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**FEMINISM AND WOMEN'S RIGHTS IN GREAT BRITAIN
THROUGHOUT THE CENTURIES WITH ANALYSIS OF
JEANETTE WINTERSON'S WORK**

Bachelor thesis

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Olomouc 2015

I declare that I have written my bachelor thesis ‘Feminism and Women’s Rights in Great Britain throughout the Centuries with Analysis of Jeanette Winterson’s Work’ independently under the guidance of my supervisor and that I used only sources listed in bibliography.

Olomouc _____

I would like to thank my supervisor Mgr. Pavlína Flajšarová, Ph.D. for her valuable advice on recommended literature and providing me with material sources, as well as for her useful comments on the text.

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For most of history Anonymous was a woman.

Virginia Woolf

INTRODUCTION

I have been concerned with the position of women in society for some time. I have chosen to focus on British feminism for Great Britain is one of the world's leading nations and thus it should be an exemplary model to other communities in behaviour towards women. The most significant period of this social movement in British history is the 19th and 20th century when the majority of great and determining events took place, mainly the evolutionary Suffrage movement. However, first thing that needs to be understood is the primary thought of feminism. I recently asked my relatives and my friends what does the word feminism mean to them and whether they are feminists themselves and the response I received was exactly what I expected. Feminism is a term with a strongly pejorative meaning in our modern society. People shy away from the concept because it is perceived as almost radical notion since it has become synonymous with man hating and the original idea behind it has lost its sense. But how often, still, we hear women anxiously asserting 'I'm not a feminist but...' ¹ Women, especially the young ones, view feminism as shameful even though there are some values for them to agree on without which the groundwork of feminism would not exist. ² Men consider feminism negatively because they believe that the empowerment of women would lead to oppression of their own gender. Mainly many people think feminism is dated; they claim that it is no longer needed to be in action because the only goal of the movement would be to allow women to vote, which eventually has happened so why society should concern with this kind of ideology. What is really important to realize is how and why this doctrine originated. The whole concept deals with female education, violence committed on women, paying equal wages, independence, disposing gender prejudices, female circumcision and sexual discrimination etc. These targets have not been achieved yet. The goal of my thesis is to show what women had to face, that feminism is not a misandry ideology and it has much deeper meaning.

¹ Margaret Walters, *Feminism: A Very Short Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 3.

² Walters, *Feminism*, 3.

1. DEFINITION OF FEMINISM; THE HISTORICAL OVERVIEW AND ROOTS OF FEMINISM IN GREAT BRITAIN BEFORE THE 19TH CENTURY

1.1 Feminism

The expression feminism emerged from a French word *féminisme* in the 1890s. Despite being created in West, it is a worldwide demonstration. It is defined as the advocacy of women's rights on the grounds of political, social, and economic equality to men.³ This ideology was gradually developing over centuries among different women and thus we distinguish between more types of feminism such as liberal, material and radical feminism.⁴ However, being a feminist does not equal only to female gender. Men are advocates of women's rights too. The principals of liberal feminism are inherent with gender equality. The theory claims that the opportunities given to both sexes should be the same as both possess equal abilities and that the different needs and attitudes of men and women should be valued the same. The term gender comes from Greek and it does not equal to sex (male or female). Gender is used to label the differences between male and female sexes. Sex is gained biologically but gender is acquired by upbringing within a scope of culture and society.⁵ Feminism came in three waves. The first wave is the second half of the 19th century where the enlightenment was increasing and the beginning of the 20th century with its Suffrage movement. The second wave dates in the 1960s and 1970s. The third wave refers to activity after the 1990s. Education and right to vote were and somewhere in the world still are the most important goals of feminism.

1.2 The Position of British Women before the 19th century

1.2.1 Non-secular roots

From the beginning of Common Era, the society was strongly patriarchal. During the whole centuries women were somehow oppressed and that determined the future of women's fighting for rights. When we speak about position of women in times closer to us, we usually refer to more or less secular times. Nevertheless, first women

³ "feminism," *Oxford English Dictionary*. 2nd ed. 20 vols. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989, accessed March 12, 2015, <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/feminism>.

⁴ Kamila Dudková, "How did the position of women change throughout the British history?" (Bachelor thesis, Palacký University of Olomouc, 2010), 29. PDF edition.

⁵ Klára Chvostková, "Sociální hnutí zvané feminismus" (Bachelor thesis, Palacký University of Olomouc, 2012), 14. PDF edition.

that wanted and tried to speak for themselves did so in highly religious age so the roots of some kind of feminism goes back to late middle ages. The most important and genuine fulfilment of woman's life was to get married (this belief lasted to the 18th century). If a family had unmarried daughters, the only solution was to put them in convents. It could be taken as an imprisonment but on the other hand it was also the only place where some of them learned to read and develop their abilities even though only men were permitted to preach. However knowing how to read, write and speak in public was considered unfeminine. The role of women and attitudes towards them were dictated by biblical texts where they are portrayed, if they are mentioned at all, as inferior, weaker and likely to tempt men into sin as in the story of Adam and Eve and her eating of forbidden food which led to disobedience of God.⁶ Of course there were positions that represent opposite of the stereotypical picture of well-behaved and subordinate woman.⁷ In monasteries and convents they could be abbesses which meant seniority to men and also outside of religious places woman could become a queen or other significant royal member. Still in general if woman was not aristocratic, she had a very little control of the direction her life would lead and she had no power. Her only role was to be a wife, mother and good housewife, peasant or, if in convent, a nun. Other working opportunity was a servant or a midwife but these positions were mainly for unmarried women. The ordinary married woman had to manage household, childbearing, taking care of husband and she was not allowed to do any other activity which would bring pleasure. Not to mention there was no time for such pursuits.

The representative figure of this non-secular age would be Julian of Norwich (1342-1416) who is considered to be the first woman ever that wrote any piece of work in Middle Age. The work is called *Revelations of Divine Love* and it is one of the foremost English mystical literatures. Besides it is not written in Latin as everything usually was but Julian narrated it in Middle English. The piece describes a series of visions experienced during her almost deathly illness. The visions of Christ and Virgin Mary saved her and she miraculously recovered from her serious condition. The rest of her life she spent in St. Julian's Church in Norwich. Troubled by the custom that only man can preach she proclaimed one of her most famous quotes: 'Just because I am a

⁶ "Medieval Women," The British Museum Library and the development of the international exchange of official documents, *eBLJ* (2002), accessed March 12, 2015, <http://www.bl.uk/learning/histcitizen/an/women2/medievalwomen.html>.

⁷ "Medieval Women."

woman, must I therefore believe that I must not tell you about the goodness of God?’⁸ Even today she is honoured on feast day of 13th May. The first thing that needed to be done was to get rid of the negative image of woman that religion claimed – that woman is responsible for sins and for the possible fall of mankind.

1.2.2 15th and 16th century England

The task of women in Tudor England remained the same when speaking of responsibilities towards children, husband and domestic chores but it certainly improved to some extent. Despite not being allowed to work in influential professions such as doctors or teachers (mainly for the still believed idea that literacy and education is unfeminine), they were given more opportunities in low paid positions of bakers, servants, confectioners, tailors, washerwomen or sellers on the market. Nevertheless, once they were married they lost their rights completely, if they had any, and stayed closed in households obeying their husband since it was their social duty. This probably resulted from labelling of women as a sex with lesser persistence, non-capable of anything significant (like have an ability to preach) and therefore needed to be given a constant guidance. Two views on women were spreading: they had to be pure and holy as Virgin Mary and that they could not be trusted because they represented a moral danger to men.⁹ A few women were given some kind of basic schooling by their husbands who taught them essential skills in order to manage everyday obligations. Moreover women were expected to bear children every year and to have knowledge about illnesses and diseases as they were becoming nurses to sick family members. The divorce was unthinkable and they could not even inherit a property if they had brothers. Only if they were widowed they gained some belongings and some kind of independency. Yet they were still under control of sons or male relatives. All this approach seems rather ironic assuming that woman were those who ensure the maintenance of population.¹⁰ Yet they were ranked at the bottom of society.

Another problem women had to face was accusation of witchcraft during the Elizabethan prosperous era. The hunting took place even earlier but in the 16th century it became an obsession. People started to shift the responsibility for misfortune from

⁸ Walters, *Feminism*, 7.

⁹ David McDowall, *An Illustrated History of Britain: The Condition of Women* (Harlow Longman, 1989), 62, accessed March 25, 2015. PDF edition.

¹⁰ “Expectations of women in sixteenth century England,” Patrician Brothers, last modified November 6, 2011, <https://patricianbrothers.wikispaces.com/Expectations+of+women+in+sixteenth+century+England>.

God's will to evil spirits of sorcery. As the Black Death was spreading and there was no cure for it, the need of casting the blame on somebody was urgent and the witches were the obvious target. In 1542 the Witchcraft Act, released by Parliament, defined witchcraft as a crime which should be punished by death sentence.¹¹ Among the accused people were men as well as women, though women formed the majority. It involved mainly the elders, the poor, unmarried women or widows. Persons with mental or physical disability were also marked as a witches or sorcerers. As the medical help was only for wealthy people, women had to be skilled in using herbs in order to make ointments and brews for curing their family members. The most common herbs were mandrakes, cannabis, datura which causes psychedelic effects. Before English Renaissance these women were called The White Witches or Healers who used only white magic for healing not black magic to harm people. However the knowledge of herbs and plants were counted as a sign of witchcraft since the 15th century. Queen Elizabeth published another law dealing with witches in 1562. Though it was harsher, it does not defined witchcraft as heresy. Therefore there was no mistreatment, torture or any kind of humiliation (such as investigation of body to find a devil's mark) done on witches during the prosecution as in other countries. Women accused of witchcraft were presented to a trial which ended either by execution or pillory. The execution was done by hanging in England, not burning on a stake which was done mainly in France. Even royal members did not avoid of the accusation, Anne Boleyn, mother of Elizabeth I, was charged with witchcraft because of her body deformation. The witch trials continued until the late 17th century.

Speaking about Queen Elizabeth I, many historians argue whether she can be considered as a first icon of feminism. Of course she was not a supporter of such movement as it did not exist and gender inequality was widespread and tolerated. Despite being a woman, not knowing great deal about warfare and politics, she managed to succeed to be one of the most influential monarchs in England in a world dominated by men. Moreover without a husband. Since being a royal member, her advantage was that she gained a proper education which made her exceptional and rang her among the intellectuals – men. She was the proof that women are intelligent, successful and useful in other ways of life than taking care of family and run the household efficiently. The key factor to achieve these traits is having the opportunity to

¹¹ Parliament UK, "Witchcraft," accessed March 16, 2015, <http://www.parliament.uk/about/living-heritage/transformingsociety/private-lives/religion/overview/witchcraft/>.

gain an education. However, she was hardly supportive of other woman. In her famous speech to the troops at Tilbury she said: ‘I know I have the body but of a weak and feeble woman, but I have the heart and stomach of king, and a king of England too.’¹² Such a statement from her suggested that being a woman in a leading position means to become a man, to accept male qualities and lose features natural for females. It could be thus said that she sacrificed her femininity in order to be a proper monarch in patriarchal society, to prove that she can be as strong as any other man. On the other hand Elizabeth proved that it is appropriate for a woman to have ‘unfeminine’ ambition and encouraged many Englishwomen to trust themselves, to develop their talents, which is the ground feature of feminism.

