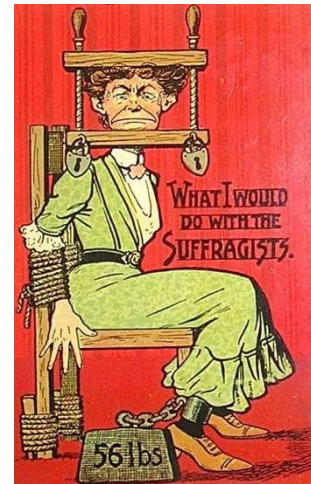
4. ANNEX

4.1. ANNEX A: SUFFRAGISTS PROPAGANDA

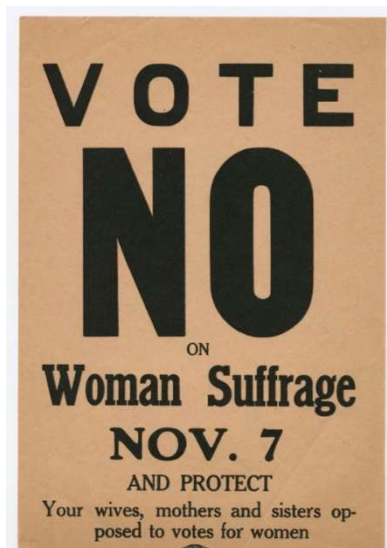
During the research of the Feminism Movement in the 20th century, including the Suffragists, I discovered some propaganda that illustrates how women were seen during this period and how males felt about women wanting the right to vote, the “*anti-suffragists*”, they were called.



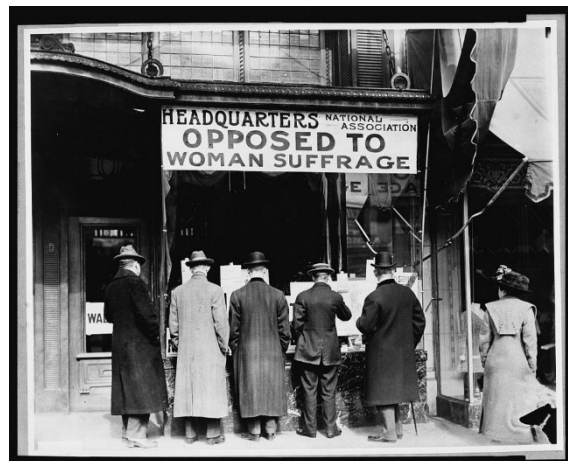
6. June 13, 1913. VOTES FOR WOMEN, Page 1.



7-8. 1900s Posters Against Women's Right To Vote Are Infuriatingly Anti-Feminist. ART-SHEEP.



9. Vote No on Woman Suffrage. The Massachusetts Historical Society. 1895-1921.



10. National Anti-Suffrage Association. Harris & Ewing, photographer. 1911. The Library of Congress.

4.2. ANNEX B: MY WORK

For the practical part, I chose to write a novel on the role of women in the 21st century and what women have to deal with on a daily basis.

Title: *Two birds trapped in red lines*

Sinopsis: *This is the story of a woman who, during a holiday in Florence, meets a nice, quiet and mysterious boy writing in a red notebook. When they return to Britain, they decide to start their love story by living together.*

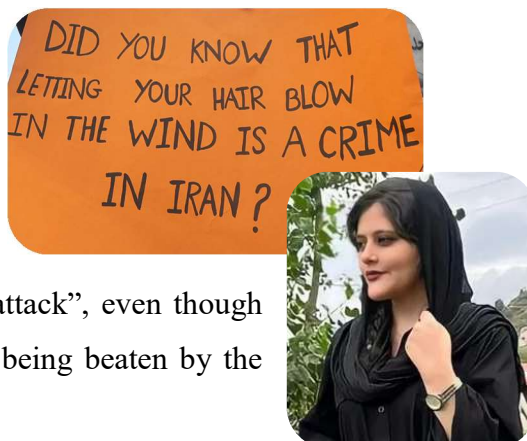
"I was in a fairy tale," she described living with him, but the fairytale turned into a nightmare she had to face not just while sleeping.

