

Univerzita Hradec Králové

Pedagogická fakulta

**Prvky feminismu ve vybraných dílech Virginie Woolfové**

Bakalářská práce

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Hradec Králové

2023

University of Hradec Králové

Faculty of Education

**Features of Feminism in Selected Works by Virginia Woolf**

Bachelor's Thesis

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B0231A090082 Foreign languages for tourism – French language  
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## Zadání bakalářské práce

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<b>Název bakalářské práce:</b>	<b>Prvky feminismu ve vybraných dílech Virginie Woolfové</b>
Název bakalářské práce AJ:	Features of Feminism in Selected Works by Virginia Woolf

### **Cíl, metody, literatura, předpoklady:**

Bakalářská práce se zaměřuje na prvky feminismu ve vybraných dílech Virginie Woolfové. Teoretická část práce vymezuje pojem feminismus, mapuje jeho historii a ztvárnění v literatuře. V teoretické části je také blíže charakterizováno viktoriánské období a postavení žen v tehdejší společnosti. Teoretická část dále přibližuje život a tvorbu Virginie Woolfové. Praktická část se věnuje rozboru vybraných děl s ohledem na aspekty feminismu a obsahuje vlastní analýzu zkoumaných děl.

WHITWORTH, Michael. *Virginia Woolf*. Oxford University Press, 2005.

WOOLF, Virginia. *Mrs Dalloway*. Alma Books, 2015.

WOOLF, Virginia. *Orlando*. Penguin Books, 2020.

WOOLF, Virginia. *Room of One's Own*. Alma Books, 2019.

WOOLF, Virginia. *To the Lighthouse*. Alma Books, 2017.

Zadávací pracoviště: Katedra anglického jazyka a literatury,  
Pedagogická fakulta

Vedoucí práce: Mgr. Jan Suk, Ph.D.

Oponent: prof. PhDr. Bohuslav Mánek, CSc.

Datum zadání závěrečné práce: 5.12.2018

## **Prohlášení**

Prohlašuji, že jsem bakalářskou práci Prvky feminizmu ve vybraných dílech Virginie Woolfové vypracovala pod vedením vedoucího práce Mgr. Jana Suka, Ph.D. samostatně a uvedla jsem všechny použité prameny a literaturu.

V Hradci Králové dne 30. 4. 2023

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## **Prohlášení**

Prohlašuji, že bakalářská práce je uložena v souladu s rektorským výnosem č. 13/2022 (Řád pro nakládání s bakalářskými, diplomovými, rigorózními, disertačními a habilitačními pracemi na UHK)

Datum:.....

Podpis studenta:.....

## **Poděkování**

Tímto bych ráda poděkovala svému vedoucímu bakalářské práce Mgr. Janu Sukovi, Ph.D. za jeho odbornou pomoc, názory, připomínky a cenné rady.

## **Anotace**

DUŠKOVÁ, Linda. *Prvky feminismu ve vybraných dílech Virginie Woolfové*.

Hradec Králové: Pedagogická fakulta Univerzity Hradec Králové, 2023. 66 s. Bakalářská práce.

Tato bakalářská práce zkoumá prvky feminismu ve vybraných dílech Virginie Woolfové. Bakalářská práce je rozdělena na teoretickou a praktickou část. Teoretická část je věnována významným faktorům, které měly klíčový vliv na autorčinu literární tvorbu. Nejprve je přiblíženo viktoriánské období a postavení žen ve viktoriánské společnosti. Dále se bakalářská práce zabývá problematikou feminismu, vymezuje pojem feminismus a popisuje vývoj feminismu v historickém kontextu a jeho ztvárnění v literatuře. Následně je přiblížena osobnost autorky a její literární tvorba. Na základě nastudovaných poznatků jsou v praktické části vybraná díla Virginie Woolfové, konkrétně *Paní Dallowayová*, *K Majáku*, *Orlando* a *Vlastní pokoj*, podrobena zkoumání a rozboru se zaměřením na prvky feminismu.

Klíčová slova: Virginia Woolfová, Feminismus, viktoriánská společnost, postavení žen

## **Annotation**

DUŠKOVÁ, Linda. *Features of Feminism in Selected Works by Virginia Woolf*.

Hradec Králové: Faculty of Education, University of Hradec Králové, 2023. 66 pp.  
Bachelor Degree Thesis.

This bachelor's thesis explores features of Feminism in selected works by Virginia Woolf. The theoretical part is devoted to the significant factors that had a key influence on the author's literary work. Firstly, the Victorian period and the position of women in Victorian society is introduced. Next, the thesis deals with the issue of Feminism, defines the term Feminism and describes the development of Feminism in a historical context and its representation in literature. Subsequently, the author's personality and her literary work are introduced. On the basis of the studied knowledge, in the practical part, selected works of Virginia Woolf, specifically *Mrs Dalloway*, *To the Lighthouse*, *Orlando* and *A Room of One's Own*, are examined and analysed with a focus on the features of Feminism.

Keywords: Virginia Woolf, Feminism, Victorian society, position of women



## Abstrakt

Tato bakalářská práce se zabývá prvky feminizmu ve vybraných dílech Virginie Woolfové. Práce je rozdělena do dvou částí. Teoretická část je věnována významným faktorům, které měly klíčový vliv na autorčinu literární tvorbu. Na základě nastudovaných poznatků se bakalářská práce v praktické části zabývá vybranými díly Virginie Woolfové, jež jsou podrobeny hlubšímu zkoumání a rozboru se zaměřením na prvky feminizmu.

V první kapitole teoretické části je nejprve přiblíženo viktoriánské období se zaměřením na historické události, které měly dopad na utváření společnosti a na životy obyvatel ve viktoriánské Anglii. První podkapitola bakalářské práce přibližuje život v době viktoriánské a jednotlivé sociální třídy, jež byly pro život lidí určující. Dále se práce zaměřuje na pracovní příležitosti a s tím související urbanizaci a životní úroveň, což byly důležité faktory ovlivňující každodenní život společnosti. Práce přibližuje viktoriánskou morálku a standardy chování. V další části je pozornost zaměřena na vzdělání, rodinný život střední třídy a na trávení volného času.

V druhé podkapitole první části se práce zaměřuje na postavení žen ve viktoriánské společnosti a na charakteristiku patriarchální společnosti. Práce objasňuje pojem “domestic ideology” a dopad této ideologie na životy žen. V této podkapitole je pozornost věnována rozdělení genderových rolí a s tím souvisejícím omezením žen v nejrůznějších sférách života. Pozornost je zaměřena na oblast vzdělávání dívek, na postavení žen v manželství a na legislativní změny upravující práva žen.

V druhé kapitole teoretické části se bakalářská práce zabývá problematikou feminizmu. V první podkapitole je vymezen pojem feminizmus. Dále jsou objasněny cíle, kterých se feministické hnutí snažilo dosáhnout. V druhé podkapitole práce seznamuje s příčinami vzniku feministického hnutí a s počátky jeho utváření. Bakalářská práce následně popisuje vývoj feminizmu v historickém kontextu a přibližuje témata, kterými se feministické hnutí zabývalo. V třetí podkapitole se práce věnuje konkrétním autorům prezentujícím myšlenky feminizmu. Ztvárnění feminizmu v literatuře je další součástí pojednání o feminizmu.

Aby bylo možné analyzovat vybraná díla Virginie Woolfové, věnuje se bakalářská práce i životu autorky a důležitým událostem v jejím životě, které měly vliv na její tvorbu. V třetí kapitole teoretické části je v krátkosti představena osobnost Virginie Woolfové. V první podkapitole třetí části se práce věnuje životu spisovatelky a okolnostem, které

měly vliv na její tvorbu. Bakalářská práce přibližuje autorčin život a zmiňuje události v životě Virginie Woolfové, které měly negativní dopad na autorčino duševní zdraví, se kterým se potýkala celý život. V další části první podkapitoly práce seznamuje s modernistickým hnutím a se skupinou Bloomsbury, se kterou je Woolfová nerozlučně spjata a jež sehrála v jejím životě a v její literární tvorbě zásadní roli. V druhé podkapitole bakalářská práce přibližuje autorčinu literární tvorbu. V práci jsou uvedena díla Virginie Woolfové a každé dílo je stručně charakterizováno.

V praktické části se bakalářská práce věnuje rozboru vybraných děl Virginie Woolfové s ohledem na prvky feminismu a obsahuje vlastní analýzu zkoumaných děl.

Cílem této bakalářské práce je hlouběji se zaměřit na postavení žen ve společnosti ve viktoriánské Anglii a na jejich zobrazení ve vybraných dílech Virginie Woolfové se záměrem analyzovat prvky feminismu. V teoretické části jsou zkoumány faktory související se společenským postavením žen v 19. století. Pozornost je věnována i problematice feministického hnutí, které je s postavením žen úzce spjata. Na základě poznatků získaných v teoretické části jsou v praktické části podrobněji analyzována vybraná díla Virginie Woolfové se zaměřením na prvky feminismu.

Při práci na zvoleném tématu jsem v teoretické části vycházela především z české a zahraniční odborné literatury zabývající se danou problematikou. V praktické části jsem analyzovala konkrétní vybraná díla Virginie Woolfové – *Paní Dallowayová*, *K Majáku*, *Orlando* a *Vlastní pokoj*. Pro potvrzení stanoveného cíle jsem analýzy jednotlivých děl na závěr podrobila vzájemné komparaci.

Na základě komparace analýz jednotlivých děl se mi podařilo nalézt společné prvky feminismu vyskytující se napříč zkoumanými díly, čímž se podařilo naplnit stanovený cíl mé bakalářské práce. Myšlenky a touhy žen čelících útlaku ze strany patriarchální společnosti odpovídaly idejím, které hlásalo tehdy vznikající feministické hnutí. Po analýze jednotlivých hrdinek lze konstatovat, že v patriarchálním světě nebylo se svými povinnostmi a téměř žádnými právy spokojeno daleko více žen, než se mohlo zdát. Avšak většina zkoumaných žen svůj úděl nesla poslušně a v tichosti, ačkoliv vnitřně trpěly a toužily po stejných možnostech a příležitostech jako měli muži. Ženy bojující za svou rovnoprávnost musely čelit neopodstatněným předsudkům a také neochotě mnoha mužů podílet se na zlepšení postavení žen. Obtížné prosazování změn a jen pomalé zlepšování postavení žen ve společnosti dokazují, že vnímání ženy jako nerovnocenné bytosti bylo ve společnosti silně zakořeněno, což byl důležitý faktor ztěžující boj za práva žen.

Na základě zjištěných poznatků je možné učinit si podrobnější představu o životě žen ve viktoriánském období a pochopit příčiny vzniku feministického hnutí a jeho myšlenky, jež jsou i v současné době občas špatně chápány a přijímány negativně.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The feminist movement fighting for gender equality began to take shape in the 19th century, but the issue is still actual today. Even in modern times, Feminism is often misperceived as an anti-male movement, a movement that seeks to enforce a privileged position for women in society at the expense of men.