1.2.3 17th century

During the 17th century many people rejected the established Church of England and formed groups such as Quakers who called themselves Religious Society of Friends. In this group women were involved and found freedom to some extent as they were allowed to gather at meetings, speak in public, make prophecies, or preach even though their missions usually met opposition and disapproval. It was very unusual to be given such opportunities in the 17th century and the inclusion of women in their actions is considered to be a part of *Testimony of equality*. Quakers believed that men and women are equal to eyes of God; the Inner Light (meaning presence of God in every individual) does not know sexual divergence¹³. They, as well as many other Protestant leaders, held the view that women should be offered at least the little knowledge of written text, especially the Bible and other religious documents. They were thus the first who publically valued women as equal human beings and should be given the same opportunities as men. John Bunyan, a writer and a preacher, disapproved of the involvement of ‘weaker sex’ in the worship of God because they are tempted to by Satan, claiming that women ‘are not the image and glory of God as the men are.’¹⁴ According to him ‘her part is to hold her tongue, to learn in silence.’¹⁵ Women that tried to speak in public and worshiped God were mocked and often labelled as mad. Still they started to truly stand for themselves, to find their place in the patriarchal society.

¹² Walters, *Feminism*, 17.

¹³ Walters, *Feminism*, 10.

¹⁴ Walters, *Feminism*, 11.

¹⁵ Walters, *Feminism*, 11.

An unknown author published *The Laws Resolution of Women Rights* in 1632 in order to notify women how the laws affected their lives. It focused on three stages of life – unmarried, married and widowed – and described the rights of women regarding marriage and property. It showed how from an early age they were guided by men, first by their father and then by husband. They were strictly controlled in many spheres and one of them was sexuality. Pre-marital intercourse was completely unthinkable and if woman devoted to such temptation, she was ruined and treated with contempt. After marriage, women had to submit to the husband's will and were dictated in terms of personality, clothing, family, appetite, sexual intercourse etc. In order to be a proper wife, she had to be 'of chaste thought, stout courage, patient, untired, watchful, diligent, witty, pleasant, constant in friendship, full of good neighbourhood, wise in discourse, but not frequent therein, sharp and quick of speech, but not bitter or talkative, secret in her affairs, comfortable in her counsels, and generally skilful in the worthy knowledge's which do belong to her vocation.'¹⁶ Men did not care much about the laws unless it suits them, e.g. the wife's possession automatically passed on them; they could beat their wives without being punished or rape them. When widowed, they gained limited independency because the possessions of her husband belonged to her and she thus became attractive for other men. Women of higher classes were controlled even more as their marriage meant important political and valuable connections between families, kingdoms or regions. The marriage was practically always arranged in advance.

The lack of education happened to be the main focus of women in the middle of the 17th century. Though still not allowed to speak publically about their injustices, they realized that without basic schooling they will not be taken seriously and cannot develop their own skills. Royal, aristocratic or bourgeois women were commonly highly educated. They learned to write, read and speak several different languages like Greek, French and Latin. They were skilled in needlework and fields such as music or theatre started to be fashionable. As opposed to peasant women whose principal role was limited to domestic scope and only few of them were gifted with the little knowledge of reading and writing given by fathers and husbands. As a whole the learning of classical

¹⁶ Vern L. Bullough et al., *The Subordinated Sex: A History of Attitudes Toward Women* (University of Georgia Press: 1998), 196, accessed March 25, 2015, https://books.google.cz/books?id=F8wUwbvO0mkC&dq=The+Subordinated+Sex:+A+History+of+Attitudes+Towards+Women&hl=cs&source=gbs_navlinks_s.

studies was thought to be unnecessary and harmful to weak minds of women.¹⁷ It was believed that too much learning would endanger women's moral rules and social life. Women in anger provocatively claimed that their exclusion from education was 'devised by men to secure their own continued domination.'¹⁸ Some of them rebelled against this idea and learned languages on their own without any tutor or teacher. It needs to be said that also among men were supporters of female education; they became aware of the importance of educated women. Protestant reformers were the main voices who urged fathers and mothers to teach their children to read and write. The educational reform attracted more and more supporters in both genders and women writers took the advantage of the changing society norms and attitudes and dared to publish works. Unfortunately they used pseudonyms, not their real names, or wrote anonymously.

Bathsua Makin (1600-1675) was among the first who can be considered as feminist or rather proto-feminist as historians call activists for women rights with the contemporary ideas of feminism. She contributed much to the criticism of women's exclusion from learning and limited female role to domestic sphere. She insisted on equal right of women and girls to receive a solid education in her exhaustively entitled didactic work *Essay to Revive the Ancient Education of Gentlewomen in Religion, Manner, Arts and Tongues with an Answer to the Objections against this Way of Education* (1673). She offered women to teach the classical arts and subjects as she later established school for girls but it was aimed only at well-off girls. She was criticized for it but we cannot condemn her as she suffered financially and by running the school she hoped to earn a living. However, she was sometimes expressing ambiguous comments. Even though she argued for female education, she said in her *Essay* that her intention is not to 'hinder good housewifery, neither have I called any from their necessary labour to the book.'¹⁹ Yet she still is praised for her effort of women's position improvement.

Another significant personage that faced difficulties for speaking out loud is Margaret Cavendish, Duchess of Newcastle (1623-1673). Born to a prominent and well-established family she became a company to Queen Henrietta Maria with whom she went to exile in Paris. There she met and married the Duke of Newcastle. Protected by title, money and her eccentric personality she published under her name. Her husband encouraged her in her ambitions and she became a poet, essayist and playwright. She

¹⁷ "Education of Women," *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*, Norton Topis online, accessed March 25, 2015, https://www.wwnorton.com/college/english/nael/17century/topic_1/hutchins.htm#lucy.

¹⁸ Walters, *Feminism*, 18.

¹⁹ Walters, *Feminism*, 18.

was a devoted ground-breaking writer and focused on topics of gender and power or philosophy which was predominantly a male field. Margaret was even interested in science, mainly in atomism; she was the only woman to be invited to a Royal Society session, which some men denounced as a scandal. Though being of a higher position, she wrote about common women's concerns and sorrows. She dealt not only with woman's marriage status but also speculated about the overall female deprivation in society, how they lost their public personality.²⁰ Women were slandered if they were too outspoken or ambitious and Margaret defended them vigorously. She encouraged learned men to dispose their prejudices that every woman's writing is absurd. In her work *Philosophical and Physical Opinions* (1655) she described the situation of women as they 'are kept like birds in cages to hop up and down in our houses', their advices 'are despised and laughed at...'²¹ All for not being allowed to learn. She argues for the involvement of women in education in order to show their talent which is thus suppressed. In her preface of *The World's Olio* (1655) she writes that 'we have as clear an understanding as men, if we were bred in schools to mature our brains and to mature our knowledge.'²² Margaret was very disappointed of the attitude towards women; she saw the lack of interest in literature written by women. Women were always believed to be too much emotionally established and that it affected their deeds and decisions.

The second half of the 17th century provided some surprising opportunities for women when speaking of employment. Apart from the traditional servants, governesses and midwives, they could be playwrights or actresses, positions often done by men. The only difference was that if these professions were done by women, it was hardly respected. Especially being an actress was often compared to prostitute. If women wrote plays, they were mocked and attacked for obscenity and plagiarism. Even in the aristocratic circles writing was still believed to be vulgar. Despite these accusations several women has contributed to the development of the English novel. The first known woman that earned living by writing was Aphra Behn (1640-1689). Her independency and loudly expressed opinions about gender equality made her celebrity, though often criticized. She was imprisoned for debt after her husband's death and in

²⁰ Michael McKeon, *The Secret History of Domesticity: Public, Private, and the Division of Knowledge* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005), 150, accessed April 3, 2015, http://books.google.cz/books/about/The_Secret_History_of_Domesticity.html?id=FdsyES_X8rsC&redir_esc=y.

²¹ Walters, *Feminism*, 21.

²² Walters, *Feminism*, 21.

order not to fall in poverty, she started to write. In her play *The Rover* appears two women, heroine Hellena and prostitute Angellica, who usually have to negotiate or compromise with man called Willmore, with whom they are in love, in order to acquire respect.²³ Willmore is described as an insensitive traitor. Although he may have some kind of affection for Hellena, he does not mind her feelings and sleeps with Angellica who believes his romantic words. Thus he betrays both women. Both female characters are given intelligence and direct voice.²⁴ *The Rover* is clearly a picaresque play as the male protagonist is not a hero but a pícaro who, unlike the hero, gain wealth by robbing, cheating and abusing women.²⁵

1.2.4 18th century: The Modern Times

The history of the very true feminism in Great Britain starts at the very beginning of feminism itself (though the term emerged a century later) because many of the first activists – Mary Wollstonecraft, Mary Astell or Lydia Becker – were British. The previous centuries looked on women as sinful demonic human beings with inclination to sexuality and disobedience.²⁶ The image of female sex changed in the 18th century. First she had to be chaste and innocent maiden who transforms into an obedient woman.²⁷ These qualities were praised as an ideal womanhood. Nevertheless, women were still oppressed when speaking of work, right to vote or even a right to own a property. Regarding female education, it stopped being a complete taboo subject. Women were given lectures but the only goal was to support domestic activities, completely ignoring any academic desires. Education for women was not provided for pleasure or to be distinguished in social classes. Women were not allowed to speak for themselves, make decisions or show their abilities; men discouraged them from attending public meetings and therefore they felt like a second-class citizens. Their dignity was tested in various disrespectful situations as they were exploited. The use of violence done on women reached high numbers. Servants have always been subordinate and masters treated them according to their will. Maids were very often humiliated and used for sexual practices no matter what their condition was; even pregnant women

²³ Walters, *Feminism*, 25.

²⁴ Dolores Altaba-Artal, *Aphra Behn's English Feminism: Wit and Satire* (Susquehanna University Press, 1999), 82, accessed April 3, 2015,

http://books.google.cz/books?id=iIKA5xhVDHkC&hl=cs&source=gbs_navlinks_s.

²⁵ Altaba-Artal, *Aphra Behn's English Feminism*, 82.

²⁶ Marlene LeGates, "The Cult of Womanhood in Eighteen-Century Thought," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* Vol. 10, No. 1 (1996), 22, *JSTOR*. Accessed April 4, 2015.

²⁷ LeGates, "The Cult of Womanhood in Eighteen-Century Thought," 23.

slept with their masters in order not to lose their job.²⁸ Being a servant meant a career and women started to take advantage of their harsh treatment toward them.

The first major English feminist is Mary Astell (1666-1731) for her ideas are still referred to even nowadays. She identified with the problems of every woman, spoke to them directly and committed herself to the advancement of women's rights, mainly for equal educational opportunities. She was highly religious, supporter and devoted member of Church of England. Astell was born into rather a prominent gentry family that included lawyers and merchants. Her father was a coal merchant who died when she was only 12 years old. She was educated by her uncle until her teens. Then she suffered with a deep depression realizing there is no decent future for her just because she was a woman who was not allowed to use her talents.²⁹ After the death of her mother she showed courage when she was 21 and decided to move to London in order to eventually settle in Chelsea where she had some relatives. Unfortunately, nobody was willing to help her and thus, unhappy and depressed of uncertain future, she asked for the Archbishop of Canterbury for help.³⁰ He provided her with contacts and money and she became a respectable and impressive debater in a circle of intelligent female friends who shared her ideas for improvement of female welfare and helped her to publish her work. Her exceptional trait was that she did not only barked arguments how women were always treated badly but rather engaged in philosophical debates, negotiated and tried proposing solutions to the problems. By 1694 she published her first plea for women called *A Serious Proposal to the Ladies, for the Advancement of their True and Greatest Interest Part I and II*, a work crucial for future feminist activists. She stated there that women and men have the same abilities to reason; they only lack the proper training that would let them evolve. Astell further proposes to establish an institution for women where they would get a religious as well as secular education.³¹ She urged women to speak for themselves, to develop their own judgement and skills, to stop their submission to male will. Astell argued that women are from the young age taught how to be representative in society rather than how to be sensible, to have their own opinion openly expressed, and to have right for the same activities as

²⁸ Dudková, "How did the position of women change throughout the British history?" 23.