4.3. ANNEX C: CURRENT EVENTS 2022

I used two current events from this year in the novel to indicate what women have gone through and are going through in 2022, and to show that these are not fake occurrences.

4.3.1. IRAN - FOR FREEDOM

Masha Amini is a 22-year-old Iranian who got arrested by the Tehran police on the 14 of September of 2022. She was not wearing the compulsory hijab in public and she died three days later under the police's custody. The Iranian authorities claimed that she had suffered "a heart attack", even though there are many witnesses who reported seeing her being beaten by the police and believe that she fell into a deadly coma.



8. Masha Amini.

Her family confirmed that she had never suffered from a heart condition and her father was denied to see the footage of her arrest. He was also not allowed to see Masha's body. She was covered in a sheet when she was presented to him and he admitted noticing some bruises on her feet.

People in Iran are doubting the claims that Masha died from natural causes. As a result, on the 17 of September, after her funeral, demonstrations began and spread across the whole country. The protests are impressive for their feminist nature and there are several clips of Iranian residents publicly burning their hijab. The police have reacted by wearing guns, water cannons and batons. At night, the power has been cut to prevent gathering, while mobile services have been broken. So far, 36 people have died in the protests and at least 1200 have been arrested.

Iranian laws state that "anyone who explicitly violates any religious taboo in public should be imprisoned for up to two months, or flogged with 74 lashes". This means that women must cover their whole body with loose clothing and their hair with the hijab. According to Amnesty International, authorities have been imposing on young girls to wear the hijab. The hijab has been compulsory since 1979.

4.3.2. ROE V WADE

On the 24th of June, in the United States, the Supreme Court overturned *Roe v. Wade*, stating that abortion is no longer a federal constitutional right. The *Roe v. Wade* was a decision of the U.S. Supreme Court that granted the right to have an abortion.

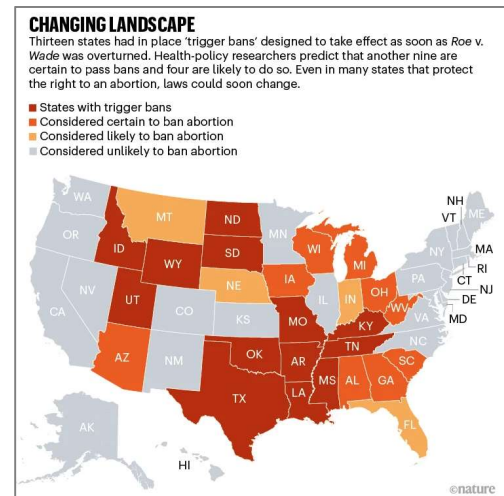
Abortion rights will depend by every state of the U.S. Half of the states, or nearly half of them, have passed the laws that ban the right to abortion. Others have established strict measures exercising the procedure.

The dissenters affirmed that women's rights are being attacked.

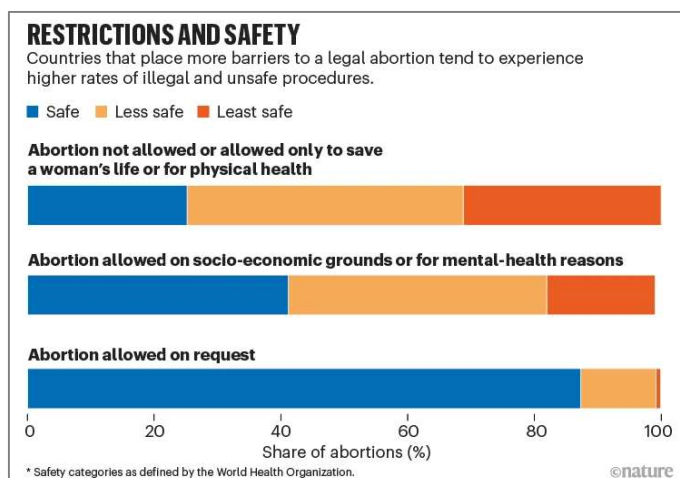
"Whatever the exact scope of the coming laws, one result of today's decision is certain: the curtailment of women's rights, and of their status as free and equal citizens."