Traditional ideas about the roles of men and women in society have been accepted as natural and unchanging for centuries. Society has accepted the weaker position of women compared to men. It was men who held power and had influence in the making of rules and their interpretation, thus influencing the mindset of the whole society. For centuries, women were pushed into the background while men ruled society. As recently as the beginning of the last century, only men could study at university, hold socially important jobs, or vote and be elected. Social rules based on historical tradition, which do not recognise the status of men and women as equal, are still seen as traditional and correct in some societies. Thus, Feminism is still perceived negatively in some parts of society as an interference with personal rights and freedoms. Despite this, however, there has been a major shift in the position of women in society.

Authors of literary works dealing with this subject have also played an important role in spreading new ideas and opinions. The English writer Virginia Woolf is one of the most important personalities to highlight the unequal position of women in society. Woolf criticises patriarchal society and the exclusion of women from social life. Through her literary works, she penetrates gender stereotypes and points out the ossification of society, which was very courageous and pioneering at the time. Woolf's literary works contributed to the strengthening of the feminist movement and became an inspiration for other women writers. Virginia Woolf became the face of the first wave of the feminist movement through her work and writings.

The aim of this bachelor's thesis is to look in depth at the position of women in society in Victorian England and their portrayal in selected works by Virginia Woolf with the intention of analysing the features of Feminism. The theoretical part characterises the Victorian period and the position of women in society at that time. Then the thesis defines the concept of Feminism, charts its history and its representation in literature. The thesis focuses on the life and work of the important English writer and feminist representative Virginia Woolf. The practical part is devoted to the analysis of selected works with regard to the features of Feminism and includes the analysis of the works under study.

# **1 THE VICTORIAN PERIOD**

“The “Britain” in which Virginia Woolf died was not the same nation in which Virginia Stephen had been born” (Whitworth, 2005, p. 30).

The Victorian period was an important stage in the history of Great Britain, during which great changes took place in all spheres of the life of its inhabitants. The Victorian era is roughly defined by the reign of Queen Victoria from 1837 to 1901. However, according to (Mitchel, 2009), three major events that took place before Queen Victoria came to the throne had an impact on life in Victorian England. The first event was the defeat of Napoleon at Waterloo in 1815, which brought an atmosphere of national pride to the society of the time. The next formative event was the Industrial Revolution, which transformed England into an industrialised country that for almost a century reigned as the world’s greatest economic power. The third important event shaping life in Victorian England and a major event in 19th century British history was the Reform Act of 1832, which regulated the electoral system in Great Britain and promised changes in society (Novotný, 2013).

The Victorian period is characterised by industrial, economic and technological advances that brought with them changes that had a profound impact on society at the time. Along with social and cultural changes came the development of educational institutions and health care. New fields of study, such as the natural sciences and the humanities, emerged. The Victorian era was also a time of significant literary and artistic works. Many important architectural monuments date back to this period. Despite the gradually rising standard of living of the population, the rapid development and progress brought with it negative consequences. Problems such as child labour, poverty of the lower classes, working conditions of workers and inequality in society led to social reforms and struggles to improve conditions for the most vulnerable sections of society.

## **1.1 Life in the Victorian Age**

Society in Victorian England in the 19th century was strictly divided into classes, and membership of a particular social class was one of the factors that determined the quality of life. Another shaping factor was the traditionally determined way of life in the countryside, town or city. One was born into a particular social class, one’s membership of a class was determined by family ties, background, education, upbringing,

and although income level was not a determining factor, it was an important part of one's position in the hierarchy of society (Mitchell, 2009).

At the beginning of the 20th century, society was generally divided into three social classes – upper, middle and lower classes. However, such a division could not fully capture the subtle differences between the classes and the sub-categories within each class (Whitworth, 2005). The “lower classes” were represented by the working class who performed physical labour and were very well represented in society – three out of four people. Most often these people worked in agriculture, in factories and as servants. The middle class boomed in the 19th century. Between 1837 and 1901 their representation in society rose from 15 percent to 25 percent (Mitchell, 2009). The middle class was very diverse and included everyone between the lower and upper classes. Members of the middle class included successful industrialists, wealthy bankers, and the common clerk. Although money was not a factor in determining class membership, the amount of income was important. Within this social class, the greatest financial disparity existed. Based on the level of income, and the associated success and respectability in society, this group gradually stratified further into upper and lower middle classes. The upper class was represented by aristocrats and nobility who did not perform paid work and their income came from renting out their property (Mitchell, 2009). Virginia Woolf was aware of the stratification of society and in her works she distinguished membership of a particular social class through, for example, the manner of behaviour and speech, however, the subtle differences between the social classes were not the focus of her work. In this she differed not only with her Victorian predecessors but also with some of her contemporaries (Whitworth, 2005).

The urbanisation that took place at the beginning of the Victorian era meant a large influx of new residents into the cities. “In 1884 one-fifth of all adults in England and Wales lived in London” (Whitworth, 2005, p. 44). Cities were not prepared for such a population increase. Urbanisation led to the development of cities and improved living conditions, but at the same time slums were created in which the poorest class of society lived. People who did not get jobs in the city lived in poverty and poor sanitation. Despite progress, social divisions in society were widening.

With the move to the cities and the new job opportunities came a great expansion of the middle class, which is the main focus of Virginia Woolf's works. The standard of living and influence of the middle class gradually increased. Along with the new way of life, the concept of bourgeois life and the associated standards of behaviour were also

taking shape at this time. The moral principles of the upper class and the royal court were the model for the middle class. Regardless of their income and status within the middle class, its members placed great emphasis on adherence to the moral rules and the manner of behaviour that was expected (Mitchell, 2009). Victorian morality was based on Christian values, was very strict and did not tolerate any deviation. The society condemned idleness and instead promoted hard work, renunciation, abstinence and sexual morality. Great emphasis began to be placed on education.

As Whitworth (2005) argues, the most significant changes in education were brought about by a series of Education Acts from 1870 onwards, which made education available to all children regardless of their background. The education of children in Victorian England took place in a variety of ways. The form and content of education depended on many factors, including social class, religion, parental financial status and gender. Education varied between classes and also defined class, making education more important. According to Mitchell (2009), some historians believe that improving education was a key reform for all other Victorian reforms.

The ideal Victorian family included parents and their children. Over the course of the 19th century, this model was further idealised and represented the norm of how things should be. The ideal model of middle-class family life was the housewife, who, unlike lower-class women, did not need to work to earn an income and could devote herself fully to the home and children. The man was in control of the entire family and household. In the first half of the 19th century, families were very large, but as the century progressed, the number of children born gradually declined and families became smaller in size. As reported by Whitworth (2005) between 1870–1900 the number of children in a family halved. This trend was likely the result of social and economic factors. In the case of the lower class, Whitworth (2005) cites the legal restriction of child labour as a possible explanation, and with it the reduction in the economic utility of more children. In the case of the middle class, rising costs of private education for children were a possible reason.

Rising living standards and shorter working hours meant more free time and the opportunity to engage in leisure activities. Previously, leisure activities were the preserve of the aristocracy and the upper classes. In the second half of the 19th century, leisure activities also spread to the middle class, who sought to emulate the lifestyle of the aristocracy. Popular activities included sports, which were considered serious, masculine and competitive, and games, which were playful and shared with women and children. Towards the end of the 19th century, sporting activities spread to the lower classes.



Members of the working class were able to participate in sporting activities due to the foresight of educated wealthy men. They realized the importance of sporting activities for health and discipline and sponsored amateur clubs, village teams, factory tournaments and religious organizations. The range of sports and games was constantly expanding. Clubs and associations were formed and members joined them. Popular sporting activities for Victorians included football, rugby, cricket and athletics. Professional spectator sport saw significant development in the Victorian era and, thanks to the availability of rail transport, became a popular leisure activity for much of Victorian society (Mitchell, 2009). In the late 19th century, cycling was very popular and flourished. As stated by Michell (2009) the bicycle not only provided healthy recreation, but as a means of transport it became part of the everyday life of the Victorians.

Apart from sports, cultural activities such as playing the piano and singing were also a part of Victorians' free time. Music was a common part of social gatherings and piano playing was a basic skill for many upper and middle class women. Dancing was another essential skill and a way to acquire graceful movements. Private balls and parties were popular (Mitchell, 2009). As Mitchell (2009) notes, various craft skills and handicrafts such as embroidery, crocheting, knitting, or drawing and painting were also leisure activities. The Victorians popularised book reading, which spread rapidly among all sections of the population. Children's literature flourished. Public libraries were established in towns and cities and were very popular. Reading for pleasure was not just an individual activity, but part of a mutual sharing with family and friends (Mitchell, 2009).

The paid mass entertainment that was available in the cities differed in its seriousness and popularity. Music halls were the most popular commercial entertainment for the working and lower middle classes. Here singers, dancers, acrobats and animal tamers performed. The performances included entertaining skits, often of a lowly nature. By contrast, members of the upper classes preferred a more serious kind of entertainment. They attended the theatres and the opera, which was an integral part of the social season for them. At the beginning of the 19th century, a large part of the middle class considered the theatre to be dubious. However, during the 19th century, the middle class also became regular theatregoers. In the Victorian era, there was a great emphasis on the educational nature of leisure. It is not unnoticed that many museums and galleries were built during this time (Mitchell, 2009).

## 1.2 Position of women in society

Victorian England was a patriarchal society in which men had more power and influence than women, whose position in society was relatively limited at the time. Women did not have the right to vote, could not run for public office and were restricted in many other areas, including property and inheritance rights. Women were considered weaker and less intellectually capable than men. A woman's main mission was to be a good wife and mother. "To be an ideal woman of any class in the nineteenth century meant neglecting one's personal needs – self-sacrifice – and devoting oneself to the service of others" (Abrams, 2002, p. 50).

As a result of the French Revolution and the Enlightenment, society became more concerned with human rights and human equality. This change in society presented promising prospects for women to improve their social status and achieve equality. However, civil and political rights were reserved only for men, while no rights were granted to women. "The fact must be faced that European nations granted human rights of legal independence to emancipated slaves and most working-class men before it was granted to women" (Abrams, 2002, p. 2).

In the 19th century, the so-called domestic ideology was promoted in Europe, which had a negative impact on the possible equality of women. According to this ideology, the sphere of the home was reserved for women, while the sphere of the world of work, politics and entertainment was reserved for men. The family was seen as the foundation of society, a safe place for family members. The family was to be protected from the outside world and its negative influences, which included the emancipation of women. The domestic ideology promoted conservative gender roles and emphasised the behaviour expected of individual family members. The man was seen as the active and decisive member of the family. He was expected to protect and financially provide for his family. The woman, on the other hand, was expected to be passive, submissive and completely devoted to her husband. The woman was responsible for raising the children and taking care of the household.

Society considered this limited division of male and female roles as the norm and fully supported it. Women were restricted by men in terms of education, employment opportunities and independence from men. "This caused women's power in society to decline, constrained their ambitions, almost imprisoned them in their homes" (Abrams, 2002, p. 5). However, in the nineteenth century, most middle-class women accepted

the cult of family life. “Mothers regarded it as their responsibility to turn out their daughters as good wives” (Abrams, 2002, p. 53).

At the beginning of the Victorian era, girls’ education in England was limited and depended on the family’s social status and economic means. Most girls, especially those from poorer backgrounds, did not have access to education because families often used their children to earn money or considered girls’ education unnecessary and inappropriate. Since girls did not need to be prepared for public life, it was enough for them to get the necessary education at home. Home study was meant to prepare girls for the role of wife and mother. It was mainly focused on moral principles and household management (Bušková, 2008). Daughters’ education was commonly considered less important than sons’ education (Mitchell, 2009).