²⁹ Walters, *Feminism*, 26.

³⁰ Walters, *Feminism*, 27.

³¹ William Kolbrener et al., *Mary Astell: Reason, Gender, Faith* (Ashgate Publishing, 2007), 198, accessed April 7, 2015, http://books.google.cz/books/about/Mary_Astell.html?id=M35hgyoSThAC&redir_esc=y.

men. Their self-fulfilment was, according to Astell, unattainable because women unnecessarily do not trust their own abilities, they ‘value them [men] too much and our [women’s] selves too little.’³² Another famous and praised work *Some Reflections Upon Marriage* (1700) showed how straight and sharp Astell could be. For many centuries women were led to believe that marriage is the only purpose of their existence. They believed that after marriage there is nothing as important and thus it means they reached the happiness in life. The future could not bring something more satisfactory as Astell sardonically says: ‘...alas! what poor Woman is ever taught that she should have a higher Design than to get her a husband?’³³ Astell’s view on marriage is very grim and scornful as she insisted that wife is nothing more than a servant. According to her belief the problem lies in teaching of men who overestimate themselves whereas women the contrary. Astell again suggested establishing women’s college which would more additionally helped unmarried women to develop their future. Astell herself never married so she knew how hard it was for unmarried women. The possible reason why Astell did not have a husband could be her attitude towards men; though friendly and talkative, she never wanted to be anybody’s maid. Furthermore, after her father’s death she ended up without a dowry. After writing *A Serious Proposal* and *Some Reflections* she became famous and often criticised as many women before her. She withdrew from the public eye in 1709 and assisted in founding of a charity school for girls in Chelsea. Her passionate involvement helped to establish many other schools in the area of Westminster in London and young women started to be involved in the process of formal education and making their own decisions for their future. Mary Astell’s contribution to feminism is the ground-breaking point because her way of fighting for female rights really urged women to take themselves seriously and appreciate their abilities. Astell said that her deed is by no means exceptional, that she had ‘not the least Reason to imagine that her Understanding is any better than the rest of her Sex.’³⁴ Owing to her courage and honesty, women had an inspiration to take their action.

Though modern feminism did not exist yet, women actively expressed the injustice and maltreatment they had to face towards the end of the 18th century. First

³² William Kolbrener et al., *Mary Astell*.

³³ Susan Staves, *A Literary History of Women’s Writing in Britain, 1660-1789* (Cambridge University Press, 2006), 104, accessed April 7, 2015, https://books.google.cz/books?id=wZ5VM2qBYH4C&dq=What+poor+Woman+is+ever+taught+that+she+should+have+a+higher+Design+than+to+get+her+a+husband&hl=cs&source=gbs_navlinks_s.

³⁴ Walters, *Feminism*, 29.

‘feminist’ programmes were presented. Women were being educated to read and write, but the books they were given was about the proper behaviour, how to gain a womanhood, how to possess woman virtues. Practically, they were taught how to be well-mannered and to be ready for the only purpose of woman’s fate – a good marriage. So even after Mary Astell’s effort, any academic learning was still useless for women in the eyes of society. Fortunately, fewer and fewer women were afraid of public disgrace and though they did not see themselves to speak in front of the audience, they wanted to be heard. In order to address the public, they choose to write and thus contributed to the English literature in many genres despite occasional mockery. The critique came from men as well as female contemporaries who were possibly even more critical of the work of their sex.³⁵ Samuel Johnson criticized women writers very avidly, calling them the Amazons of the pen. The name is inspired by the mythic race of female warriors The Amazons. Johnson complained that women interfere into a male field of writing.³⁶

The most influential of the feminists Amazons was Mary Wollstonecraft (1759-1797). She is regarded as a founding feminist philosopher often cited by modern feminist advocates. She was born to a comfortably well-off middle-class family but had it not been for her father’s whims, she could afford to continue her study in a day school in Yorkshire. However, she ended up being mostly self-educated. She studied dutifully tolerating herself nothing ‘for mere amusement, not even poetry’ but ‘concentrating instead on works which are addressed to the understanding.’³⁷ It was hard for her to earn a living as a little educated young woman. She nursed her ill mother and sister who suffered postpartum depression. She worked as a governess and set up a school which soon failed due to the lack of experience and training. Mary fell into a depression when she was, at the age of 30, rescued by Joseph Johnson who offered her a position of translator and reviewer in a periodical *Analytical Review*. The work allowed her to build a confidence and she published her first, moralist, book *Thoughts on the Education of Daughters* (1787). As Mary was a supporter of Church of England, the book demonstrated orthodox attitudes saying that any religious diversion is a barbaric.³⁸ She urged for the opportunity for possible female education which would allowed

³⁵ Cheryl Turner, *Living by the Pen: Women Writers in the Eighteen Century* (Routledge, 2002), 129, accessed April 7, 2015, https://books.google.cz/books?id=eQEfluLgbPUC&dq=living+by+the&hl=cs&source=gbs_navlinks_s.

³⁶ Turner, *Living by the Pen*.

³⁷ Walters, *Feminism*, 31.

³⁸ Barbara Taylor, *Mary Wollstonecraft and the Feminist Imagination* (Cambridge University Press, 2003), 95, accessed April 7, 2015, https://books.google.cz/books?id=uqiJiLA5FFcC&hl=cs&source=gbs_navlinks_s

developing the God-given intelligence.³⁹ She also briefly touched the theme of marriage saying it is based on friendship and respect, not love. Wollstonecraft was the one who later explored the dilemmas of women. She published her first novel *Mary, A Fiction* (1788) where she examines the emotional paradoxes of the heroine named Mary. It is believed to be base of Wollstonecraft's life. The protagonist struggles to fulfil her desires in a society which gives her so little opportunities. She protests against male dominance and violence but on the other hand wish to be given protective fatherly love.⁴⁰ It features a heroine which is intelligent and sensible and although the novel was not very appraised, it definitely helped future women novelists to develop the tradition of strong female heroines (as Brontë's *Jane Eyre*) who would represent the hopes and struggles of a modern woman. Since 1789 to 1799 a French Revolution took place which had a huge impact on Wollstonecraft as she shared the racial ideas of the revolt. In 1792 she published her most celebrated and foundational work of contemporary feminism *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, written in a form of angry public letter to a stubborn and arrogant Jean-Jacques Rousseau who wrote in his educational work *Emily* that women should be educated only in order to make a proper and useful companion of a rational man.⁴¹ She was dissatisfied with the book, saying that she did not do the justice to the subject and convinced herself to be able to write a much better book if she did not rush it and gave herself more time.⁴² Despite her concerns, *Rights of Woman* became immensely successful. She wrote that women truly were inferior, 'taught from their infancy that beauty is a woman's spectre'⁴³, that the flattering of men is only an attempt to keep their women in a cage and if a girl wants to become a real woman, she has to serve men's desires. This was taught from a childhood. The ambitions and dreams of a woman were shrunk into an only goal – to find a man which would support her and to be a proper wife according to his will. As they are not given an education which would help them to develop their own judgement, there is no alternative for them than to accept this position. Wollstonecraft further develops the ideas of her female contemporary Catherine Macaulay that the image of a fragile woman is a product of bad education and criticizes the double standards. She not only emphasised the importance of female education but she came up with a new

³⁹ Walters, *Feminism*, 32.

⁴⁰ Walters, *Feminism*, 32.

⁴¹ Janet Todd, "Mary Wollstonecraft: A Speculative and Dissenting Spirit," last modified February 17, 2011, http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/empire_seapower/wollstonecraft_01.shtml.

⁴² Taylor, *Mary Wollstonecraft and the Feminist Imagination*, 25.

⁴³ Walters, *Feminism*, 33.

revolutionary idea – a universal education at least to the age of 9.⁴⁴ In addition she argues that women are often described as masculine whenever they act naturally for human being – meaning expressing their injustice, wishes, dreams and hopes openly. If woman did that it meant losing a womanly qualities and integrity. However, Wollstonecraft argues that if masculinity means being reasonable and honest, women will ‘grow more and more masculine.’⁴⁵ The biggest advantage of Wollstonecraft was that she understood that without a change in society, the attitude towards female gender will not have a promising future. Women were, according to her, above all rather careless, uncertain and hesitant to do something due to the condition of society which stagnated, and in needed a revolution. Women were often ridiculed for their obsession with true love and ideal life. The reason behind it, according to Wollstonecraft, is they have no choice than to dream because their lives are empty and devaluated. Nevertheless, she admitted that as reasonable as she tried to be, she fell in love with an American adventurer Gilbert Imlay. They had a child together but for his indifference Mary suffered from depression as she found Gilbert with another woman and tried to commit a suicide. Luckily she survived and married her close friend William Goldwin who was a big admirer of her work. In her second, melodramatic, novel *Maria: Or the Wrongs of Women* (1797) she shows her deep fears about the future of female sex and shows that no matter what social class woman come from, she will be exploited by male-dominated world.⁴⁶ Unfortunately, the novel is unfinished as Wollstonecraft died after giving birth to another child, daughter Mary, who married the poet Percy Shelley and grew up to be very famous author of gothic novel *Frankenstein*. Mary Wollstonecraft’s work is even today eagerly cited and responded to.

⁴⁴ Walters, *Feminism*, 35.

⁴⁵ Walters, *Feminism*, 35.

⁴⁶ Walters, *Feminism*, 40.

2. FIRST WAVE OF FEMINISM; REFORMING WOMEN, BEGINNING OF ORGANIZED FEMINISM, THE SUFFRAGE MOVEMENT

2.1 Reforming women and the outset of women's Suffragists and Suffragettes

The beginning of the 19th century was still harsh in attitude towards female sex. Any women's movement before 1850 was scattered and disjoint, basically non-existent.⁴⁷ Divorce, higher education, possibility of working, right to own a property or to vote were women's ambitions still considered as a taboo. For woman education is a waste of time, responsibility would seize them and work would make them ill.⁴⁸ Speaking about female emancipation in public was still controversial subject. Higher institutions did not do anything as they still believed women were created to be inferior and dependent by nature. Very often women handed their manuscript to the minority of men fighting for gender equality who were willing to read it out loud for them. That was the only way to reach a broader audience. Being a woman was still a very hard position to be in. Married or unmarried, she was still a subordinate human being with almost no part in leading her life. It is true that it was possible to choose a husband, to marry from love but if the relationship did not end happily, the divorce would deprive her from any possession, dignity and social position. Unmarried woman was also in an unenviable situation. As Jane Austen in her novel *Emma* wrote that 'a single woman, with a narrow income, must be a ridiculous, disagreeable old maid, the proper sport of boys and girls; but a single woman of good fortune is always respectable, and may be as sensible and pleasant as anybody else.'⁴⁹

Marion Reid (1815-1902), a Scottish feminist writer, wrote a notable work *A Plea for Woman* (1843) where she admits that domestic duties should be a part of woman's life but to a certain extent. She should not be limited only to the domestic sphere. Marion did not agree with the form of education that was delivered to girls. She claimed that if a girl tried to express her own thought or idea on a certain subject, she was immediately repressed. There was no freedom for them to develop their minds as it was for boys. Marion was the one who showed her radical argument that women should vote, even though she hardly sees any of the female sex to be chosen as a representative. It is about the possibility of the act, to be given the opportunity to convey a belief because woman

⁴⁷ Ray Strachey, *The Cause: A Short History of the Women's Movement in Great Britain* (Essex: Virago Limited, 1978), 64.

⁴⁸ Strachey, *The Cause*, 16.

⁴⁹ Strachey, *The Cause*, 17.

is as 'a rational, moral and accountable creature' as man is.⁵⁰ They did not want to belong to the domestic sphere only; they wanted to become a part of the public sphere to influence their own choices. However, her work was more influential and praised in USA than in Great Britain.