"From the very moment of fertilization, a woman has no rights to speak of."

This decision has impacted poor women who now have to travel in order to obtain this procedure. Women lacking money will suffer from this decision. Surveys have showed how many women has requested abortions because they cannot support financially a child, but they are being denied. Most of these women were most likely to be young, less likely to have kids, be unemployed and live with their parents or family members.



12. August 10, 2022. *Changing Landscape*
Source: Guttmacher Inst.



13. August 10, 2022. *Restrictions and Safety*.
Source: Ganatra, B. et al. *Lancet* 390, 2372–2381 (2017)

Moreover, there will be many women who will find an unhealthy way of making herself to abortion. This decision has put women in the U.S. in danger, as well as taken our rights away. Death rates are expected to rise since safe abortion possess less risk to a person's health than giving birth to a child.

4.4. ANNEX D: RESISTIR CENT ANYS MÉS

In the conclusion, I questioned, "Will women have equal rights to men in a hundred years?", not only because of the article "Women will be real equals in 2023" (*Picture 5*), but also because my mother asked herself the same question nineteen years ago after reading **Virginia Woolf's** *A Room of One's Own*.

She wrote a whole paper reflecting on the advancements made in gender equality in the labour environment. She wonders if this equality is due to the natural evolution of society's conscience or because the only way companies have found is to implement actions that seek statistical equality: 50% of workers have to be women and 50% men. This is the statement that companies make to ensure that equality exists.

Here's her paper.

RESISTIR CENT ANYS MÉS

En cent anys les dones ja no seran el sexe protegit. Participaran en totes les activitats i esforços que ara li estan vetats. La noia carregarà carbó a l'espatlla. La botiguera conduirà una locomotora. Totes les conclusions derivades del fet que la dona sigui el sexe protegit caducaran –per exemple la conclusió que les dones i els capellans i els jardiniers viuen més anys que l'altra gent.

VIRGINIA WOOLF. *Una cambra pròpia*, 1929.

Em resulta difícil valorar si amb aquesta quantificació de "cent anys" la Virgínia Woolf volia augurar-nos, a les dones, la proximitat d'una realitat ben diferent a la que li va tocar viure a ella. Em resulta difícil apreciar si volia afirmar "només en cent anys" o "encara han de passar cent anys"; potser tan sols volia evidenciar que alguns canvis s'havien iniciat i ja eren imparables. Sigui com sigui, n'han passat pràcticament setanta-cinc i probablement ser dona ja no és una "ocupació protegida" (pels homes) com afirmava la Virgínia Woolf, però continuem parlant de feminisme. I continuar vetllant quina és la situació real de les dones només denota que no s'ha aconseguit una normalitat. És veritat que les dones han accedit de forma massiva al món laboral i a la vida pública, però la igualtat no deu ser una realitat quan les dones quedem reflectides per quotes, un percentatge en les estadístiques que tothom s'entesta a fer incrementar per demostrar que existeix la igualtat d'oportunitats. La presència de la dona en qualsevol àmbit, amb normalitat, voldria dir que la distinció per gèneres ha deixat de tenir sentit; no caldria fer la divisió homes-

dones perquè el resultat, fos quin fos, es consideraria equitatiu – en el sentit de just – i, en conseqüència, cap col·lectiu no se sentiria discriminat i tampoc seria necessari discriminar positivament cap dels col·lectius per intentar compensar les possibles divergències entre ells.