However, during the Victorian era, the idea that girls should be educated began to emerge. Some schools began to accept girls and educate them at a basic level. In the mid-19th century, several academic schools for girls were established. The first was the North London Collegiate School (1850). These institutions provided education at a higher level and enabled girls from better-off families to receive a quality education. Although girls’ education gradually improved, it still faced many limitations and obstacles and did not match that of boys. Girls had limited access to certain fields of study and universities, which often hindered their professional growth. Men supporting the feminine ideal of the time were of the opinion that educated wives would upset the balance of marriage. They were supported in their view by a number of respected physicians who argued that education was the cause of female sterility. Despite these views, which sought to discourage women from studying, the number of women studying increased from the 1870s onwards. Depending on the demand, teaching was the main field of study for women (Bušková, 2008).

In the 19th century, a woman was expected to marry and properly fulfill the role of wife and mother. Motherhood was supposed to be the highlight of a woman’s life. Through it, a woman gained a certain status. Childless women were seen as deplorable. As a substitute for motherhood, they were advised to take care of children as a governess or nurse (Abrams, 2002). Since the number of women was higher than the number of men at this time, marriage was an important goal for many women. However, relationships within marriage were mostly hierarchical and unbalanced. Husband and wife did not have equal rights and responsibilities in marriage. The man controlled the family’s property and finances, while the woman did not have the right to sign contracts or make business

agreements on her own. This unequal status of man and woman in terms of rights and duties persisted throughout the 19th century.

However, during the Victorian era there were several significant legislative changes that extended the rights of married women and strengthened their position in society. Marriage law reform extended the rights of the mother to care for her child and provided greater protection for women in cases of domestic violence. In 1857, the Divorce Act was passed, which made it possible to end a marriage through an orderly divorce. The Act also guaranteed protection of property for abandoned women. The Married Women's Property Acts of 1870 and 1882 allowed married women to hold their own property, which they could dispose of independently (Bušková, 2008). A woman's right to own and manage her own property was an important step towards women's suffrage.

Although there was no equality between men and women in the Victorian era, there were signs of change. Women's rights movements began to take hold and organisations began to be set up to try to improve the status of women in England. Women began to fight for their rights and during the Victorian period the foundations were laid for the promotion of women's rights in subsequent eras.

## **2 FEMINIST MOVEMENT**

The Victorian period brought a large number of changes affecting all spheres of life. It was a period of progress not only in technology but also in thought. For women in particular, this period marked a major breakthrough and a shift in how they were viewed. In the 19th century, organizations and groups began to form that focused on fighting for women's rights and improving the status of women in society. The foundations of Feminism were laid during this period and since its inception it has continued to evolve and change in response to changes in society. The feminist movement can be divided into three waves that emerged in response to developments in society. In the Victorian period, the first wave of Feminism began to take shape and lasted until the early 20th century. Although the three waves focused on different issues related to women's lives in society, their common goal was to improve the status of women in different areas of their lives.

### **2.1 Characteristics of Feminism**

As already mentioned, the feminist movement has evolved and the issues it has focused on have changed along with society. The term "Feminism" was used in the 1880s by Hubertine Auclert, a Frenchwoman, to refer to those concerned with women's issues. The term "Feminism" was very broad and encompassed a variety of attitudes and opinions whose common goal was to advocate for the emancipation of women (Abrams, 2002).

The aim of the feminist movement is to strive for equality between the sexes and to fight against discrimination and inequality between women and men. The movement seeks to highlight and fight against gender inequality and stereotypes that are part of society and culture. Feminism aims to improve the status of women in society in all spheres of life. Today, there are different strands of Feminism that focus on different aspects of gender inequality and have different approaches to addressing these issues.

### **2.2 The Development of Feminism in Historical Context**

The term "Feminism" is associated with the late 19th century, but the roots of feminist consciousness were formed many years earlier. The feminist movement was a continuation of the women's movement, which dates back to the mid-19th century. In Victorian England, women had very limited rights and were seen primarily as wives and mothers whose main role was to care for the home and family. Women were excluded

from the vote, could not attend university, had limited employment opportunities and many other restrictions on property rights. Based on their gender, women were denied opportunities that men had. There was discrimination against women (Abrams, 2002). It was in this context that the women's movement began to take shape in England, motivated by the desire of women to gain greater rights and equality. To this end, in the mid-19th century, women began to organize more and collectively began to speak out against their subordinate position in society. This effort to promote a better position for women began the so-called first wave of Feminism.

The feminist movement was linked to the effort to promote women's suffrage. In 1867, John Stuart Mill, a member of the British Parliament, liberal philosopher and advocate of women's rights, spoke out on the issue. He said that the right to vote should be extended to women. It is enough to replace the word "man" with "person" in the Reform Act. He also supported women's rights with his arguments in *The Subjection of Women* (1869). In his book, he focuses on the issue of women's unequal status in society and in relation to men. Mill argues that women are constrained by their subordination to men and their position in society is unjust. According to him, women are discriminated against in education, employment and political representation. Mill criticizes stereotypes about women and argues that these prejudices prevent women from reaching their full potential. In his book, Mill argues that without personal freedom, women cannot fully develop their character and nature. He advocated for the removal of restrictions on women, without which women will be able to develop their potential in all spheres as they choose, thus contributing to the development of a civilized society (Abrams, 2002).

The first wave of Feminism was a diverse movement, often involving women who based their participation in the movement most often on their own experience of some form of discrimination. The feminist movement sought to work in many areas. Middle-class women initially focused primarily on improving their position within the middle class. They sought to improve access to education and employment and to legal and moral reform. Later, they also became interested in the problems of lower class women, e.g. prostitution, wages and working conditions etc. Although women began to organise more to promote change, the women's movement was not yet united at that time. For the most part, it was more about local associations and self-help networks of women. The women's movement lacked an organization that would unite the various associations into a single organization that would strengthen women in their fight for their rights through its unity (Abrams, 2002). Despite this, women involved in the feminist movement were able to

achieve partial changes. Particularly from the 1860s and 1870s onwards, reforms began to take place that empowered women in society.

In the Victorian era, women fighting for feminist reforms had not yet succeeded in achieving equality for women. However, their efforts and the reforms they achieved represented an important step in the subsequent struggle for women's equality, which was not achieved until the following century.

### **2.3 Representation of Feminism in Literature**

Feminist ideology is closely related to the Enlightenment and later to the revolutionary events in France. Enlightenment ideas proclaiming liberty and rights for all, as well as the Great French Revolution (1789) with its slogan "liberty, equality, fraternity" gave women hope of achieving equality with men. However, women's expectations were not fulfilled and they were denied the same rights as men. The non-recognition of women's rights and the consequent exclusion of women from public and political life led to growing dissatisfaction among women with their social status. Frustration among women in society grew and opposition to discrimination against women became increasingly evident in the literary works of many women authors. It should be noted that criticism of the inferior status of women in society also began to appear in the literary works of some male writers.

One of the first women writers to explore ideas about the status of women was the English writer Mary Astell (1666–1731). Mary Astell presented feminist ideas in her books many years before the feminist movement was founded. In her first book, *A Serious Proposal to the Ladies* (1694), the author urges women to learn to think for themselves, to develop their minds, and not to submit to the opinions of men. In *Thoughts on Education*, Mary Astell stresses the importance of a good education, which she finds more beneficial to women than elegant social behaviour. In her view, women are just as capable as men. Mary Astell held a negative attitude towards men and the institution of marriage, which she presented in her work *Some Reflections Upon Marriage* (1700) (Walters, 2005). In her view, men marry only to have a housekeeper to rule (Bocková, 2007). The author questions the superior position of men and opposes the "natural subordination of women". She challenges such inequality between men and women in the third edition of her 1707 book *Some Reflections Upon Marriage*, where Mary Astell asks the question: "If all men are born free, how is it that women are born slaves?" (Bocková, 2007, p. 46). "But her

great contribution to Feminism was the way she urged women to take themselves seriously, to trust in their own judgement, to make their own choices in life by developing their talents and educating themselves” (Walters, 2005, p. 29). Mary Astell defied the conventions of the time with her progressive attitudes and views and contributed her ideas to the feminist movement long before it was formed.

Another important British author presenting feminist views was Mary Wollstonecraft (1759–1797). Her most famous feminist work was *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792), which presents women as independent and rational beings who decide their own future. The author argues that women are pushed into their roles by their upbringing and traditions. However, Wollstonecraft advocates equality between the sexes and says that women should be treated equally with men because women play a vital role in society in raising children. According to Wollstonecraft, good education is crucial for girls and should be equal for girls and boys and should be done together (Abrams, 2002). Wollstonecraft disagrees with the domination of one gender and believes that women should have power over themselves and there should be equality and friendship in their relationship with men (Bocková, 2007).

As mentioned earlier, the fight for women’s rights was also supported by the British philosopher John Stuart Mill, who dealt with the status of women in society in his book *The Subdication of Women* (1869).

Feminist ideas were not only part of literary works directly aimed at criticizing the social status of women and their rights. Elements of Feminism are also evident in the novels of female Victorian writers, who wrote stories about real-life situations experienced by people at the time. In their novels, women authors often devoted themselves to describing interpersonal relationships and the world in which they lived. Their heroines experienced all the restrictions and pressures of the Victorian era society (Abrams, 2002). Feminist ideas are presented both indirectly and directly. They can be noted in the actions of the characters, which are often influenced by their social status, but they also sound from the mouths and thoughts of the literary heroes. Throughout the 19th century, there was a gradual increase in the number of women writers who presented their readers with stories written from a woman’s point of view. Women readers recognized their own feelings, frustrations, and desires in these stories. Identifying with another woman’s experience and recognizing their own feelings made women feel that they were not insignificant, that their opinion had value and that they could stand up and change their lives (Morris, 1998).



Jane Austen is one of the British writers whose works criticize the unequal status of women and society at that time. Jane Austen often uses parody and satire in her works to cover her dissatisfaction with the social order and the limited position women have. Although Jane Austen did not openly speak out against patriarchal society, her views were often expressed through her literary heroines who were intelligent, witty and mostly single. For example, the heroine of the novel *Northanger Abbey* (1798) sighed that history books were dull and full of quarrels between popes and kings, and “there is scarcely any talk of women” (Bocková, 2007, p. 331). According to Alex Zwerdling (1986), Austen’s use of satire was a model for the work of Virginia Woolf.

Another important woman writer was Charlotte Brontë, who fought hard for the right of unmarried women to independent employment and to live freely outside the home. The subject of her work is the soul of a lonely and socially insignificant woman, but one who is empowered by the awareness of her intellectual abilities, nobility, and strength of spiritual values (Craig, 1963). Charlotte Brontë projected her own defiance against the social norms of the time into the character of the protagonist of her most famous novel, *Jane Eyre*. The main character, Jane, is independent and strong, making her own decisions about her life and being true to her principles. The novel received great acclaim at the time, but also critical acclaim. Puritan Victorian readers did not accept the image of the main character being a self-sufficient woman with no obligations to men. Jane’s defiance was unacceptable to many readers because, in their view, a woman should be subordinate to a man. Influential critics condemned her work for its vulgarity and for dealing with circumstances bordering on indecency (Craig, 1963). Charlotte Brontë presented readers with a very progressive novel for the time, which was an immediate success with readers. Through her protagonist, she reached many women who were emboldened to be themselves and make free decisions about their lives.