There were also men who strongly argued for the female emancipation; though it is fair to say that they were strongly influenced by their wives. William Thompson (1775-1833), an Irish writer and a social reformer, wrote one of the best known arguments *Appeal of One Half of the Human Race, Women, against the Pretensions of the Other Half, Men, to Restrain them in Political and thence in Civil and Domestic Slavery* (1825). It is dedicated to Anna Wheeler who left her drunken husband and became a reform activist. Thompson shared her ideas and stated her as a contributor to the *Appeal*. The book deals with the condition of married women, how they are oppressed, considered to be a property and servant to their husband. He says that home is nothing more than a prison. He promotes the civil and political rights of women. The *Appeal* is in its part a disapproval of James Mill's essay *On Government* where he claimed that there is no need for women to have any political voice as they are represented by fathers and husbands. Thompson criticized this idea and asks what an unmarried woman without a father could do. His new and strongest idea was that if woman participate in political view and agenda, it can benefit men as well.

It was the second half of the 19th century when organized campaigns, clubs and movements for women's rights emerged in order to improve female condition in terms of education, opportunities to work outside their households, reform in laws affecting married women and, for the first time, for the right to vote.⁵¹ These movements mark the first wave of feminism. The main representatives that contributed to the enhancement of women's rights were John Stuart Mill, Emily Davies, Barbara Leigh Smith or Elizabeth Garrett. These advocates worked together and published several petitions for female emancipation in social and mainly political sphere. Women experienced new situations, became more opinionated, articulated against mistreatment and honoured their beliefs. Right to vote evolved into an important issue for women as they believed that it was the only way how to change their status. They did not want to

⁵⁰ Walters, *Feminism*, 43.

⁵¹ Walters, *Feminism*, 41.

belong to the domestic sphere only; they wanted to become a part of the public sphere to influence their own choices.

How married women faced difficulties can be demonstrated in the life of Caroline Norton (1808-1877). Though she never intended to be the fighter for the gender equality but her life made her changed her attitude. She married out of the fear that she would die as an old maid but the marriage was not happy. Norton gained a respectable social position but she suffered from domestic violence. It escalated by his taking the children away and refusing them to see their mother. Moreover, her husband accused her of adultery. Despite the accusation was dismissed, Caroline was humiliated, betrayed and depressed by the denied access to her children. She could not sue or be sued, she would not have any legal defence, no support as married woman had no legal laws; married woman had no legal existence. Being married was a handicap in 19th century. She supported a bill in 1838 renovating the Infants Custody Act and wrote a pamphlet defending the Act by declaring the natural rights of mothers to care for her children. At the end of the 1850s, another Bill circulated to reform of Marriage and Divorce Bill. The intension was to abolish the Church their judicial power and to allow a divorce otherwise than through Parliament.⁵² It resulted in passing a Divorce Reform Act in 1857 and it caused a stir. Many people were thinking about other reforms and extensions but Caroline Norton did not identified with this attempt. She claimed that the main purpose was to allow a woman who left her husband to keep her own property or at least her earnings; and the goal was achieved. Furthermore the Divorce Bill provided provision for legal separation and it allowed woman to take care of her children and if injured, a payment of potential guardianship.⁵³

A man that spoke out loud for women was John Stuart Mill (1806-1873), son of the previously mentioned James Mill to whom he strictly opposed. Mill contributed to the women's liberation immensely as they finally had an intelligent and determined advocate among male gender. His wife Harriet Taylor had a big influence as they were very open and honest to each other. Harriet often spoke about her struggles and feelings. Although married, they had strong objections about the constitutional law of marriage. John Mill argued that the law gives to one of the pair the power of the other one; the person can control the other one's property and action of decision making process. John publically declared that he surrender all these 'rights' and will never use them to his

⁵² Strachey, *The Cause*, 74.

⁵³ Strachey, *The Cause*, 76.

advantage. He disapproved of then existing marriage law as he considered that to be his duty. Unlike his father he published *The Subjection of Women* (1869) in order to support women's rights, declaring that the women's inferior position is wrong and if society does not eliminate the differences between genders, human race will deteriorate. He said the prejudices to female sex are ancient and hindrance to the development of society. Mill further believed that the relationship between man and woman need to be viewed equally because it is natural. Moreover he bravely claimed that womanhood had lost its true inner value because it was controlled and defined for centuries, directed in different ways to be suitable for others. He expected from marriage that husband and wife would resemble and complement each other.⁵⁴ Woman should not give up her own dreams and ambitions in favour of the interest of man. Man on the other hand should be more generous and tolerant. In the 1860s he was elected as an official in government and became responsible for the advocating of Woman Suffrage. He fought for the inclusion of women into the government. In 1866 Mill presented a first women's petition to vote, followed by an appendix from 1867 called Reform Bill and campaigned for a parliamentary reform in favour of women's suffrage in order to give women the same political rights as men. Together with Barbara Leigh Smith, Emily Davies and others he formed a first Women's Suffrage Committee (1866).

Florence Nightingale (1820-1910) did not want to be identified with female movements, however, her deeds inspired much more than any other woman had ever said and she became a true role model. She complained about women's laziness to work adding that she is 'brutally indifferent to the wrongs and rights of [her] sex.'⁵⁵ Nevertheless, she strongly disagreed with the system that restricted women's existence. From an early age she longed to be useful and helpful to the world, and despised the expected behaviour of woman – a constant smile, lively attitude and being always agreeable. She received an education from her father but she did not find it pleasurable, it did not challenged her. Florence did not find any sympathy for writing as it is 'a substitute for living.'⁵⁶ Only actions speak for a man and bring results. She decided to fulfil her life by nursing which met a disapproval of her mother and sister due to the bad reputation nurses had. Fortunately her father decided to help Florence against his wife's will and provided her with money and she could afford to devote her life to charity. She

⁵⁴ Walters, *Feminism*, 47.

⁵⁵ Walters, *Feminism*, 49.

⁵⁶ Strachey, *The Cause*, 20.

worked as a superintendent in the Invalid Institution for women of a noble birth or a nurse in at the Middlesex Hospital in London during and outbreak of cholera. Thus she acquired a lot of experience, established herself a name and soon she was asked to put together a team of nurses in order to help wounded soldiers in Crimean War. There for her gentleness and sympathy, she was nicknamed as the Lady of the Lamp. She found the hospital in a hopeless condition with poor hygiene, lack of proper supplies and medical care. Due to her untiring attempt to improve the hygienic situation of hospital she radically lowered the death rate by 40% and proved that hygiene and health are closely related. Taking care of the injured undoubtedly lived up to her expectation of a promising life she longed for so eagerly. Florence Nightingale became a national heroine who demonstrated the possibility for women to be of a specific occupation.

During the 1850s women were meeting together to discuss their issues and set up a first group of organized feminism 'the Ladies of the Langham Place' which would published a first feminist periodical *English Women's Journal*. The founder of this group was Barbara Leigh Smith (1827-1891). She was born into a wealthy family connected with a circle of influential and intelligent circle. Her father encouraged her in studying and gave her enough money per year so she could afford to travel. Soon she found out that her position of freedom and fortune is unique. She could see it on her cousins. Although well-dressed and surrounded by luxury, they could hardly afford anything, let alone do what they wished for. To see women in such despair, she decided to alter laws dealing with property and employment. Together with her like-minded friends she created Married Women's Property Committee. Barbara decided to focus mainly on the situation of married women, change in female education and for the employment possibilities. The aim of the committee was to support a Bill for married women in order to improve their financial situation. She argued that women should be allowed to educate their children and if needed, to work. Moreover she urged for appreciation of the work women do at home. Barbara is recognized for establishing a first primary school for girls and boys, where they would study together no matter what level of society they came from. As the *English Women's Journal* gained popularity among women, the Ladies of the Langham Place kept an employment register as women were coming to their office looking for a job. Naturally, it found disapproval

among many men as they claimed the presence of women in their trades might force men into unemployment.⁵⁷

Female education arrived to certain betterment during the 19th century. Working-class girls were educated in churches and schools. Despite this opportunity, their schooling was vastly different from what a boy of the same class was given.⁵⁸ Boy's education was challenging to the mind. For girls, it was not anyhow demanding to the intellect; religion was still a part of the training so they would be humble, modest and moral. The care of the household was involved as the priority, moreover under the supervision of governess. The higher academic education was not available for women until the 1870s, of course without degree, which was male dominant. Women activists tried to contribute to a proper education for girls which would challenge them just as the boy's education. Emily Davies (1830-1921) was a pioneering activist in women's right for higher education. She was a member of the Women's Suffrage Committee although she firstly did not want it when offered a position of secretary since she believed extremists would join and it would destroy the education movement. Davies despised the basic training provided for girls. If anything, it discouraged them to develop their abilities as they were told nothing is expected from them and that they always fail against men. Angry and encouraged by Langham Place group, she managed to form a committee in 1862 which would allow women to participate in the University Local Examinations at Oxford and Cambridge Universities. Four years later she published book *The Higher Education of Women* where she defend the right of women to study and although admitting that they will not be as good as men. After raising a sufficient amount of money she, together with Barbara Leigh Smith, co-founded the Girton College in Cambridge in 1869, a first college opened for girls. Despite women were not being equally treated at university level schooling, Emily Davies made a huge contribution and her work was crucial for further development, for example awarding degrees to women in 1878 or establishing the Lady Margaret Hall for women in 1879 at Oxford University.

⁵⁷ Walters, *Feminism*, 60.

⁵⁸ Franklin Kimmel Prochaska, *Women and Philanthropy in Nineteenth-century England* (Oxford University Press, 1980), 3, accessed April 17, 2015, http://books.google.cz/books/about/Women_and_Philanthropy_in_Nineteenth_cen.html?id=Uk-flYAL5lkC&redir_esc=y.

A long-time friend of Davies Elizabeth Garrett (1836-1917), known today as a first woman that ever gained a medical qualification in Britain, also did not want to dedicate her life to idleness and after she was introduced to the Langham Place group, she knew immediately what the future will bring. The heartening she gained in the group made her to achieve her dream to become a doctor. It was a profession still predominated by men and so she was mocked by her male students, some of them even did not agree to share the classes with women as it was inappropriate for them. Encouraged by their disbelief she cannot be a proper doctor, by her father who gave her all the money she needed, and by her role model doctor Elizabeth Blackwell she wrote to several others hospital just only to be refused. Eventually, she received a certificate in physiology and anatomy and was admitted to Society of Apothecaries where, after studying privately with professors from several universities, she could not be refused by law and thus obtained a licence to practice medicine. After opening a small dispensary for women, she was allowed to obtain a M.D diploma in Paris.

In 1864, Elizabeth Garrett together with Florence Nightingale, she protested against the barbarous Contagious Disease Acts by which the police was allowed to arrest any woman who was suspected from prostitution and subjects her through humiliating genital examination by a male doctor. The acts were passed all of a sudden by the Houses of Parliament with no publicity or discussion. Five years later a Ladies National Association was established in order to abolish these acts. Activist like John Stuart Mill, William Thompson, Elizabeth Garrett or Elizabeth Smith started to sharply argue for the right to vote for women and the suffragists as well as later more aggressive suffragettes came to the foreground of the female emancipation.