Podríem pensar que encara no hem tingut el temps suficient per assolir aquesta normalitat (potser només ens falten aquells vint-i-cinc anys), però el que resulta més preocupant és el fet que es poden advertir símptomes que no fan preveure l'extinció del feminisme des de la vessant primària de lluita per garantir la presència de la dona en termes quantitius.

En els darrers anys, des d'alguns governs s'està fent una crida a la recuperació del valor de la família. Dit així, qui no pot estar d'acord a defensar una de les unitats fonamentals de la societat? Però hem d'estar atents (sobretot atentes) per si quan ens parlen de recuperació s'estan referint a recuperar el concepte de família "tradicional".

En el moment en què la dona s'integra de forma inqüestionable al món laboral, sorgeixen noves necessitats de la societat del benestar a les que l'Estat ha d'aportar solucions: qui té **cura** dels nens que durant els primers anys ja no es queden a casa amb les mares?, qui té **cura** dels avis que amb una esperança de vida més llarga ja no tenen les filles a casa?

Per als governs la solució sembla òbvia: recuperar el valor de la família. Però, de quina estructura de família estem parlant? Perquè recuperar l'organització de la família tradicional significa que les dones es tornin a quedar a casa. Com és possible que els poders polítics insinuïn aquesta proposta com a solució? Que les dones reprenguin el seu rol tradicional i així estalviar que l'Estat hagi d'assumir les despeses que suposa adaptar les estructures a la nova realitat social és una solució? Potser per als governs sí.

A mi, però, no em convenç aquesta xerrameca política de recuperar el valor de la família (tradicional). No tenen en compte que les dones d'avui hem nascut d'una generació de dones que són les que han lluitat amb més vigor per inserir-se en el món laboral i no resignar-se a fer només les feines de la llar. Dones acostumades a treballar des de ben jovenetes al camp, a les fàbriques tèxtils. Dones que es casaven dins l'estructura de la família tradicional i tenien fills ben aviat (dos, tres,...). Dones que deixaven de treballar per tenir cura d'aquests fills. Dones que, quan els fills han crescut, s'han vist abandonades (ja ho sabem, és llei de vida!). Dones que

durant la soledat que les acompanyava des de l'adolescència a l'emancipació dels fills han vist que el món revolucionat que les envoltava no les tenia en compte. Una vellesa sense jubilació és el mínim que les espera perquè l'Estat no ha fet una política activa de defensa dels seus drets, socials.

El grup de drets humans que està perpètuament en crisi no sol ser, però, el dels drets anomenats de primera generació, que són els drets civils i polítics. És el grup de la segona generació de drets: els drets econòmics i socials. El dret a l'educació, el dret a la sanitat, a una pensió, al treball, a la vivenda. Són els drets que requereixen una intervenció activa de l'estat per ser respectats i garantits. Quan no hi ha diners, o el diner es destina a objectius menys socials, comença a qüestionar-se la legitimitat d'aquests drets.

VICTORIA CAMPS. *El segle de les dones*, 1998.

A mi no em convenceran. Però tinc por que convencin a les noves generacions. Noies que han nascut en el si d'una família en què la mare, naturalment, treballa fora de casa. Noies que recordaran les estones amb la mainadera. Noies que han viscut amb presses, amb el nerviosisme d'una mare que compagina el treball, la feina de la casa i la cura dels fills (del sumatori casa i fills ja no se'n diu família). I aquestes noies sí que poden pensar que quedar-se a casa a tenir cura dels fills és un valor que val la pena recuperar. Perquè potser no acaben de veure que implícitament significa deixar de tenir diners. I els diners, en aquest cas, no són importants en sí mateixos. Els diners, en una economia capitalista com la nostra, són l'única arma per a la defensa dels propis interessos. Només si les dones som presents a tots i cadascun dels àmbits de la societat podrem garantir que els nostres interessos també es prenguin en consideració. Si renunciem a formar part activa de la societat, de l'economia, de la vida política (entenent el terme política com l'àmbit de la presa de decisions¹) no em costa creure que un dia puc trobar-me a les portes d'una biblioteca en la que no em deixin entrar sense anar acompanyada d'un professor només pel fet de ser una senyora.