In the Victorian era, the number of women writers, as well as the number of books published, increased, and this period can be called the golden age of women writers. Women writers’ books began to feature themes, ideas and opinions of women that had not been publicly presented until then. Through their work, women broke social taboos and made women’s voices heard. Gradually, women began to assert themselves more and to organise themselves to assert their rights together, which was one of the ideas of the feminist movement that began to take shape in the second half of the 19th century. Women writers became an integral part in the struggle for women’s rights.

### **3 THE PERSONALITY OF VIRGINIA WOOLF**

Virginia Woolf (25 January 1882 – 28 March 1941) was a prominent English novelist, literary critic, publisher, philosopher and feminist. Her literary work focused primarily on writing novels, short stories and essays. Virginia Woolf's innovative writing style made her one of the most important representatives of Modernism in English literature and a major representative of literary Impressionism. Her work sought to define herself against the traditional values and rules of the Victorian era, which was linked to her interest in the social status of women and their representation in the literary world. Virginia Woolf championed women's rights and was actively involved in organisations that worked to improve the social status of women. Her essay *A Room of One's Own* (1929) is considered a foundational text of feminist criticism. Virginia Woolf's work contributed to the popularization of feminist ideas and ideals and thus played an important role in women's struggle for their equality.

#### **3.1 The Life and Influence on Virginia Woolf's work**

Virginia Woolf (born Adeline Virginia Stephen) was born into the middle-class family of the "great Victorian" Leslie Stephen (Hilský, 2017). Her father, Sir Leslie Stephen, a literary critic and editor, was a typical representative of the Victorian era. He acknowledged Victorian values and the patriarchal structure of society. He regarded the traditional Victorian family as the basis and condition of happiness. Woolf's mother Julia Stephen was a practical and hard-working woman who dedicated her life to caring for the needy in addition to her family. The environment in which Virginia Woolf, along with her own and her half-siblings, grew up shaped her views and attitudes, which she later presented in her books. "In one respect Virginia Woolf was an unusual child; it took her a very long time to learn to speak properly; she did not do so until she was three years old" (Bell, 1972, p. 22). "Words, when they came, were to be then, and for the rest of her life, her chosen weapons" (Bell, 1972, p. 22).

Virginia Woolf was very perceptive from childhood and her childhood experiences were indelibly etched in her memory and later reflected in her literary works. She was brought up in the spirit of Victorian manners, which required controlling and suppressing her emotions. This way of keeping things to oneself or on the contrary giving vent to one's emotions was later on regularly found in her works (Harris, 2013). While

Virginia Woolf's father wrote books, her mother created a colorful life for her children with various pleasures and was an attractive force in their lives (Harris, 2013). Her death affected the then thirteen-year-old Virginia Woolf greatly and she began to show mental problems that would then accompany her throughout her life. Since childhood, she had dealt with the idea of what one leaves behind and was troubled by a sense of impermanence. Therefore, as a child she began to keep diaries in which she wrote down her feelings and observations. "If you wrote something down, it could stay that way forever" (Harris, 2013, p. 21). The death of her mother was so traumatic for Virginia Woolf that she did not write anything in her diary for two years. Later, in hindsight, she said of this period that the desire to write had left her (Harris, 2013).

Virginia Woolf and her sister Vanessa did not attend school because their parents educated them at home. In the spirit of Victorian tradition, both sisters were educated primarily for the role of wife, which was not enough for both of them. Since childhood, Virginia Woolf had aspired to be a writer, while her sister Vanessa wanted to be a painter. They both worked hard to develop their knowledge and skills in their chosen fields, as they wanted to make a name for themselves in them in the future. Their father, Leslie Stephen, provided the girls with many books to read in addition to their home education. Woolf read for several hours every day and educated herself. Reading became her passion and a way to survive the manifestations of her mental illness (Harris, 2013). Later, she even attended lectures at the Women's Department at King's College to educate herself. The fact that she did not pass her schooling influenced almost everything she later wrote. She wrote her essays in an original style. "In her essays she developed a style based on informal conversation rather than systematic analysis" (Harris, 2013, p. 38).

Another event that affected Virginia Woolf was the death of her father, which again affected her health. Although she was hurt by her father's death, she later stated that his death gave her the freedom to write in her own way (Harris, 2013). After her father's death, she, her sister and two brothers moved to Gordon Square in Bloomsbury where Virginia Woolf met her brother's university friends. However, at these meetings she felt that she was different from the others and viewed them and herself with sarcastic detachment. Later, she lectured on history and the art of composition at Morley College, which did not satisfy her and she began to establish herself as a successful literary reviewer (Harris, 2013). Two years after her father's death, Woolf's beloved brother Thoby died of typhus, which was another blow to her. Vanessa Stephen married and Virginia Woolf and her brother Adrian moved to Fitzroy Square (Harris, 2013). Here,

regular meetings were held, from which an important modernist association of artists and intellectuals, the so-called Bloomsbury Group, was formed around 1905.

The Bloomsbury Group's common characteristics were mutual friendship, a belief in the free and independent individual, and above all a revolt against Victorianism. The members of the group rejected Victorian values, ideas of family, home, and the role of women (Hilský, 2017). Woolf completely identified with these ideas. She took her rejection of the Victorian cult of the family during her childhood as a reaction to the patriarchal environment she grew up in. She knew this system intimately from her experiences at home but also from many books. Virginia Woolf most rejected the subordinate and subservient status of women, which her uncle, the eminent lawyer Sir James Fitzjames Stephen attributed to women in his book. In his essay ironically titled *Liberty, Equality, Fraternity* (1873), he presents the traditional Victorian view that the man is superior to the woman, that he is stronger and the woman must obey him (Hilský, 2017).

Virginia Woolf, along with members of the Bloomsbury Group, challenged Victorian duty and obedience, and instead advocated freedom and emancipated sexual and family relationships. In Woolf's works, the change in perception of sexuality is evident, but only in hints and subtle allusions (Hilský, 2017). The Bloomsbury Group's moral principles, relaxed manners and outspoken views were often criticized and received with embarrassment. Because of its views on traditional concept of the Victorian family, the group was labelled as controversial and snobbish elite. The paradox was that although the Bloomsbury Group dissented and railed against the traditional Victorian family, many of its members came from elite Victorian families.

The Bloomsbury group also focused on public activities, contributing to the spread of art and aesthetics in society. Thanks to her affiliation with the Bloomsbury Group, Virginia Woolf was able not only to devote herself to her writing, but also to support the women's movement through her lectures and publications. Through her work this emancipated woman made an indelible mark on the history of Feminism, of which she was a pioneer in England. Despite all the criticism, the Bloomsbury Group's work significantly influenced the development of literature, art criticism, and aesthetics, and promoted modern attitudes towards Feminism, pacifism, and sexuality.

For Woolf, being a member of the Bloomsbury Group has been fundamental to her life and work. In 1912 she married Leonard Woolf, a critic and writer on economics, who was also a member of Bloomsbury. Her marriage was a very happy one. Her husband

supported her in her creative activities and encouraged her in their emancipatory attitudes and views. Her husband was also a support to her during the difficult times when she was struggling with her mental illness. Together they purchased a press and founded the Hogarth Press in 1917. “The establishment of the Hogarth Press gave Virginia a sense of creative freedom: she was now guaranteed an outlet for experimental works” (Whitworth, 2005, p. 19). Woolf’s own publishing house also brought new friendships in literary circles and strengthened existing ones. Hogarth Press enabled many avant-garde and modernist authors to publish (Hilský, 2017).

Her work has also been closely associated with the Bloomsbury Group. In particular, discussions with aestheticians Roger Fry and Clive Bell shaped her writing. Woolf’s literary experimentation was based on aesthetic principles derived from the visual arts. She sought to create a novel that was a fusion of words, visual art and music (Hilský, 2017). In this regard, she was greatly influenced by Fry’s exhibition of post-impressionist painting, which was a major social and cultural event for the entire British public (Hilský, 2017). Following the example of the Impressionists, Woolf used light and radiance in her literary works, descriptions of colours and flowers to illustrate the characters. However, she also worked with colours in a psychological way. Different characters perceive colours differently and are characterized based on their colour preferences (Hilský, 2017). Woolf tried to capture the finest details, the fleetingness and uniqueness of the moment. She was interested in the effect of external reality on a person’s consciousness and the way they process it internally. She processed the chaotic stream of consciousness, focusing on associations, fragments of thoughts and feelings. “Woolf attempts a new vision of reality, trying to find extraordinary beauty in a quite ordinary moment of existence” (Hilský, 2017, p. 177).

Woolf’s life was marked by her mental illness, which began to manifest itself after her mother’s death. Virginia Stephen was plagued by anxiety, agitation, and an elevated pulse (Harris, 2013). Happy periods alternated with less happy ones as she struggled with her illness. “Many years later, at the end of a life marked by bouts of illness, Virginia Woolf placed the first of her “breakdowns” precisely in the period 1895–1896” (Harris, 2013, p. 29). The illness not only exhausted her mentally but also physically. She had to be hospitalized in a mental hospital several times and even attempted suicide a couple of times. Her mental health deteriorated over time, and even with the help of doctors and her husband, who was a great support, she could not overcome her depression. The ongoing Second World War worsened her mental state and by March 1941 Woolf perceived her

situation as unbearable. She felt she could not overcome her further incipient mental breakdown and on 28 March 1941 she ended her life alone in the River Ouse near Rodmell, where she and her husband lived.

### **3.2 The Works of Virginia Woolf**

Virginia Woolf was drawn to literary activity from early childhood. “The children slept in the night nursery at the top of the house and there, from quite an early age, Virginia became the family story-teller” (Bell, 1972, p. 25). At the age of six she wrote a short letter to her godfather, who was the American poet, critic, editor and diplomat James Russell Lowell. This letter is the first written document of Virginia Woolf’s literary life (Bell, 1972). From the age of nine, she and her siblings regularly published the *Hyde Park Gate News* newspaper, and from an early age she kept a diary in which she recorded her feelings and observations.

Virginia Woolf worked on her first novel, *The Voyage Out*, for several years, during which time she renamed, revised and changed the novel several times before it was finally published in 1915. Soon after, between 1916 and 1922, two more novels, *Night and Day* (1919) and *Jacob’s Room* (1922), were published, which were completely different from each other. “Woolf wrote *Night and Day* during a period when she was trying to kill her own madness” (Harris, 2013, p. 65). For Woolf, writing this novel served as therapy, so she avoided experimentation. She conceived it as a classic novel not deviating from the norm with its conservative technique. Later, Woolf depicted *Night and Day* as “an exercise in the usual style” (Harris, 2013, p. 62). In contrast, the novel *Jacob’s Room*, which was based on her experimental short stories, represented a new form of prose. The plot consisted of a sequence of moments and fragments of experience. Woolf referred to this novel as a mere experiment (Harris, 2013).