2.2 Fighting for the vote

In 1870 the Married Women's Property Act allowed married women not to transfer her belongings to her husband and if divorced, she could keep her property. After achieving this, the right to vote and to be equally paid became the new goals of the female liberation. They wanted to vote because it would mean they could influence the laws affecting them. Society was divided up by the dealing with the problem which women should be empowered by the right to vote. The demands of women's suffrage concentrated on unmarried women. It was believed that the interests of wife and husband are indistinguishable and therefore there is no need for married woman to be

given a vote as it would be like giving another one to her husband.⁵⁹ Women's suffrage had opponents in men as well as women. Their idea was criticized by many, especially for the exclusion of married women who are much more experienced than spinsters and therefore should have had more rational understanding and opinion.⁶⁰ Others argued that only man is able to fight for his country and that is why the right to vote belongs to male sex. Women's Suffrage Committee produced petitions which though defeated, they meant a huge step in the enfranchisement of women. Other committees and pro-suffrage groups were founded in British cities. Richard Pankhurst, member of the Manchester group, set up *Englishwoman's Review* (1866) which helped to promote the Suffragists.

2.2.1 Suffragists

In 1890s there were several groups supporting suffrage. Three of them joined together in 1897 to form united group called the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies (NUWSS). The members, led by Millicent Fawcett, who were called *suffragists* wanted to obtain the right to vote through peaceful and legal means. They formed public meetings, organized petitions, tried to address the Politicians, distributed literature and periodicals in order to show their aims.⁶¹ They learned to speak in public at schools, proving themselves to be as good speakers as men. Though they did not have many successful victories and vast of their petitions were denied, they formed an encouraging group for women who demonstrated courage and determination. A break point happened in the same year when a bill circulated in Houses of Parliament and received 71 vote majority in favour of women.⁶² Despite the bill did not come out as a law, it meant a progress and women had another reason to continue their battle.

2.2.2 Suffragettes

More and more pro-suffrage activist were annoyed by injustice that emerged. Even poor and illiterate men were able to vote while educated women who paid taxes

⁵⁹ Walters, *Feminism*, 70.

⁶⁰ Walters, *Feminism*, 70.

⁶¹ "National Union of Suffragge Societies," accessed April 17, 2015, <http://spartacus-educational.com/Wnuwss.htm>.

⁶² Harold L. Smith, *The British Women's Suffrage Campaign 1866-1928: Revised 2nd Edition* (Routledge, 2007), 20, accessed April 17, 2015, https://books.google.cz/books?id=WraOAwwAAQBAJ&hl=cs&source=gbs_navlinks_s.

were excluded.⁶³ Suffragists were realizing of their little success that resulted from their peaceful actions and decided to take a step in more radical range motivated by Lydica Becker's claim from 1868 that 'it needs deeds of bloodshed or violence before the British Government can be roused to justice.'⁶⁴ The family of Pankhurst were frustrated by the failure of NUWSS. Emmeline Pankhurst (1858-1928) founded another influential group of pro-suffragettes the Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU) in 1903. The members of this union, *the suffragettes*, held more radical approach to spread their word to the audience. Their main intention was to gain vote for women on the same principles as men. The leading character and the most effective speaker of the union was Anna Kenney (1879-1953). Through her harsh experiences when working from an early age in a cotton mill, she became an activist of suffrage movement after hearing a speech of Emmeline's daughter Christabale Pankhurst (1880-1958). The two women often collaborated in several campaigns.

The media did not provide enough space to the struggles of suffragettes, WSPU started to use different methods to be noticed. First they started to build up an image. Women were dressed in white with purple and green sashes carrying banners with colourful inscriptions.⁶⁵ The members started to set up demonstrations, marched at frequented places such as Hyde Park or Albert Hall or shouted and provoked politicians at public meetings. Sometimes they turned to smashing stones to shop windows and setting fire to letterboxes. On October 1905 Anna Kenney and Christabale interrupted a political meeting of Liberal Party where they heckle at that time Prime Minister. He commanded the police to order them out of the meeting. They refused to go so they ended up beaten and bruised, arrested, charged with assault and fined with five shillings each which they refused to pay so they were sent to prison.⁶⁶ After the incident *the Daily Mail* coined the term suffragette in 1906 to differentiate the WSPU activists from the mild suffragists.

Over the course of time several of the activists were arrested, humiliated and morally destroyed. But if anything, these injustices only encouraged women to fight more. However, their actions sometimes went too far; some of them wanted to burn down theatres or set on fire the house of a minister. Many of the suffragettes were arrested and to show resistance, they went on hunger strikes during 1908. As

⁶³ Walters, *Feminism*, 74.

⁶⁴ Walters, *Feminism*, 75.

⁶⁵ Walters, *Feminism*, 78.

⁶⁶ "National Union of Suffrage Societies."

government could not let them die, authorities of the prison force-fed them. Emily Wilding Davison even died for the cause when she ran to the horse race under the King's horse on Derby Day in 1913.⁶⁷ Year later Emmeline was arrested outside the Buckingham Palace when trying to hand a petition to the King. Disagreement from the inside of WSUP towards these fanatic actions grew, and several activists resigned. In The Prisoner's Temporary Discharge Bill, known as 'the Cat and Mouse Act', was passed in 1913 allowing the government to temporarily release women from prison who were weakened from hunger striking; but as soon as they recovered, they were imprisoned again. Christabel at those times were in exile in Paris, leading the WSUP externally which caused criticism from the members. As the First World War became inevitable, government released the suffrage prisoners and Emmeline suspended the campaign for the vote and declared that all women have to fight for their country as they fought for the vote.⁶⁸ The war gave many women opportunity to work outside – hospitals, munitions factories, engineering works. First attempts for equality of pays arose. After the war Parliament passed Qualification of Women Act which enabled women over 30 to vote and Constance Markiewicz became first woman to be elected to Westminster.

⁶⁷ Walters, *Feminism*, 82.

⁶⁸ "National Union of Suffrage Societies."

3. EARLY 20TH CENTURY; SECOND WAVE OF FEMINISM; MODERN AGE

3.1. Early 20th century

With gaining the vote, though limited, it seemed like the feminism, the female liberation, completed the task and there were still many issues to fight about. Nevertheless, the reform in politics did not very change the social condition. NUWSS changed name into National Union of Societies for Equal Citizenship (NUSEC) in 1919 and started to focus on achieving broader scale of reforms than politics – economic, legislative and the mentioned social condition. Still they fought for the expansion in the right to vote. The success came in 1928 when women over 21 were enabled to vote on the same basis as men. As the economic recession took place, women were the most sensitive target in terms of unemployment. They wanted the profession propositions to be open for women, to be available for women to have a chance to choose their occupation. Their main goal was equal pay for equal work, reform of laws dealing with prostitution, custody of children and existing divorce law which would stop tolerating men's adultery, participation of women in Parliament in order to promote equality programme etc. And they had success. In 1919 the market opened a little for women after passing the Sex Discrimination Removal Act which made illegal to discriminate women from legal profession or other jobs because of their sex.⁶⁹ Four years later a Matrimonial Causes Act made adultery as a main argument for divorce and thus established equality between wife and a husband. New periodicals were focused on women such as *Woman and Home*, *Good Housekeeping* which through their titles again restricted the areas women should be in. But there was one distinguished magazine *Time and Tide* (1920) in which Virginia Woolf, G.B. Shaw, Emmeline Pankhurst or Rebecca West were among the contributors where women talked openly about the problem of caring children, being unmarried or widowed etc.

The question of birth control started to be a significant theme which caused a lot of controversy. The pioneer was Marie Stopes (1880-1958) who broke many taboo subjects about sexuality. During her divorce, she met Margaret Sanger (pioneer in birth control in USA) and showed her unfinished book *Married Love* (1918) and asked her for an advice about contraception. The book became a phenomenon and made it to another six editions by the end of the year. She set up a birth control clinic in 1921

⁶⁹ "1928 Equal Franchise Act," *Spartacus Educational*, accessed April 18, 2015, <http://spartacus-educational.com/W1928.htm>.

where poor women were given advice about birth control for free. Another highly controversial issue was abortion. In 1936 the Abortion Law Reform Association was founded to reduce death due to miscarriage. It remained an unthinkable affair till 50s when several women began to urge for legalization of abortions.

During the 20s and 30s feminists started to be viewed as old spinsters, unattractive harridans who do not like men. The press, who started this labelling, remarked it is due to the war where women lost their feminine qualities and became 'de-sexed and masculinised.'⁷⁰ Unfortunately, this faulty notion persists until nowadays.

After WWII, the United Nations (UN) was established in 1943. It is a formation promoting international co-operation to prevent worldwide conflicts.⁷¹ In 1947 they created a Commission of the Status of Women which published a Declaration of Human Rights. It says that both women and men had equal rights in every aspect of life. They held several important meeting declaring that 'there is and must be a diversity of feminisms, responsive to the different needs and concerns of different women.'⁷²

3.2. Second wave of feminism

This period of feminism became in 1960s. Second-wave dealt with obstacles in sexuality, family, working opportunities, equal pay and birth control. They wanted to bring publically their prospective on their own problems. Moreover, lesbian feminism started to be quite big topic in women's liberation. They felt to be detached, indifferent by both the women's movement and in gay liberations groups. They called themselves to be centre of the feminism because their existence threatened the male supremacy.⁷³ The homosexual male and female writers attacked the routine of heterosexual household as well as the dominant-male/passive-female role pattern.⁷⁴ In London throughout the 70s, women were meeting in several groups in order to talk about every-day issues, problem, fears and wishes. The meeting served as an exploration what women have/have not in common no matt. The number one goal was equal pay and education, birth control and abortion on demand. Women's marches were usually concerned to the

⁷⁰ Walters, *Feminism*, 91.

⁷¹ "Overview," United Nations, accessed April 19, 2015, <http://www.un.org/en/sections/about-un/overview/index.html>.

⁷² Walters, *Feminism*, 97.

⁷³ Neeru Tandon, *Feminism: A Paradigm Shift* (New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers, 2008), 8, accessed April 19, 2015, https://books.google.cz/books?id=zffBjzTsRHUC&dq=the+paradigm+shift+neeru&hl=cs&source=gbs_navlinks_s.

⁷⁴ Walters, *Feminism*, 107.

body and women's right to make decisions over their own bodies. Women started to be considered as a sexual object and bombarded with images of ideal women which often led to self-destructive actions (anorexia, bulimia, plastic surgeries); the questions about being exposed to the un-realistic demands on women are common and more widespread in our modern age. Questions of surviving a rapist attack were getting forward. Especially in America women tend to investigate this field; the results were applicable even in Britain. Women were bitterly mocked that they cannot be raped against their will and if so, they ask for it. In 1977 the first Crisis Centre in London was founded. Domestic violence began to be common. Nevertheless with the raising of violence, many women became to be fanatics and the man-haters, posing to be feminists and thus making a bad label to the original idea of feminism. That is when feminism started to be misleadingly taken a misandry movement and the radical feminism started to be predominant movement.

3.3. Post-feminism

Since 1990s another era of feminism emerged, referred to as third-wave or the post-feminism. More and more women became representatives in Parliament. British women can do almost every job they want, can study at universities and can decide about their future prospects. Gender studies became widely studied, exploring new studies of women's, as well as men's, position in society. Several discrimination acts were passed in order to improve working condition for disabled women and Trans people. In 1994 rape in marriage was considered as a crime. Equal Pay Acts should guarantee fair wage of women and men in the same positions. So is there any further need of feminism? What lies in the future of women's rights?

After the year 2000, the interest about feminism faded. The radical movement based on the idea that women are oppressed in every possible way and men are dominant started to be in the lead and a lot of anti-feminism hate emerged. Their notions are only masquerading as feminism as it discriminates the male gender.

The third-wave shifted their interests more broadly. Activists try to define the problems of women based on class, race, transgender rights, workplace concerns like sexual harassment, motherhood, domestic violence. Men are not view as enemies. Women try to dispose their doctrine of the idea that women want to have power over men and get rid of the patriarchy.