...però aquí estava jo a la porta de la biblioteca. Dec haver-la obert, perquè immediatament ha sorgit, com un àngel guardià, vetant el camí, amb una agitació de vestidures negres en lloc d'ales blanques, un cavaller suplicant, platejat i bondadós, que deplorava en veu baixa, a l'acomiar-me, que l'entrada a la biblioteca només fora permesa a senyores acompanyades per un professor del Col·legi o proveïdes d'una carta de presentació.

VIRGINIA WOOLF. *Una cambra pròpia*, 1929.

¹ Definició extreta de *El siglo de las mujeres*, VICTORIA CAMPS, 1998.

No sembla possible que en el segle XXI (fins i tot hi ha qui s'atreveix a qualificar-lo com el “*segle de les dones*”²) es pugui ni esmentar fer un pas enrere tan gran. Doncs no vulguem anar a recuperar el concepte de família tradicional perquè no és aquest valor el que necessitem.

Homes i dones hem de reformular quin model de societat volem. Sí, homes i dones. Perquè arribar a normalitzar la presència de la dona no pot ser només un objectiu de les dones i perquè mantenir unes quotes de presència no pot ser la finalitat. Hem de caminar plegats en la construcció d'un model social en el que homes i dones participem de forma equilibrada.

Em permeto posar en dubte que tingui un bon acolliment la proposta que els homes comencin a adoptar valors típicament femenins per a les relacions familiars. Més que res perquè he pogut constatar que els homes rebutgen categòricament el comportament d'aquelles dones que han assumit rols masculins, sobretot per fer front a les relacions laborals. ¿Ha estat el rebuig a aquest comportament la raó de la resistència dels homes a plantejar-se els beneficis de feminitzar-se? Per què els homes no han lluitat per alliberar-se de les càrregues horàries derivades de la seva professió i que els limita el temps disponible per a l'oci i per a les relacions personals? La flexibilitat és un valor que els homes tenen restringit. La jornada parcial sembla ideada únicament i exclusivament per a les dones. La societat ha condemnat els homes a no poder qüestionar-se el fet de deixar de treballar. I no se senten discriminats?

Quin és aquest valor de la identitat femenina que ens fa tant diferents a homes i dones en les relacions personals i familiars? Bàsicament, ***tenir cura dels altres***; no en el sentit masculí de *mantenir*, sinó en el sentit femení d'*agombolar*. Molt probablement “cuidar” és un valor instintiu lligat a la maternitat i, en conseqüència, propi de les dones. Però el temps que s'ha de destinar a la cura dels altres (fills, avis, malalts,...) ha de començar a ser un interès comú, d'homes i dones. En cas contrari, la humanitat se'n ressent. L'indicador: la baixa natalitat.

² “El segle XXI serà el segle de les dones” així comença el pròleg de *El siglo de las mujeres*, VICTORIA CAMPS, 1998.

4.5. ANNEX E: INTERVIEW

Corin Throsby is a broadcaster and academic. She teaches at the University of Cambridge and she has a doctorate in the University of Oxford. Her research interests are on Romantic literature and early celebrity culture. She regularly appears on BBC Radio as a New Generation Thinker and she presents the Literary Pursuits on BBC Radio 3. **Mrs. Throsby** has her own website where she posts updates on what she's up to and what she's done throughout her life. Here is the link to her blog: <https://www.corinthrosby.com>.

On November 19th, she appeared on a podcast called *You're Dead To Me*, where she discussed Mary Wollstonecraft, a female referenced on this project. I became quite interested in what she said and learned things about Wollstonecraft that I had never heard before, so I decided to contact her and request an interview on December 10, 2022, which she agreed to do.

The interview's audio is available in the *Interview.m4a* file.

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