The acquisition of her own press in 1917, and the associated sense of freedom in Woolf’s writing, was evident in the very next two stories, *The Mark on the Wall* (1917) and *Kew Gardens* (1919). Woolf’s first published story, *The Mark on the Wall*, marked a turning point in her previous work. Woolf abandoned traditional literary technique and began to develop a style based on an impressionistic perception of the world around her, on free association and stream of consciousness. Woolf focused on the inner life of her literary characters. She puts the feelings, impressions and thoughts of the characters in the foreground, while external reality is relegated to the background. In this short story,

she “boldly demolished all the “scaffolding” of traditional prose, as she liked to call plot and characterization” (Hilský, 2017, p. 175). In the short story *Kew Garden*, inspired by the works of impressionist painters, Woolf masterfully works with light, glow, and color. In this short story, Woolf literally portrays the atmosphere of a summer day. “The short story *Kew Gardens* is, like all of Virginia Woolf’s best novels, a poetic prose woven from light, a prose so light that we could blow it away, so unforgiving that it almost melts before our eyes” (Hilský, 2017, p. 178). This was followed by the short story collection *Monday or Tuesday* (1921), which was not immediately received with the same acclaim as the previous two stories, but soon after its publication, positive reviews began to proliferate.

In 1924 Woolf published an essay, *Mr Bennett and Mrs Brown*, inspired by a chance encounter on a train. Based on it, she created *Mrs Brown*, which arose from Woolf’s inner feelings, sensations and impressions. “From one fleeting moment of existence she made the time of a lifetime, and from a few precisely observed details she constructed the complex inner world of Mrs Brown” (Hilský, 2017, p. 172). Her next published book was a collection of essays, *The Common Reader* (1925), which contained her continuously written critical essays.

In the years that followed, Woolf published four climactic novels in rapid succession, each of which was completely different from its predecessor. In each of them she applied a different, previously untried method (Harris, 2013). The first of the four to be published was *Mrs Dalloway* (1925), a novel about the strangely intertwined fates of two people, which became one of the key works of modernism. Like the Impressionist painters, Woolf seeks to use colour and light to capture the fleeting moments of a day. She focuses on the inner world of the characters, on their state of mind. She records a stream of sensations and thoughts. “She moves swiftly from one sight to the next, constantly changing the focus from close-up to panorama, concentrating momentarily, unpredictably, on an old lady, a retired judge, then moving back or up to survey a street, the river, the city itself” (Zwerdling, 1986, p. 17–18).

This was followed in 1927 by *To the Lighthouse* (1927), an autobiographical novel in which she came to terms with her relationship with her parents. Woolf projected her memories of her parents onto her main characters from the perspective of a child, but also captured them in an empathetic way from the perspective of an adult. Woolf laid out her novel in an interesting composition that reminded her of “something in the shape of an H, “two blocks connected by a corridor”. A past, then a break, then a reunion” (Harris, 2013,

p. 101). The influence of Sigmund Freud and his psychoanalysis is noticeable in the novel. The book is built on the stream of thoughts and inner dialogues of the characters, on their feelings, sensations and emotions. The novel *To the Lighthouse* is considered by many experts to be her best work.

The very next year, Woolf published *Orlando* (1928), an experimental novel that was completely different from her previous works. “She wanted to write something brisk and for fun” (Harris, 2013, p. 109). Woolf created an entertaining story about Orlando, a nobleman who travels through history from the Renaissance to the present day, transforming from a man to a woman. Although the plot of the story is fictional, the story raises the issue of gender stereotypes, the search for identity and conforming to the norms of a society that does not accept any differences. Through the use of irony and satire, Woolf expresses her disapproval and criticism of prudery. The novel *Orlando* became her most successful and best-selling book. “It was, as Leonard said, the turning point in Virginia’s career as a successful novelist. *To the Lighthouse* has sold 3,873 copies in the first year. *Orlando* sold 8,104 copies in the first six months” (Q.Bell, 1972, p. 140).

In the same year Woolf gave a series of lectures in Cambridge, which were published in 1929 in the essay *A Room of One’s Own*. Through her conversational style of delivery and tone of expression, she managed to create one of the most powerful debates on women’s liberty. Woolf expresses the view that a woman needs money and a room of her own to be free to pursue intellectual pursuits. “The key to emancipation is to be found in the door of a room which a woman may call her own and which she can inhabit with the same freedom and independence as her brothers” (Q. Bell, 1972, p. 144). With this work she made a significant contribution to feminist literature and to the struggle for women’s equality.

*The Waves* (1931) is probably Woolf’s most difficult book to read. It is written in a certain rhythm that requires the reader to follow it. In the novel, six friends speak as they part and reunite on their journey through life, drawn to each other. Like waves, they converge to a peak and then break and crumble. Their voices overlap and blend, but despite their different messages, they share the same rhythm. In the book, Woolf develops the idea of diversity being a part of every individual (Harris, 2013).

In 1932, Woolf published *The Common Reader: Second Series*, a collection of 26 essays on a variety of literary topics.

In her generational novel *The Years* (1937), Woolf took the reader through the life story of one family from the late 19th century to the 1930s. In this novel, Woolf set her



sights high. She wanted to capture an entire society, she wanted to connect fact and vision, she wanted to merge everything she had created so far. In *The Years*, Woolf returned to a traditional narrative style and storyline, from the inner world to the outer world and from lyricism to realism.

In 1938, Woolf published a book-length essay, *Three Guineas*, in which she criticizes patriarchal society and addresses social issues and gender differences. She focuses on education, family relationships, laws, and the economic and political role of women. Woolf calls for the emancipation of women and for cooperation between men and women.

Her last novel, *Between the Acts* (1941), was published after Virginia Woolf's death. In it, the author poetically depicts an afternoon in the English countryside during which an amateur performance takes place. The story interweaves the scenes of the play with the inner lives of the actors and audience, with their fate and thoughts. Woolf reflects on the uncertainty and groping of the artist.

The Victorian era was not only a period of revolutionary progress and development, but it was also a period in which patriarchal society clung blindly to obsolete principles and rules. From the perspective of women, it was a period hostile to women because their position in society was still perceived as inferior. Despite the changes taking place in all spheres of life, Victorian society was unwilling to give women equal rights and recognise them as having the same status as men. At the time Virginia Woolf lived in, it was very difficult for a woman to defy the established rules and become independent. However, Woolf followed her dream and despite all the obstacles that women had to face, she was able to establish herself as a writer in a field that until then had been reserved for men. Woolf did not adapt her writing to the male world view and wrote as a woman, which made her position as a writer all the more difficult. Woolf was not afraid to publicly defend women's rights to equal status in society, and thus became an important figure in the feminist movement. With her then unconventional and innovative work, Woolf contributed significantly to the emergence of literary modernism. Although Virginia Woolf went through difficult periods during her life, which also affected her mental health, she was able to process her experiences in her works in a such a way that Woolf has made an indelible mark on history.

## 4 FEMINISM IN SELECTED WORKS OF VIRGINIA WOOLF

The practical part is devoted to the analysis of selected works with regard to the features of Feminism and includes the analysis of the works under study. In the selected works, the focus is mainly on the female protagonists and their inner lives. Although Woolf's heroines differ from each other they all experience restrictions and oppression from the patriarchal society. The heroines constantly have to face the pressures of a society that shapes their lives according to given conventions. The author's heroines feel dissatisfaction in their lives, which stems from their unequal status and the consequences this has for their lives. Through her heroines, Woolf has made a deep probe into the Victorian society and has given a testimony of the uneasy position of women in those times. The individual works are examined with the intention of analysing the features of Feminism.

### 4.1 Mrs Dalloway

In the novel *Mrs Dalloway*, Virginia Woolf tells a story against the background of a summer day in London, the events of which will affect the lives of the novel's characters to a greater or lesser extent. The main and connecting character of the story, fifty-year-old Clarissa Dalloway, a representative of the upper social class of Victorian England, is hosting a party that day at her flat in Westminster. Clarissa lives a seemingly contented life with her husband Richard and their teenage daughter Elizabeth, but her thoughts gradually reveal that reality is different. The whole day is filled with preparations for the party and Clarissa's memories of her youth introduce us to her life. Through her memories, we gradually learn about the other important characters in the story and their interrelationships and fates. An important person in Clarissa's life is her ex-boyfriend Peter Walsh, whom she meets unexpectedly that day. Their meeting leads Clarissa to reflect on her life and how she has dealt with her life. Parallel to Clarissa's storyline is the tragic tale of war veteran Septimus Warren Smith and his wife, Rezia, the denouement of which intertwines with Clarissa's party at the end.

In her novel, Virginia Woolf used the narrative technique of "stream of consciousness", which is typical of modernism. Woolf tries to capture fleeting moments in her narrative as faithfully as possible, using elements of impressionist art, such as colours, their shades, vague outlines. The plot of the novel is neglected and the inner

monologues and thoughts of the individual characters on which the novel is largely based come to the fore.

Marrying well was very important to Victorian women because it was through their husbands that they gained their social status, which Clarissa did from this point of view. Clarissa married Richard Dalloway who is a politician and his occupation provides her with a good social status. Richard is a loving, reliable and sensible husband who has good intentions, however he too is influenced by the social norms of the time. Richard also affords Clarissa a certain amount of freedom and space and is therefore not a typically minded Victorian man, something Clarissa realises when she reflects on her past relationship with Peter. “For in marriage a little licence, a little independence there must be between people living together day in day out in the same house; which Richard gave her, and she him” (Woolf, p. 7).

Although Richard is a relatively tolerant and supportive man for his time, marriage for a woman meant a relationship of dependence on her husband, and Clarissa was no exception. “[...] she thought [...] must one repay in daily life to servants, yes, to dogs and canaries, above all to Richard her husband, who was the foundation of it [...]” (p. 27).

The mutual freedom in Clarissa and Richard’s marriage also results in mutual alienation when her husband leaves to fulfill his work duties and she, as an upper-class wife, is left alone at home feeling lonely. “Where was he this morning, for instance? Some committee, she never asked what” (p. 7).

Clarissa is also eager to realize herself as her husband and wants to be important to others. Women at that time did not have many opportunities for self-fulfilment, but one of the areas where women found their niche was in charitable societies. “Think, for example, of the woman she admired most, Lady Bexborough, opening the bazaar” (p. 9).

Clarissa finds self-fulfilment in throwing parties, which her husband does not understand. “[...] it was a very odd thing how much Clarissa minded about her parties, he thought” (p. 110).

Clarissa lacks the understanding from Richard and Peter that women usually lacked from men. Women were looked upon with a certain disdain, which is also reflected in this relationship. “But – but – why did she suddenly feel, for no reason that she could discover, desperately unhappy? [...] and what Richard had said had added to it, but what had he said? [...] Her parties! That was it! Her parties!” (p. 111–112).

Neither Richard nor Peter understand that Clarissa compensates for her separation and perceived uselessness by organizing parties. They consider throwing parties foolish,

childish and snobbish. “Both of them criticized her very unfairly, laughed at her very unjustly, for her parties” (p. 112).

The lack of communication between Clarissa and Richard deepens the gap that has developed between them over the years of their marriage. Clarissa languishes and does not feel happy in her marriage. “And there is a dignity in people; a solitude; even between husband and wife a gulf, and that one must respect, thought Clarissa, watching him open the door; for one would not part with it oneself, or take it, against his will, from one’s husband, without losing one’s independence, one’s self-respect – something, after all, priceless” (p. 110–111).