However, patriarchal society effects also men – how they should act, what to wear, how they should look etc. That is why feminism gained another new direction which rejects superiority of any gender and believes that both genders can enrich each other. In 2011 an organization UN Women started to operate for empowerment of women. Since then the new face of feminism appeared. UN Women does not include only women, they want also men to speak for the gender inequality and equality as it affects also their sex. UN Women initiated in September 2014 a new solidarity movement for gender equality called HeForShe. It wants to actively involve boys and men to the fight, as it is no longer only the fight of women for women. The key figure of this campaign is a British actress Emma Watson who became a UN Women Global Goodwill Ambassador in July 2014. Making her a face of this movement was a good step as it attracted millions of people to sign up for the cause. However, Watson represents this movement mainly actively, not only passively as it would be expected from a famous person. With launching the HeForShe movement, she delivered a speech in New York about their goals. She declared that feminism needs to stop being connected with man-hating, speaking of her own experiences with inequality by being sexualized from an early age by media, how her girlfriends discontinued to play certain sports in order not to appear masculine, and her male friends cannot express their feelings so they would not be mocked to be feminine.⁷⁵ These gender prejudices affects both sexes and oppress them. She pointed out that feminism causes uncomfortable emotions. When woman proclaims herself to be feminist, she is considered to be unattractive. She addressed the men to take action in the campaign and to make a change which would help women as well as men. The campaign has in its aim the global gender equality by pointing out that even in leading nations women are not paid the same as men, sexualizing of women increased and they also touch sensitive themes of circumcision, marriages at early age etc. HeForShe of course get a lot of criticism and threats but as it gained a lot of famous faces, it definitely gives a new rise to feminism.

⁷⁵ “Emma Watson at the HeForShe Campaign 2014 – Official UN Video,” Youtube Video, 1:52, posted by UN Nations, September 22, 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gkjW9PZBRfk>.

4. JEANETTE WINTERSON AND ANALYSIS OF HER NOVELS

Jeanette Winterson, a British novelist, journalist and activist, was born in August 1959 in Manchester. A year later she was adopted by Constance and John Winterson and grew up in Accrington, Lancashire. She was strictly brought by her religious mother who intended her to be a missionary. Reading as such was not approved at home unless it was the Bible. However, it was Malory's *Morte d'Arthur* that evoked in her a passion for writing. At the age of 16, she left home after having confessed to be a lesbian. After gaining a diploma from St Catherine College, Oxford, she had a various jobs before publishing her highly acclaimed first book *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* (1985) which won a Whitbread Price for best novel. Another famous work *Sexing the Cherry* (1989) is considered to be an important novel for women as it deals with their position in society. In 2006 she was made an officer of Order of the British Empire for services for literature. Winterson writes novels, essays, literature for children and has a regular column in *The Guardian*.⁷⁶ Winterson has gift in creating unusual worlds where common principles are often transitory.

4.1. Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit

Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit is a bildungsroman, containing autobiographical elements, which at first spread by word of mouth, people were handing it over. It tells a story about an adolescent girl Jeanette adopted by a religious couple in the 1960s. The story is narrated from a first-person perspective, starting from the age of 7 to 21. Her fanatically religious mother brings her up to be a future missionary and Jeanette is persuaded there is no other proper alternative for her. When 14, she meets a girl Melanie with whom she fell in love at the age of 16. Mother, superiors of church and others judges her, believing she is possessed. Jeanette is made to leave the Church when refusing to undergo an exorcism, which is a disaster for her mother. After having an argument with her, she decides to leave home and start to live on her own. She succeeds and gains a job at Oxford University, and after some time she visits her parents. During her stay she reconcile with her mother who acts like nothing had happened.

The novel includes fairy tales and historical stories to supplement and enliven the whole storyline. The novel deals with themes like self-knowledge, finding one's

⁷⁶ "Jeanette Winterson," *British Council Literature*, accessed April 25, 2015, <http://literature.britishcouncil.org/jeanette-winterson>.

own place, dealing with sexuality, disposing prejudices about homosexuality, injustices between homosexual and heterosexual women, dealing with refusal, hetero-patriarchal society and fanatical religious beliefs.

As the main character is a lesbian, the novel is considered to be a lesbian fiction despite the fact Winterson disagrees with it, saying that she ‘never understood why straight fiction is supposed to be for everyone, but anything with a gay character or that includes gay experience is only for queers.’⁷⁷ Winterson uses very little male characters, there’s women’s superiority in numbers. Jeanette grew up hearing negative opinions and offensive names on men, for example when her mother told her that she married a swine or two ladies, Doreen and Nellie, talking about their husbands as drunkards. Overhearing their conversation becomes significant also from another point of view – though the women express strong aversion towards men, Doreen complains about her daughter that instead of finding a boyfriend, she is always with her girlfriend Susan. Doreen reveals her worries how people will talk they are like the other two lesbian women in neighbourhood buying a double bed for themselves. Nellie opposes that she also once bought a double bed for her and her husband which Doreen scoffs that is something different. Jeanette could not understand why it is not normal, what is so strange about a woman living with another woman. From the very beginning of the story, she takes a liking to women than to men. Jeanette is not interested in men and she has never had any intimate moment with male sex. As she grew up in an environment full of strong women where each of them negatively speaks about their husbands, she does not consider a marriage with man to be fulfilling and gaining her own view and opinions on world which differ from what she has been taught. When she and Melanie are accused of being possessed by the Church, Melanie withdraws and submits to the thoughts of the priest and suddenly acts like it was an accident. Jeanette openly admits that she loves Melanie. Her sexual orientation feels natural for her and that is why she do not understand what is so bad about it and why she should feel guilty and why it is considered as a sin. She thus finds out that her sexual orientation should have been a secret because now she is ostracized. The only person who fully accepts her is Elsie Norris. She supports her, helps her, listens to her and becomes a role model of her because Elsie regards the same values as Jeanette does. Moreover, Elsie believes in God in a manner which does not judge people and that motivated Jeanette not to give up God

⁷⁷ “Books: Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit,” accessed April 25, 2015, <http://www.jeanettewinterson.com/book/oranges-are-not-the-only-fruit/>.

entirely in the end even though she eventually stands up to her mother and the Church and leaves home.

Jeanette's mother is a woman with a strongly hypocritical attitude. Especially when treating Jeanette herself. Jeanette is neglected by her mother. It seems that she adopted Jeanette only to have someone she could raise as a perfect servant of God with whom she could oppose the evil of the world. The lack of understanding and love toward Jeanette is shown from the beginning. She slaps her when she forgot a word from the Bible or does not want to send her to school as it would lead her to astray.⁷⁸ When Jeanette goes deaf, her mother sees it a God's sign, telling her it is rapture. After undergoing an operation, she sends Jeanette oranges to the hospital after an ear operation instead of visiting her and rather deals with her religious business. Most importantly, she reports Jeanette to the priest when finds out about her and Melanie. All of this makes their mother-daughter relationship more difficult. Jeanette's mother (as well as the Church) blindly follows the rules and regulations proving she is a sheep without a rational judgement.

The title of the book is rather unusual but it indicates a deeper meaning, mainly in what the oranges stands for. The whole life she is taught that the oranges are the only proper fruit. However, the orange does not only imply a fruit but also other possibilities. The orange represents the whole upbringing of Jeanette. Her mother gave her no other chance to decide for herself what she wants to do. To a certain time, Jeanette was sure she wants to be a missionary and that is the only proper future for her. Had it not been for her strong nature and curiosity, she would probably end up like her mother, obsessed with God, behaving as absurd as her. Oranges are given to Jeanette in difficult times as they should right the wrongs that happened, like a compensation for the mistreatment towards her. The orange in the story comes alive in form of an orange demon that appears to Jeanette when starving in order to get rid of the sin of affection towards women. The little demon says to Jeanette that everybody has a demon inside representing the difference in each of us, and if she gets rid of him, she will be pretentious having two identities – the one the Church and her mother wants and the other, not fitting to the community but the true one. Jeanette decide to follow his advice but not sure how to achieve it as she wants both, to fit in and to be true to her beliefs. The breaking point for Jeanette was the rejected by Melanie who gives her an orange

⁷⁸ Jeanette Winterson, *Na světě nejsou jen pomeranče* (Argo, 1998), 25.

when she breaks up with her. Jeanette, broken and disappointed, refuses the orange and thus refusing the doctrine Melanie succumbed to – the same doctrine preached by the Church. Thus she is loyal to herself and her rules and principles. The oranges portray the hypocritical attitude toward difference (here it is the homosexuals), appreciating one way of life and not valuing other possibilities.

Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit is novel with a strong message that people should stand up for their beliefs and should not conform to every custom that society dictates. When speaking from a feminist point of view, the message is present in Jeanette. As a main female character and protagonist of the novel, did not allow to be affected by the society's doctrine, spoke aloud for her justice when accused of possession and thus succeeded in heavily patriarchal society led by the Church. Her mother, on the other hand, though appearing as a strong and leading figure, is behaving according to principles of the Church - that is patriarchy, even when dealing with her daughter. Thus she truly complies with the label of a weak gender women so fought against and constitute the opposite to Jeanette, who is strong young woman with rational reason who develops her judgement on her own, without the influence of others.

4.2 Sexing the Cherry

The postmodernist novel *Sexing the Cherry* is set in the 17th century during the Puritan London and includes real historical characters and events - Charles I, Oliver Cromwell, the Great Plague and The Great Fire of London. The story has two narrators, Jordan and his mother who forgot her name so she is called the Dog-woman as she takes care of fifty dogs. Jordan is an orphan who is found floating on the river and rescued by the Dog-woman who is an ugly huge creature. She is very much aware of her appearance and decided to retreat from any kind of love towards a man but her foster child. Her face, with flat nose and heavy eyebrows, is deformed with scars and holes from smallpox. For her look she has no kind word expect for her eyes which are blue and can see in the dark well. However, she does not mind her unflattering look as long as her son loves her; and he does. The story is about a quest of the mother and Jordan across the sea in order to bring fruit England has never seen, shifting time from present to future, in exotic lands. The novel is heavily shaped by intertextuality, magical realism and as well as the Oranges, an altered tale of Twelve Dancing Princesses is

inserted.⁷⁹ There are also two extra narrators from the 1990s in order to show that the prejudices that Dog-woman had to face in 17th century are occur also in the present times.

Dog-woman's narration is more honest and factual and provides us with historical background to the Jordan's descriptions. She has a complex personality. Winterson deliberately equipped her main female character with typical masculine attributes. Though she is anatomically female, her body underwent immense changes and due to her physically no man is capable to have sex with her and thus conceive a child.⁸⁰ Still, she can gentle for instance towards her son but when somebody pulls her leg, she transforms into a violent creature as she weighs more than elephant and possess an unearthly strength which she sometimes cannot control. She solves problem by action, not by standing away and speaking about it as majority of women would do. For example, when Jordan lies with fever during the Great Plague, she grabs her neighbour and insists on her help otherwise she 'may not say what maternal rage might do,'⁸¹ or when she kills her father at a young age because he wanted to sell her due to her proportions. Moreover, she takes an aggressive approach towards the Puritans she despises. Because she experienced several mistreatments because of her look, she wants to help to change the perception of woman which would be much worse under the Puritans who connect the sins and devil with the female body. She takes her campaign against them as far that she kills two of them in a brothel. The Dog-woman possess gentleness, tenderness, maternal affection, charity and other qualities typical for female gender, but because she looks as a mountain and has murderous tendency, people do not expect these traits from her as they are expected from a woman with different physical proportions; in other words woman with pretty looks and appropriate behaviour. However, the Dog-woman ignores the regulations of a proper woman and acts according her own rules of femininity. Winterson wanted to notify that if the expectations of women did not complied with somebody, she was immediately exposed to humiliation and prejudices.