Richard and Clarissa live in an outwardly happy marriage, but they are more likely to live only side by side. Clarissa’s husband also feels a sense of alienation when one day he decides to buy his wife a gift as an exception. The last time Richard gave his wife a gift was two or three years ago, which shows that it was not common to want to please his wife with a present. When choosing a gift, it turns out that Richard does not even know his wife well enough because he does not know what he should buy her. “He wanted to open the drawing-room door and come in holding out something; a present for Clarissa. Only what?” (p. 105–106). Finally, he buys her flowers. On the way, he thinks about his marriage and realizes that he is happy that Clarissa is his wife and wants to tell her that he loves her. “Which one never does say, he thought. Partly one’s lazy; partly one’s shy” (p. 106). The Victorian era was characterised by a prudish upbringing, and although Richard loves Clarissa, he cannot speak of his feelings for her in front of her. “But he could not bring himself to say he loved her; not in so many words” (p. 109).

In Victorian England, girls received mainly home schooling, which was also mainly focused on activities related to her role as a wife. Because of her lack of education, Clarissa suffers from feelings of inferiority and low self-esteem in her marriage. Her lack of self-confidence and desire for education is evident throughout the book. Right at the beginning, she assesses herself as follows: “She knew nothing; no language, no history; she scarcely read a book now, except memoirs in bed – and yet to her it was absolutely absorbing; all this [...]” (p. 8).

Frustration with Clarissa’s lack of education is manifested in her relationship with Elizabeth’s governess, Miss Doris Kilman, who had previously worked as a teacher before losing her job in the war. Doris is bitter about her loss, which she also blames on Clarissa as a representative of the upper class. “She despised Mrs Dalloway from the bottom of her heart. [...] Her life was a tissue of vanity and deceit” (p. 118–119).

Doris represents the educated woman Clarissa would also like to be to match her husband. “[...] Richard said she was very able, had a really historical mind” (p. 10–11). In the presence of Doris, Clarissa feels her ignorance particularly strongly, which makes her feel uncomfortable. “[...] she was never in the room five minutes without making you feel her superiority, your inferiority [...]” (p. 11).

Clarissa sees education as very important, and the fact that she did not receive a good education is a big disadvantage for her. Miss Kilman “[...] had become one of those spectres with which one battles in the night [...]” (p. 11). However, Clarissa’s relationship with Doris is more complicated because Doris embodies Clarissa’s youthful ideals and dreams. Clarissa sees Doris partly as herself in her earlier ideas of herself, and therefore both looks up to and admires her. “[...] for no doubt with another throw of the dice, had the black been uppermost and not the white, she would have loved Miss Kilman! But not in this world. No” (p. 11).

Another reason for Clarissa’s complicated relationship with Miss Kilman is the governess’s close relationship with and influence over her daughter Elizabeth. In the nineteenth century, it was not common for parents to have a very close and intimate relationship with their children. Unlike Clarissa, Doris spends a lot of time with Elizabeth, and this is another reason why Clarissa is jealous of her. “This woman had taken her daughter from her!” (p. 116).

Clarissa longs to be equal to her husband and would like to be recognized as much as he is. She tries to compensate for her education by reading, from which she has the opportunity to gain knowledge in a typically masculine field. Reading was not common for women in Victorian times, let alone reading with a military theme. “[...] she had read deep in Baron Marbot’s *Memoirs*. She had read late at night of the retreat from Moscow” (p. 29).

It was certainly important for a Victorian woman to marry advantageously, but at the moment of marriage her personal rights were extinguished and she essentially became the property of her husband. By marriage, a woman got the status of her husband, but at the same time she began to be seen by others as only a wife. Clarissa also experiences this attitude towards her own person and finds it difficult to bear and frustrating that others perceive her only through the person of her husband. “She had the oddest sense of being herself invisible; unseen; unknown [...] this being Mrs Dalloway; not even Clarissa any more; this being Mrs Richard Dalloway” (p. 10). Clarissa adapted her personal life to the demands of Victorian society. Benjamin (1965) sees Clarissa’s life after she

married as follows, “She functioned for thirty years for others (her husband, her friends, her daughter), and she justified her existence by accepting society’s reasons for living”.

In terms of society, married women were overshadowed by their husbands which is also evident elsewhere in the book, for example in the section where Peter talks about the married woman he fell in love with. In short succession, this woman is referred to several times as “the wife of a major in the Indian army”. Her name, Daisy, is mentioned only once, and in parentheses, as if it were less important.

The role of Victorian wives was also to be completely loyal to their husbands and to adopt their ideas and opinions. It was unacceptable for a married woman to disagree with her husband's opinions or to present her own views, which Clarissa accepts with bitterness. “With twice his wits, she had to see things through his eyes – one of the tragedies of married life. With a mind of her own, she must always be quoting Richard [...]” (p. 71).

In addition to devotion to her husband, a wife was almost obliged to have children, thus fulfilling the Victorian sense of women's lives. Even Clarissa’s childhood friend Sally Seton, who had previously been full of ideals, determination and unbridled determination, failed to defy and assert her dreams and ideals. Sally Seton succumbed to the pressure of society and, against her earlier beliefs, fulfilled the role of wife in the spirit of traditional Victorian values. “[...] she lived a very solitary life, in the wilds, Clarissa would say, among great merchants, great manufacturers, men, after all, who did things. She had done things too! “I have five sons!” she told him” (p. 172).

Since Clarissa has already fulfilled her maternal duty and is not expected to continue motherhood given her age, she feels even more useless. Clarissa feels that her life is empty and yet she longs to be important and respected by others. “How much she wanted it – that people should look pleased as she came in, Clarissa thought [...]” (p. 9). The feeling of not being recognized by others was very hard to bear. When Lady Bruton, who was also respected by men, invited only her husband Richard to lunch, Clarissa was completely shaken. “[...] feeling herself suddenly shrivelled, aged, breastless [...]” (p.28).

However, even Lady Bruton, who comes from an old respected military family and is admired by men, cannot do without men as a woman in a patriarchal world. When she needs to write a letter to *The Times*, she asks Richard and Hugh for help. “Debarred by her sex, and some truancy too, of the logical fakulty (she found it impossible to write a letter to *The Times*) [...]” (p. 166). Again, the man is superior to the woman in his abilities. Women were not supported by men in education that would give them

appropriate skills, independence and belief in their abilities. Lack of education and lack of support from men strengthened dependent position of women.

The motif of a wife's subordination to her husband and the loss of her personal freedom is also evident in other female characters featured in this novel. Reflections and observations on the status of women appear throughout the novel. Whether they are presented by the heroine herself or appear in other women's reflections on each other. It is a mutually shared experience and insight that is common to all women regardless of their position in the society of the time. The number of passages that are devoted to this theme evokes a sense of women's powerlessness, revealing the magnitude of the problem.

As mentioned, the inferior status of women in marriage affected every woman at the time, including Lady Bradshaw, the wife of the doctor who seeks to treat Septimus's wartime trauma. In the following excerpt, Septimus' wife Rezia reflects on Lady Bradshaw's life. "Fifteen years ago she had gone under. It was nothing you could put your finger on; there had been no scene, no snap; only the slow sinking, water-logged, of her will into his" (p. 93). "Once, long ago, she had caught salmon freely: now quick to minister to the craving which lit her husband's eye so oilily for dominion, for power, she cramped, squeezed, pared, pruned, drew back, peeped through [...]" (p. 93). Later, as Rezia reflects on her marriage, she makes the remark. "Everyone gives up something when they marry" (p. 61). The character of Rezia is the personification of self-sacrifice and devotion to her husband Septimus, whom she would not leave even because of his mental illness. Rezia feels lonely and desperate. She longs for a child and for fulfillment of the meaning of her life as women were expected to do.

The way women were commonly viewed by men can be seen in the thoughts of the male characters. Peter, in remembering Clarissa's conceited and calculating old friend Hugh Whitbread, also presents his disparaging opinion of his wife Lady Evelyn. "But Mrs Hugh sometimes gave the show away. She was one of those obscure mouse-like little women who admire big men. She was almost negligible. Then suddenly she would say something quite unexpected – something sharp" (p. 68–69).

The characters' thoughts and the events that unfold show a mutual misunderstanding and the complete difference between the male and female worlds. Men's affairs appear more important than women's, and women's activities are presented as unimportant through Victorian optics. While the men are dealing with politics and insulting the House of Windsor, resulting in a fight, the women across the street are buying "white underlinen threaded with pure white ribbon for their weddings" (p. 17).

The noise of the fight reaches them only as an echo. Women were not meant to be in politics. Women were assigned only the sphere of the home.

In many places in the book the hypocrisy of Victorian values is presented. In Victorian times, women's appearance was preferred, while education was more of a nuisance. The always well-groomed Clarissa is contrasted with Miss Kilman, who is not attractive. Clarissa lacks education while Miss Kilman is educated. Despite her education, society better accepts the superficial Clarissa. Women are judged primarily based on their appearance, which is evident in the case of daughter Elizabeth. "And already, even as she stood there, in her very well-cut clothes, it was beginning [...] People were beginning to compare her to poplar trees, early dawn, hyacinths, fawns, running water and garden lilies, and it made her life a burden to her [...]" (p. 124). Like society, Clarissa has elements of hypocrisy. She represents traditional Victorian values in her behaviour, but deep down she does not identify with them. "[...] half the time she did things not simply, not for themselves, but to make people think this or that; perfect idiocy she knew [...]" (p. 9).

Clarissa tries to counteract her unsatisfactory way of life by frequently returning to the period of her youth and freedom. In her memories, she returns to her teenage years when she and her friend Sally, dreamed of their future and were full of ideals. They planned a bold future for themselves, free of any constraints, based purely on their decisions. "There they sat, hour after hour, ... talking about life, how they were to reform the world" (p. 31). Clarissa feels disappointment and sadness at not fulfilling her dreams. "Oh if she could have had her life over again! she thought ..." (p. 9).

The status of men and women has been determined since early childhood. It was manifested in the different upbringing of boys and girls, which was typical of the Victorian era and is also evident in the Dalloway family. "If he'd had a boy he'd have said, Work, work. But he had his Elizabeth; he adored his Elizabeth" (p. 105). Richard is a traditional Victorian in his approach to education. Miss Kilman, on the other hand, encourages a desire for education in Elizabeth. "She had lent her books. Law, medicine, politics, all professions are open to women of your generation, said Miss Kilman" (p. 120).

Elizabeth is excited about the idea of working in the future and is beginning to think about what work she might pursue. Elizabeth does not enjoy parties and the fact that she is perceived by men through her appearance makes her uncomfortable and bothers her. Elizabeth here presents hope for the next generation of women that women will be able to break out of the box that Victorian society has placed on them. She is hopeful that



women will gain their equality. Elizabeth is the promise that women will be free to realize their dreams that their mothers failed to realize. Elizabeth is the carrier of the idea that Virginia Woolf is trying to convey through her.

In the following book, the focus is again on women, but the focus is primarily on the unequal status of women in marriage and the role of women in the family.