Jordon's narration is more philosophical, dreamy, imaginary and full of tales and supernatural elements. Jordon loves her mother no matter her ugly appearance, her lies or her murderous intentions. He was even proud of her because 'no other child had a

⁷⁹ Elizabeth Langland, "Sexing the Text: Narrative Drag as Feminist Poetics and Politics in Jeanette Winterson's 'Sexing the Cherry,'" *Narrative* Vol. 5, No. 1 (1997), 102. *JSTOR*. Accessed April 28, 2015.

⁸⁰ Langland, "Sexing the Text."

⁸¹ Jeanette Winterson, *Sexing the Cherry* (New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 1989), 162.

mother who could hold a dozen oranges in her mouth at once.’⁸² At the age of three, Jordan sees a banana and it awakens his nomadic nature. He yearns for adventure, for crossing his boundaries which is in contrast to his materialistic mother. He wants to become admired and to become a hero. It is a dream every man has and that is the only masculine trait he expresses. Jordan possesses qualities which a reader would not await from man. He is gentle and romantic when he takes her mother to watch and cherish the view of the sunset; he contemplates about love several times and admits the fear which is something man would never do.⁸³

Winterson decided to pay attention to the gender qualities and thus challenge the reader’s mind in traditional concept of perceiving female or male. She portrayed women as strong, active, of independent will, with noble purpose to make world a better place whereas men are idle and unconfident, dwelling in their dreams. Thus, *Sexing the Cherry* belongs to the category of literature that startled many critics and readers by its approach of questioning the conventions about the proper woman and man. If a certain gender does not behave in an expected way, they are mocked and therefore they often have to put a pretentious behaviour and suppress their real qualities and interests in order to fit in and not to be ostracized. This problem is the main focus of the post-feminism that tries to get rid of the prejudices of a certain gender. Winterson represented the solution of this issue in a Dog-woman who deals with ridicule by strength and violent behaviour. Though this kind of resolution would hardly work in reality, Winterson demonstrated that in each person there is an inner strength to fight for their own being.

⁸² Winterson, *Sexing the Cherry*, 21.

⁸³ Giulia Suci, “Feminist Criticism in Jeanette Winterson’s ‘Sexing the Cherry,’” (University of Oradea), 6, accessed April 28, 2015, www.uab.ro/reviste_recunoscute/...2005.../09.doc.

5. CONCLUSION

The aim of my thesis was to explore the phenomenon of feminism in Great Britain and to prove that the main focus of the movement is not hatred against men. In order to do that, I focused on history of the position of British women in society from an early age, described the harsh treatment, oppression and gender prejudices they had to face, and how they stood up and decided to improve their lives.

In the first chapter I explained the term feminism to show that the motives of the movement are entirely non-violent and that the activists' goal is to achieve equality between the genders so that both men and women would have the same opportunities in various levels – from education and social role to politics and economics. In addition, I focused on the beginnings of the women's position in community.

From an early age women lived in a patriarchal society and that set the basis of the future women's movement. The beginnings started in non-secular times when the image of woman was shaped by the Bible which portrays her as a weak, inferior and likely to tempt men into a sin. The destiny of woman was planned in advance and the only possible occupation for her was to get married. Unmarriageable women were sent into convents which meant an advantage of learning how to read and write. However, they could not develop their abilities further as they were not allowed to preach and the basic education was considered unfeminine. Women had not any social status and the only work position was a midwife or servant; married woman managed household. This stereotypical view on women remained into the Tudor England. Woman's main deal was to take care of household, children and husband. Men automatically gained all wives' property and the divorce was unthinkable. The occupation outside the domestic sphere improved a bit as they were allowed to work as bakers, sellers or tailors. The 15th and 16th century was marked by witch hunting when the poor, herbalists and handicapped women as well as men were accused of black magic and despite not being humiliated by investigation of their body parts, they were executed. Though feminism did not exist as such, the first feminist icon was Queen Elizabeth I who managed to be one of the most influential monarchs in patriarchal society and thus encouraged other women to successes also in 'unfeminine' ambitions.

The 18th century represents the change in the perception of a woman. She was not sinful anymore, but pure and innocent maid who grows into a loyal and obedient woman. Opportunities regarding education improved, women gained basic education,

however, not for development of the mind but for better handling of domestic skills. The most influential figures for women's improvement were Mary Astell and Mary Wollstonecraft who plead for better training and education for women as they have the same abilities to make a rational judgement. Astell helped to established first institutions for schooling girls and Wollstonecraft came up with the idea of universal education. Both heavily criticized that women are from an infant taught how to be socially acceptable and representative and thus they lack confidence to act.

In the second chapter of the thesis I focused on the first wave of feminism that has its peak at the beginning of the 19th century. When women had such ambitions in education, occupation or politics, she was mocked and discouraged. Married or unmarried, woman were in unenviable situation as they were still considered as subordinate to man and could not lead her own life. Although they could choose a husband, the divorce was a taboo. Women started to form clubs, first campaigns emerged and also men started to openly defend women's rights and advocated in the advancement of their positions. Among the main contributors for the betterment of women's emancipation were John Stuart Mill, Emily Davies, Barbara Leigh Smith or Elizabeth Garrett. They openly fought for the emancipation in terms of education, opportunities to work outside their households, reform in laws affecting married women and, for the first time, for the right to vote. Several petitions were presented and shortly after first university level education for women were provided, followed by the first official movement for women's right emerged around Women's Suffrage. First there were the Suffragists who fought for the cause peacefully by public speeches or distributing literature. However, they did not achieve as much as they expected, and many women resigned in order to form more radical group the Suffragettes. They wanted to gain right to vote on the same principles as men but used vandalism to spread their goals. It resulted in several arrests and hunger strikes; however, it helped women to achieve what their desired most – the right to vote. At the end of the WWI, they were also allowed to be elected into the Parliament after their peaceful participation in fighting for their country by helping in hospitals, munitions and factories.

The third chapter suggests that even though the enfranchisement of women was successful, there were issues worth fighting for. Women started to focus on much broader aims like social condition, equal pay and the ability to choose occupation in more professional spheres. They demanded reforms in custody of children, divorce law

and change in perceiving man's adultery. The question of birth control and abortion emerged and it provoked heated debates. A woman that contributed to the first clinics for abortion and birth control was Marie Stopes who openly spoke about contraception and sexual aspects. During the WWII feminists were labelled as old spinsters, unattractive harridans who do not like men. The 1960s until the late 1980s marks the second-wave of feminism and its branches like lesbian feminism or radical feminism. Women were meeting at groups to talk about their every-day issues, their social position as sexual object, being the victim of more common rape attack and domestic violence. Increasing violence towards women caused a bad label to the original idea of feminism as some women started to be fanatical man-haters and hence the feminism started to be taken as a movement against men.

The modern age of feminism that arose in the 1990s which showed a new point of view is labelled as third-wave of feminism. As women achieved many spheres from education and job opportunities to political participation and reform in sexual discrimination, we can ask what else to fight for. After 2000 feminism started to be globally understood as movement only for women which has for its aim to oppress men. Contemporary British activists joined the activists from other countries to change this misconception. They try to define the problems of women based on class, race, transgender rights, workplace concerns like sexual harassment, motherhood, domestic violence. More importantly, men are not view as enemies but main key factors in achieving gender equality. In 2014 the organisation UN Women launched new solidarity movement for gender equality called HeForShe. Its representatives want to actively involve boys and men to the fight for gender equality and believe that both genders can enrich each other. The key figure of this campaign is a British actress Emma Watson who attracted a lot of people to the cause by her speech where she declared that feminism needs to stop being connected with man-hating and that they have to eliminate the gender prejudices that hugely oppresses both sexes. The campaign has a lot of criticism as well as supporter, and due to its international intention it gives a new rise to feminism.

In the last chapter of my thesis I focused on two works by Jeanette Winterson who is considered to be one of the most interesting voices in literature. I explored the portrayal of female characters in *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* and *Sexing the Cherry*. Both works deal with the position of women in society. Jeanette in *Oranges*

proves exceptional courage when she stands up for her beliefs and values and refuse to blindly follow the rules of the society based on hypocrisy and prejudices towards different people. The Dog-woman in *Cherry* was exposed to humiliation and mockery her whole life because of her unattractive appearance. Nevertheless, she takes advantage of her strength and deals with aggressors by her own way, though the violent one is not the right one. Winterson showed on her that even if woman does not look an expected way, her typical traits like gentleness do not vanish. Moreover the Dog-woman understands herself as a female and though she does not look like a woman, she ignores the society's rule how to be woman and live her life on the basis what she considers to be feminine. Winterson intentionally interchanged gender characteristics and equipped women with male traits and vice versa. The probable reason behind it is that she wanted to draw attention to gender bigotry.

To conclude this thesis, my focus was to show the purpose of the feminist movement, its gradual historical development and that it is not aimed against men. I had to trace the women's position from the very beginning of our age which marks the first indication of gender oppression. Women lacked education, any public behaviour or development; and any legal defence; these issues became the main goal for women until the 19th century when the first official organization emerged. Women wanted to gain rights that were fully possible only for men. They fought mainly for the right to vote, education on the same level as men, to bring up their children or for a support in legal affairs like divorce or having a property. After the World wars the focus of the feminists changed a little towards their own body and fought for question of abortion, contraception or for the law that would mark rape as a crime. From this we can see, that the objective of feminist advocates has never been an oppression of male sex but the control over their own decision about their life.

6. RESUMÉ

V této bakalářské práci bylo mým cíle prozkoumat sociální hnutí zvané feminismus v oblasti Velké Británie a dokázat, že toto hnutí nemá nic společného s nenávisí vůči mužům. Zvolila jsem postup zaměřený se na historii ženského postavení ve společnosti od počátků věků, popsala jsem tvrdý přístup, utlačování a předsudky vůči pohlaví, kterým ženy musely čelit, a také jak se vzepřely a bojovaly za zlepšení jejich postavení.

V první kapitole jsem vysvětlila původní myšlenku a pohnutky feminismu, které hlásají rovnoprávnost mezi pohlavími, aby muži a ženy měli stejné možnosti v různých odvětvích, od vzdělání a sociálního postavení, až po politické a ekonomické aspekty. Dále jsem se zabývala počátky ženského postavení.

Ženy žily v patriarchálním světě už od pradávna, a to zapříčinilo základ pro budoucí ženskou emancipaci. Začátky formování ženského postavení se datují už od světských dob, kdy představa o ženě byla utvářena Biblií, která ženu popisovala, pokud se o ní vůbec zmínila, jako slabou, podřazenou a náchylnou ke svádění mužů k hříchu. Osud žen byl dopředu naplánován a jediná možnost, jak se žena mohla uplatnit, byl sňatek. Ženy, které byly nějakým způsobem nevhodné ke sňatku, skončily v klášteře, což však znamenalo výhodu v možnosti naučit se číst a psát. Nicméně, společnost považovala vzdělání za neženské, a tak jim nebylo umožněno jejich schopnosti dále rozvíjet. Jelikož také neměly žádné společenské postavení, jediná práce, kterou mohly vykonávat, byla porodní bába nebo služka. Vdané ženy pak měly za úkol pouze obstarávat domácnost. Stereotypní obraz hříšné ženy přetrvával až do Tudorovské Anglie. Také hlavní úděl byl stejný – postarat se o manžela, děti a domácnost. Muži navíc po sňatku automaticky získali veškerý majetek, který náležel ženě a co se týče rozvodů, na to žena nesměla ani pomyslet. Možnosti práce se nepatrně zlepšily, ženy už mohly pracovat jako pekařky, prodavačky na trzích, krejčí nebo jako cukrářky. V 15.- 16. století čelilo mnoho žen, ale také i mužů, obvinění z čarodějnictví. Chudí, postižení nebo staří lidé byli často obvinění z černé magie. I kořenářky, které znaly různé druhy bylin a rostlin, byly považovány za čarodějnice. Přestože často pomáhali lidem s různými nemocemi, některé byliny byly halucinogenní a to jasně naznačovalo černou magii. V Anglii čarodějnice nebyly ponižovány ohledáním těla, nicméně u soudu si většinou vyslechly odsouzení k smrti oběšením, ne upálením jako třeba ve Francii. I když v té době feminismus jako hnutí neexistoval, dnešní historikové považují za první

feministickou ikonu Alžbětu I. Přestože nerovnoprávnost mezi muži a ženami byla velice rozšířená, dokázala se v patriarchální společnosti prosadit a stala se jedním z nejvýznamnějších panovníků Anglie; navíc bez manžela. Její velkou výhodou bylo, že se jí dostalo plného vzdělání, nicméně i tak to neměla lehké, například v politice, která byla (a stále je) dominantou mužů. Pro své odhodlání se tak stala vzorem pro ostatní ženy, které měly určité ambice.