## 4.2 To the Lighthouse

In *To the Lighthouse*, Virginia Woolf has projected her childhood memories, in which she returns to her parents and her relationship with them. Virginia Woolf tells the story of the Ramsays, their children and friends, who spend holiday days with their family at their summer home on the Scottish Isle of Skye. The characters of Mr. and Mrs Ramsay display features of Virginia Woolf's parents, which Woolf views from both a child's perspective and that of a grown woman. Woolf focuses primarily on the inner world of each character. The thoughts and feelings of the main characters come to the fore, through which the author presents their relationships. The storyline, on the other hand, recedes into the background. The novel is divided into three parts, *The Window*, *Time is Running* and *The Lighthouse*.

The plot of the first part of *The Window* takes place during one day spent together by the Ramsays, their eight children and their various family friends. The community consists of a single artist, Lily Briscoe, who is a painter; a widowed botanist, William Banks; a young man, Charles Tansley, who is writing his dissertation; an old poet, Augustus Carmichael; and young Minta Doyle and Paul Rayley. Mr Ramsay's character is always trying to draw attention to himself and force importance upon himself, but despite this it is not he who is important to the others. The character who comes to the fore and becomes the central figure of the entire novel is instead Mrs Ramsay, hence Woolf's mother. Gradually it becomes clear that it is she who was the soul of the whole family. Mrs Ramsay, who is about fifty years old, represents a typical Victorian woman who recognizes Victorian values and morals. Likewise, her husband, the academic and writer, Mr Ramsay personifies the typically minded representative of Victorian patriarchal society. A critical view of Victorianism is presented especially by the character of the artist Lily and the son James and daughter Cam.

Mrs Ramsay is a kind woman to whom her family is everything, and she subordinates her life entirely to her family. In contrast, Mr Ramsay is the epitome of

a despot who wants to control his family at all costs. He oppresses the family with his behaviour and becomes an enemy to their children. Mr Ramsay creates a sense of fear and distress in the children and is a tyrant to them. His authoritarian manner and insensitive behaviour is the cause of a complicated relationship with the children. In particular, young James perceives the negative influence of his father on their family life and on his beloved mother. A recurring motif that runs through the first part of the novel is the trip to the lighthouse that young son James would like to take. The trip to the lighthouse is very important to James and he clings to it. In his childlike eyes, the trip represents adventure, freedom, and evokes joyful feelings for him. His mother promises him that if the weather is nice they will go to the lighthouse and James is looking forward to it. However, his enthusiasm is repeatedly and deliberately crushed by his father, who, from his position of power, always says that the weather will not be nice anyway. Mr. Ramsay revels in his power to make decisions for his family. “[...] standing, as now [...] grinning sarcastically, not only with the pleasure of disillusioning his son and casting ridicule upon his wife [...]” (Woolf, p. 6).

Despite Mr. Ramsay’s authoritarianism, his wife looks up to him with complacency, admires him and does not contradict him. She is typical of the Victorian woman who is devoted and submissive to her husband without doubting his qualities. On the contrary, she doubts her own qualities. Mrs Ramsay refuses to admit to herself the idea that she could outdo her husband in anything because, according to the Victorian model of marriage, it is the woman who is supposed to be weaker and more subordinate. Although Mrs Ramsay secretly suspects that her husband is no better than she is, she does not want this fact to come out. She is still trying to properly fulfill her role as a wife, as is expected of her. “[...] she did not like, even for a second, to feel finer than her husband; and further, could not bear not being entirely sure, when she spoke to him, of the truth of what she said” (p. 37).

Mrs Ramsay attaches unjustified importance to all her husband’s activities and, on the contrary, downplays the importance of her own activities. “[...] of the two he was infinitely the more important, and what she gave the world, in comparison with what he gave, negligible” (p. 38). Mrs Ramsay adopts her husband’s views and belittles her own position. “She was not good enough to tie his shoestrings, she felt” (p. 31).

Mr. Ramsay represents typical characteristics and patterns of behaviour of the patriarchal society of the time. He appreciates his wife’s beauty, but has little opinion of her intelligence. He belittles his wife’s cleverness because of his own sense of superiority

and superiority over her. As Mrs Ramsay falls asleep over the book she has been reading, Mr. Ramsay's thoughts question her cleverness. "And he wondered what she was reading, and exaggerated her ignorance, her simplicity, for he liked to think that she was not clever, not book-learned at all. He wondered if she understood what she was reading. Probably not, he thought" (p. 112).

Obedience and total devotion and support were expected from a woman. Mr Ramsay has the same expectation of his wife. He wants constant reassurances of his awesomeness and words of appreciation from her. "It was sympathy he wanted, to be assured of his genius, first of all [...]" (p. 36). His wife thinks of Mr Ramsay as admirable and takes his demand for recognition as perfectly natural. "But then if you had the other temperament, which must have praise, which must have encouragement, naturally you began [...] to be uneasy [...]" (p. 99). Although Mr Ramsay considers himself superior, he is still anxious to be recognised by others and to be looked up to with respect and admiration. Mrs Ramsay is aware of this need of his, and if he does not receive it appropriately from those around him, she is immediately prepared to make it up to him. "[...] and she, Mrs Ramsay saw, realizing his extreme anxiety about himself, would, in her own way, see that he was taken care of, and praise him, somehow or other" (p. 99). Mr Ramsay aspires to be the equal of world-renowned literary authors and suffers from the feeling that he has achieved nothing. "He must be assured that he too lived in the heart of life; was needed; not here only, but all over the world" (p. 36).

Mrs Ramsay obediently fulfils all her husband's needs, but she is physically and mentally tired of it. Her youngest son James, who has a very strong bond with his mother, notices this. "James felt all her strength flaring up to be drunk and quenched by the beak of brass, the arid scimitar of the male, which smote mercilessly, again and again, demanding sympathy" (p. 36). James suffers greatly from his father's behaviour towards their family and it marks his attitude towards him. "He hated him [...] for his exactingness and egotism (for there he stood, commanding them to attend to him) [...]" (p. 35). James witnesses that his mother's behaviour changes in the presence of his father, that she is nervous and tense. James perceives that there is tension between the parents in his father's presence and that James is losing his mother's attention.

Although Mrs Ramsay is a devoted wife to her husband and agrees with him in everything, she is aware that Mr Ramsay's behaviour towards the children is wrong. She knows that the children will not forget his behaviour. She would like to protect them, but it is absolutely unthinkable for her to resist.

Life in the Ramsay family is lived in the spirit of traditional Victorianism. From the children's point of view, however, it is clear that they long to leave the Victorian model of life and dream of a different way of life. "[...] her daughters – Prue, Nancy, Rose – could sport with infidel ideas which they had brewed for themselves of a life different from hers; in Paris, perhaps; a wilder life; not always taking care of some man or other [...]" (p. 8). Mrs Ramsay does not accept such ideas and does not identify with ideas of a complete different way of life.

However, although Mrs Ramsay acknowledges Victorian morality and order, it is clear from her thoughts that she sometimes doubts it. She would like to stop time so that her children do not grow old, as she feels they will not be happier in adulthood. Mrs Ramsay would like to give her children a happy future. "[...] her own daughter must be happier than other people's daughters" (p. 101).

Mrs Ramsay tries to fulfill her role as wife and mother, as was desirable in Victorian times. Yet she has doubts about the rightness of certain phenomena. Outwardly she accepts Victorian principles, but her anxiety about her children's future suggests that she realizes that the system adopted is not fair to all equally. "For that reason, knowing what was before them – love and ambition and being wretched alone in dreary places – she had often the feeling, Why must they grow up and lose it all?" (p. 56).

For the time, Mrs Ramsay has a relatively close relationship with her children and is aware of her children's differences. She foresees much suffering in the future for her sensitive daughter Rose. Since she draws on her own experiences, it is safe to assume that she too is often unhappy in her life. Mrs Ramsay hides this shadow side of her life from her children to protect them from worries and fears.

Mrs Ramsay tries to fulfill her role to the best of her ability and gives of herself for her family. She devotes all her time to her family. The only time she does not have to fulfill her role as a wife and mother and can be herself is when everyone is asleep. It is the only time she does not have to suppress her personality and can truly be herself.

For now she need not think about anybody. She could be herself, by herself. And that was what now she often felt the need of – to think; well not even to think. To be silent; to be alone. All the being and the doing, expansive, glittering, vocal, evaporated; and one shrunk, with a sense of solemnity, to being oneself, a wedge-shaped core of darkness, something invisible to others (p. 59).

Mrs Ramsay sacrifices her life for the family she lives for. She creates a home and a feeling of security for others. She symbolizes a beacon that spreads light around her. Yet in the midst of her large family, she faces her worries and pains alone.

Mrs Ramsay lives an outwardly contented life, but in reality her life is not entirely idyllic, and she even dreads it. “[...] she must admit that she felt this thing that she called life terrible, hostile and quick to pounce on you if you gave it a chance” (p. 56). She considers her real life to be her private business, which she does not share with anyone in her family. Mrs Ramsay probably feels a sense of disappointment in her life when she says: “No happiness lasted; she knew that” (p. 60). She even considers life as her enemy.

Mrs Ramsay cannot help thinking about her life so far, even during the gala dinner when she is hosting her family and friends. Despite everything seeming perfect, she doubts whether this is the life she imagined. During dinner, she realizes that she feels indifference towards her husband. “She could not understand how she had ever felt any emotion or any affection for him” (p. 77). Outwardly, however, she plays the role of the model wife and mother that is required of her. No one knows what she is really experiencing. She shuts herself off from disillusionment and disappointment into her inner world. When all is quiet in the evening, Mrs Ramsay escapes into her dreaming, where she feels free and uninhibited. “[...] this self having shed its attachments was free for the strangest adventures. When life sank down for a moment, the range of experience seemed limitless” (p. 58–59).

Marriage and family are everything to Mrs Ramsay and in the spirit of Victorian values, they are her priority. She considers it essential that every woman should marry and have a family. Although she herself does not always feel happy in marriage, she nevertheless considers marriage to be unquestionable. “[...] an unmarried woman has missed the best of life” (p. 47). However, as the story progresses, some of the doubts that Mrs Ramsay has about her marriage are revealed. She even calls the marriage “transaction”. “And here she was, she reflected, feeling life rather sinistr again, making Minta marry Paul Rayley [...]” (p. 56–57).

Mr. Ramsay’s position within the family is superior, and although he loves his wife, he often treats her with contempt. His behaviour towards her reflects the attitude of men towards women in Victorian society. However, it is not only Mr Ramsay who represents the characteristics and patterns of behaviour of Victorian patriarchal society. Charles Tansley, a family friend who spends holiday days with the family on the Isle of Skye, shares the same values. He regards women as stupid and shallow and speaks of them with

contempt. “Women can’t write, women can’t paint [...]” (p. 80). He attributes mainly negative qualities to women. “Women made civilization impossible with all their “charm”, all their silliness” (p. 79).

On the opposite side from Mrs Ramsay is Lily Briscoe, who represents an independent and autonomous woman. Lily is a thirty-three year old single artist who is a type of emancipated woman. She points out the hypocrisy in society and in partnerships. She considers the relationship between the couple to be particularly insincere and full of pretence. “Human relations were all like that, she thought, and the worst [...] were between men and women. Inevitably these were extremely insincere” (p. 86). Lily does not see the purpose of her life in the role of a wife, in which she would not be free to express and fulfil herself. Painting offers her such opportunities, where she can free herself from the restrictions of society and give freedom to her own self.