18. století přineslo změnu ve vnímání ženy. Nemluvilo se o ní jako o hříšnici, ale o čisté a nevinné panně, která vyrostle ve věrnou a poslušnou ženu. Přístup ke vzdělání se zlepšil, ženám bylo poskytnuté základní vzdělání, nicméně nebylo určeno pro zábavu a rozvoj ducha, ale pro lepší zvládnutí domácnosti. Nejvýznamnějšími osobnostmi tohoto období byly Mary Astell a Mary Wollstonecraft, které vyžadovaly pro ženy lepší školení a vzdělání, protože dokáží stejně racionálně uvažovat jako muži. Astell se zasadila o založení první instituce, která školila mladé dívky, kde by se učily náboženství, ale i světským předmětům. Wollstonecraft přispěla univerzálním vzděláním od devátého roku, což byla tehdy převratná myšlenka. Obě aktivistky silně kritizovaly, že jsou ženy od malička učeny, jak být společensky přijatelné a reprezentativní ve společnosti, a tak se jim ubíralo na sebevědomí.

V druhé kapitole práce jsem se zaměřila na první vlnu feminismu, která byla na vrcholu na začátku 19. století. Pokud měla žena zájem v odvětví vzdělání, práce nebo politiky, byla terčem výsměchu a odrazování. Ať byla vdaná nebo svobodná, nacházela se v nezáviděníhodné situaci, protože nemohla rozhodovat o svém životě a byla podřazena muži. Přestože si mohly vybrat svého budoucího manžela, rozvod jí stále nebyl umožněn. V té době neměla žádná práva, co se týkalo majetku nebo dokonce výchovy dětí. To znamenalo, že právně neexistovala. Ženy se začaly scházet ve spolky, vznikaly první kampaně, a také muži začali veřejně bránit práva žen a zasadili se o zlepšení jejich postavení. Mezi hlavními iniciátory byli John Stuart Mill, Emily Davies, Barbara Leigh Smith nebo Elizabeth Garrett. Veřejně bojovali za emancipaci žen ohledně vzdělání, pracovních příležitostí mimo domácnost, reformy v zákonech týkajících se vdaných žen a také za udělení práva volit. Bylo prezentováno nespočetně petic a zanedlouho bylo ženám poskytnuto první univerzitní vzdělání následované oficiálním hnutím pro ženská práva – Suffražetky. Jako první bojovaly ženy skrze mírové jednání, roznášely literaturu a pořádaly veřejné proslovy. Těmto bojovnicím se říkalo v anglickém jazyce Suffragists. Vzhledem k tomu, že nezaznamenaly svým

přístupem mnoho úspěchů, některé ženy odstoupily, aby založily novou, mnohem radikálnější, skupinu bojovnic nazývanou Suffragettes. Chtěly získat pro ženy právo volit na stejných principech, které mají muži; používaly však násilí a vandalismus. Vyústilo to v nesčetná zatčení, hladovky a následná násilná krmení, účel byl ale splněn a ženy dosáhli práva volit těsně před První světovou válkou. Sufražetky odstoupily během války od svých plánů a podporovaly muže, kteří bojovali za Anglii, sloužily v nemocnicích, pracovaly v muničních skladech a továrnách, za což pak po válce byly odměněny tím, že mohly kandidovat do parlamentu.

Třetí kapitola je zaměřena na hnutí ve 20. století a jeho druhou vlnu. Přestože ženy mohly volit, stále tu byly cíle, kterých chtěly ženy dosáhnout. Aktivistky se zaměřily na širší spektrum, např. sociální podmínky, platovou rovnost a možnost pracovat a prosadit se v profesionálních oborech. Požadovaly reformu zákonů týkajících se rozvodů a vnímání mužského cizoložství a také právo matky vychovávat své děti. Hlavním cílem však byla antikoncepce a možnost potratu, což vyvolalo značnou kontroverzi. Marie Stopes byla první žena, která založila kliniku pro ženy, kde jim kromě informací byla poskytnuta interupce a antikoncepce. Marie byla první ženou, která otevřeně mluvila o sexuální stránce ženy a antikoncepci. Během Druhé světové války byly aktivistky za ženská práva označeny jako „staré panny a neatraktivní fúrie“, které nemají rády muže. Od 60. let až po pozdní 80. léta nastala druhá vlna feminismu a vznikly nové druhy tohoto hnutí, např. lesbický nebo radikální feminismus. Ženy se setkávaly v menších kruzích, aby řešily každodenní problémy, jejich sociální postavení jako sexuální objekt, znásilnění a domácí násilí. Zvýšené nebezpečí a násilí vůči ženám zapříčinilo negativní postoj vůči feminismu, protože se k feminismu začly hlásit ženy, které muže opravdu nenáviděly a odtud vzniklo dnešní pojetí feminismu, které je spojeno s myšlenkou oprese mužů.

V 90. letech 20. století vznikla třetí vlna feminismu, která nabízí nový směr. Ženy mají možnost účastnit se ve všech odvětvích, od vzdělání a práce, po politickou účast. Zasadily se také o změnu zákona o sexuální diskriminaci a obtěžování na pracovišti, což se stalo trestným činem. Po roce 2000 začal být feminismus celosvětově chápán jako hnutí pro ženy, které má za cíl utlačovat muže. Současní britští aktivisté se spojili s aktivisty ze zahraničí, aby toto mylné chápání změnili. Snaží se řešit problémy žen s přihlédnutím na rasu, třídu, transgenderová práva, pracoviště, sexuální obtěžování, mateřství a domácí násilí. Hlavní důraz je kladen na myšlenku, že muž není nepřítelem,

ale hlavním elementem, který může pomoci k rovnoprávnosti mezi pohlavími. Organizace pro podporu emancipace žen UN Woman rozběhla novou solidární kampaň nazvanou HeForShe – On pro Ni. Její představitelé chtějí aktivně zapojit chlapce a muže, protože věří, že obě pohlaví se mohou inspirovat navzájem. Klíčovou úlohu v boji hraje velvyslankyně dobré vůle OSN a britská herečka Emma Watson, která inspirovala mnoho lidí, aby se aktivně zapojili do boje za rovnoprávnost. V září 2014 přednesla řeč, kde prohlásila, že feminismus už nesmí být chápán jako nenávist vůči mužům a že prvním cílem by měla být eliminace předsudků vůči pohlaví, která silně ovlivňuje muže i ženy a utlačuje je. Kampaň si získala jak mnoho příznivců, tak odpůrců. Díky mezinárodním záměrům a cílům, které si představitelé HeForShe kladou, vzniká nová tvář feminismu.

V poslední kapitole mé práce jsem se zaměřila na dvě díla bristké spisovatelky Jeanette Winterson. Zabývala jsem se vyobrazením ženských postav v románech *Na světě nejsou jen pomeranče* a *Jak naštěpit třešeň*. Obě díla řeší pozici žen v komunitě. Jeanette v *Pomerančích* prokázala výjimečnou odvahu, když se postavila za svou víru a principy a odmítla slepě následovat pravidla společnosti založené na pokrytectví a předsudcích vůči odlišným lidem (např. homosexuálům). Psí žena v *Jak naštěpit třešeň* byla celý svůj život vystavena posměchu a ponížení kvůli jejímu monstróznímu vzhledu. Nicméně se dokázala vzchopit, využila ve svůj prospěch svou enormní sílu a postavila se vůči agresorům po svém, i když násilí není tím správným způsobem. Winterson na Psí ženě ukázala, že když žena nevypadá tak, jak se od ní očekává, její typické charakterové vlastnosti jako je něha, se nevytratí. Psí žena sama sebe chápe jako ženu a žije svůj život podle toho, co ona považuje za ženské, a to je důležité pro odlišení ženskosti od mužnosti. Winterson záměrně přehodila typické vlastnosti mezi jednotlivými pohlavími a vybavila tak ženy ve svém románu mužskými povahovými vlastnostmi a naopak, aby poukázala na předpojatost vůči pohlaví.

Závěrem bych chtěla shrnout své výše uvedené poznatky. Mým zaměřením bylo hnutí feminismus, jeho hlavní cíle, historický vývoj a vyvrácení, že toto hnutí nabádá k nenávisti vůči mužům. Sledovala jsem ženské postavení od počátků věků, kdy nastaly první známky genderového utlačování. Ženy se nesměly vzdělávat, rozvíjet své myšlení a projevat své názory na veřejnosti. Dokonce neměly žádné právní zastání. Tyto záležitosti se staly hlavním cílem boje až do 19. století, kdy začly vznikat první organizace. Ženy chtěly mít stejná práva, která byla poskytována pouze mužům.

Zaměřily se na právo volit, získání vzdělání na stejné úrovni jako mají muži, právo vychovávat své dítě nebo na získání právního zastání v oblastech jako rozvod či možnost vlastnit majetek. Pozornost aktivistů se po obou světových válkách zaměřila na ženské tělo a začli bojovat o legalizaci potratů, antikoncepce nebo za zákon, který by uznal znásilnění jako trestný čin. Na základě těchto zjištěných dat můžeme vidět, že feminismus nikdy nesměřoval k utlačování mužů, ale naopak kladl důraz na právo žen mít kontrolu nad svým vlastním životem.

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Annotation

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Name of the thesis: Feminism and Women's Rights in Great Britain throughout the Centuries with Analysis of Jeanette Winterson's Work

Supervisor: Mgr. Pavlína Flajšarová, Ph.D.

Number of pages: 55

Number of characters: 105 324

Key words: feminism, gender, Great Britain, British, sex, male, female, post-feminism, gender oppression, prejudice, Jeanette Winterson

The thesis deals with a social movement in Britain called feminism and its historical background. The aim is to show that feminism does not equal to misandric ideology and the reasons behind the movement are more complex. The focus was given on the position of women throughout the centuries, their oppression and how they fought the gender biases. Post-femism of the present age is mentioned at the end as well as the analysis of two works of a contemporary British author Jeanette Winterson.

Anotace

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Katedra: Katedra anglistiky a amerikanistiky

Název práce: Feminismus a práva žen ve Velké Británii napříč stoletími doplněno o anlyýzu děl Jeanette Winterson

Vedoucí práce: Mgr. Pavlína Flajšarová, Ph.D.

Počet stran: 55

Počet znaků: 105 324

Klíčová slova: feminismus, pohlaví, Velká Británie, britský, muž, žena, post-feminismus, genderové utlačování, předsudky, Jeanette Winterson

Tato práce se zabývá sociálním hnutím zvaným feminismus a jeho historií na uzemí Velké Británie. Cílem této práce je dokázat, že feminismus nemá nic společného s misandrickou ideologií a že důvody pro toto hnutí jsou složitější. Důraz byl kladen na pozici žen napříč stoletími, jejich utlačování a jak čelili předsudkům vůči pohlaví.

V závěru práce je zmíněn i současný post-feminismus a analýza dvou děl současné Britské spisovatelky Jeanette Winterson.