In Victorian society, marriage and motherhood were the fulfilment of a woman's life. Mrs Ramsay tries to persuade Lily to marry, but she does not share Mrs Ramsay's opinion and has a different idea of her life. “[...] gathering a desperate courage she would urge her own exemption from the universal law; plead for it; she liked to be alone; she liked to be herself; she was not made for that [...]” (p. 47). Lily is steadfast in her opinion on marriage and maintains her attitude even under pressure from those around her. On the contrary, she continues to reinforce her negative attitude. She does not succumb to efforts to make her fulfil her mission as a wife and mother, which is expected of women. Duplessis (1988) sees the character of Lily as follows, “Lily is fabricated deliberately to avoid the romantic involvements that are proposed, and Mrs Ramsay is explicitly criticized for proposing them”.

Lily knows that marriage would mean an unequal relationship in which she would have to submit to her husband and lose her freedom and independence. Such a position for a woman is unacceptable to the emancipated Lily. Lily's refusal to marry challenges Victorian morality. “[...] she need not marry, thank Heaven: she need not undergo that degradation. She was saved from that dilution” (p. 94). Lily sees marriage as a tinsel under which lies great disillusionment. “[...] if you asked nine people out of ten they would say they wanted nothing but this; while the women, judging from her own experience, would all the time be feeling, This is not what we want; there is nothing more redious, puerile and inhumane than love [...]” (p. 95).

Although Lily Briscoe likes and admires Mrs Ramsay, she disapproves of her subservience. “Mrs Ramsay gave him what he asked too easily” (p. 43). In Lily’s eyes,

Mr Ramsay is “petty, selfish, vain, egotistical; he is spoilt; he is tyrant; he wears Mrs Ramsay to death [...]” (p. 24). Lily believes that Mr Ramsay’s self-centred behaviour caused Mrs Ramsay’s death.

The second part summarises the events that took place over the next ten years. It was a difficult time for the Ramsay family because Mrs Ramsay, who was the soul of the family, died. Daughter Prue also died of childbirth-related illness and son Andrew died from a grenade explosion in France. With Mrs Ramsay’s death, it was as if the whole family had lost the family spirit. Her personality drew family members to her like a beacon light, which Mrs Ramsay so loved to watch.

In the third part of *The Lighthouse*, the Ramsay family and Lily are back at their summer home on the Isle of Skye. Mr Ramsay is still the same authoritative man and father who asserts his authority and wants to control others. He is short-tempered and easily becomes angry at any feeling of dissatisfaction with others. His surroundings are always ready for his short-tempered reactions. He lets everyone know that he is the master of the family and it is up to others to obey him and do his bidding.

Mr Ramsay also applies his authoritarian behaviour to his children. He forces James and Cam to go with him on a trip to the lighthouse, which they wanted so much as children and which he did not give them. Now James and Cam submit to his trip reluctantly because they are afraid of their father. Lily, who defies Victorian morals and principles even after all these years, witnesses Mr Ramsay’s overbearing behavior towards his children and sympathizes with them. “And it struck her, this was tragedy – not palls, dust and the shroud; but children coerced, their spirits subdued” (p. 140). Lily is angry at Mr Ramsay for not giving his children a happy childhood and a joy in life. She expresses regret for their lives ruled by a despotic father. “They looked, she thought, as if fate had devoted them to some stern enterprise, and they went to it, still young enough to be drawn acquiescent in their father’s wake, obediently, but with a pallor in their eyes which made her feel that they suffered something beyond their years in silence” (p. 145–146).

James and Cam realise that their father controls their decisions and they must always obey him. “[...] he had forced them to come against their wills” (p. 153). The knowledge of their own helplessness against their father weighs on them. Their defiance against their heartless father, who does not care about their feelings, begins to grow. James and Cam rebel against their traditional Victorian upbringing and make a pact to fight tyranny and oppression together. “But they vowed, in silence, as they walked, to stand by each other and carry out the great compact – to resist tyranny to the death” (p. 153).

Both long to escape the influence of their despotic father and be free. However, James fears that he will be left alone to fight tyranny. He suspects that in the future Cam will succumb and marry. James fears that Cam, like the other girls, will succumb to the rules of Victorian society and accept her submissive role as a wife. His thought implies a sense of helplessness and confusion. However, James is determined to defy even himself. “[...] he would fight, that he would track down and stamp out – tyranny, despotism, he called it – making people do what they did not want to do, cutting off their right to speak” (p. 172).

Even after Mrs Ramsay’s death, Mr Ramsay still feels sorry for himself and demands sympathy and reassurance from others about his qualities. Mr Ramsay realises that in Mrs Ramsay’s death he has lost the comfort she was always ready to give him. Mr Ramsay misses the support that Mrs Ramsay provided him and tries to force sympathy and reassurance on Lily Briscoe. The emancipated Lily, however, does not accept his pressure and does not give in, even though she feels that she is behaving indecently in the eyes of society. “[...] there issued from him such a groan that any other woman in the whole world would have done something, said something – all except myself, thought Lily [...]” (p. 142).

Lily is aware that as a woman she is expected to behave in a subservient manner and knows that her behaviour does not fulfil the qualities of the ideal Victorian woman. However, Lily proudly stands by her beliefs and refuses to be manipulated by Mr Ramsay into the role he wants. She does not let a man control her. “His immense self-pity, his demand for sympathy poured and spread itself in pools at her feet, and all she did, miserable sinner that she was, was to draw her skirts a little closer round her ankles, lest she should get wet” (p. 144).

Mr Ramsay does feel the loss of his wife and misses her, yet he belittles women and views them with disdain. On the way to the lighthouse, he makes fun of Cam for not knowing the points of the compass. He, as a man, knows full well that women do not have the opportunity to educate themselves in the same way as men. It was men who prevented women from getting an equal education. Mr Ramsay is even using his socially privileged position against his own daughter. Looking at the dreamy Cam, Mr Ramsay reflects on his dead wife. “He thought, women are always like that; the vagueness of their minds is hopeless [...] did he not rather like this vagueness in women?” (p. 157). It is clear from his thoughts that he is actually comfortable with the fact that women do not have the same knowledge as men. Women look up to men, admire them and are easier to manipulate.



Staying in the house brings with it memories of Mrs Ramsay, whose presence is missed by all. Mr Ramsay misses her care for him above all. For the sensitive James, the memory of his mother, with whom he had a strong bond, is very painful. “She alone spoke the truth; to her alone could he speak it” (p. 174).

Although Lily Briscoe did not hold the same Victorian values as Mrs Ramsay, she feels her loss keenly. She still remembers her and sees her everywhere. In her eyes, Mrs Ramsay embodied a person who could spread peace, kindness and goodness around her. She could bring people together and create a sense of security. Mrs Ramsay sacrificed herself for others, which was the lot of women. Lily admired her for her dedication to her family, but was also angry with her for following the traditionally accepted values of Victorian society in her life. Lily blames her self-centered husband, Mr Ramsay, for her death. “That man, she thought, her anger rising in her, never gave; that man took. [...] Mrs Ramsay had given. Giving, giving, giving, she had died [...]” (p. 141).

Lily becomes convinced that marriage is an institution hostile to women. By entering into marriage, a woman loses her identity, her independence and a fulfilling life. Mrs Ramsay tried to fulfill the role of the ideal wife, but at the expense of her happiness and independence. What she thought was good in the spirit of Victorianism ultimately failed. Minty’s marriage to Paul, which Mrs Ramsay had initiated, broke down soon after the wedding, the beautiful Prue, whom she had predicted a happy future for, died of the effects of childbirth, and Lily, too, did not submit to her will to marry William. Mrs Ramsay’s Victorian ideals are not fulfilled and are instead challenged.

Through Lily Briscoe, a critique of a patriarchal society that is hostile and unfair to women is voiced. Women are underestimated by men and their intellect and qualities are constantly questioned. Men approach women from a position of power and superiority, and by their behaviour towards them, they constantly push them into the subordinate position that they are destined for. It is difficult for independent, emancipated women to assert themselves in such a society, which is evident in the heroine Lily Briscoe.

Lily does not submit to the dictates of her surroundings, however, even she begins to doubt her talents under the influence of men’s opinion of women. When she wants to finish painting her picture, the words of Charles Transley keep playing in her head, which takes away her courage to paint. “[...] she heard some voice saying she couldn’t paint, saying she couldn’t create [...]” (p. 149). However, Lily is a strong female heroine who does not give up and stands up against the prejudices of men against women. When she frees herself from all the prejudices and negative opinions about women that

undermine women's self-confidence, she regains her inner balance, self-confidence and creative determination. “And as she lost consciousness of outer things, and her name and her personality and her appearance, [...] her mind kept throwing up from its depths, scenes [...] and ideas, like a fountain spurting [...]” (p. 150). Lily is a heroine who disproves men's prejudices about women and proves that women are just as capable and talented as men. Women need to be given the opportunity to fulfil their potential, which is denied to them by male society. Women are excluded by men from the world of opportunities that men have. Through her example, Lily refutes the claims of men about women, whom men think of as inferior, independent beings who need male guidance.

In the novel, male and female perspectives on male-female relationships and social expectations collide. Although women are constantly pushed back by men and relegated to a subordinate role, it turns out that women are more important to men's lives than men are willing to admit. It is evident that women are indispensable to men and their subordinate role is totally unjustified. The novel challenges the values and ideas of Victorian patriarchal society.

In the following book, the author uses a fictional character to develop the taboo topic of same-sex relationships and underline the absurdity of gender stereotypes.

### **4.3 Orlando**

The satirical novel *Orlando* is a fictional biography of a young English nobleman, Orlando, who moves through historical eras spanning four hundred years. Orlando's life is set against the backdrop of real historical events, which are intertwined with fictional ones. In the course of his life, Orlando even changes his gender from male to female. Woolf's use of time in the novel is unconventional, as the protagonist only ages a few years during the course of the story and then his age does not change. In the story, Woolf deals with the position of women in society, gender stereotypes, the issue of gender identity and the relationship between individuals of the same gender. Woolf uses her novel to highlight the absurdity of gender roles that are assigned to men and women by society.

Against the backdrop of the Elizabethan era, sixteen-year-old Orlando enjoys all the joys of young manhood on his father's estate without any restrictions. He enjoys spending time alone under an old oak tree and devotes himself to writing the poems he would like to become famous for. When Orlando is invited to court by the queen, he lives an uninhibited life and forms fleeting relationships with women from different social

classes. Belonging to each class is characterised by a flower. “For Orlando’s taste was broad; he was no lover of garden flowers only; the wild and the weeds even had always a fascination for him” (Woolf, p. 11). The unimportance of the women is evident in the remark about their names, which Orlando does not even remember.

Because he is a man, his sexual exuberance is viewed very differently than if he were a woman. His behaviour is justified and accepted with understanding. “He was young; he was boyish; he did but as nature bade him do” (p. 11). The superficial values that men valued in women are evident in Orlando’s assessment of his three potential wives. Orlando focuses primarily on their appearance and social appearances. “[...] owing to the extreme care she took of her person. In short, she would have made a perfect wife for such a nobleman as Orlando [...]” (p. 14).

At court, Orlando meets Sasha, a Russian noblewoman, with whom he immediately falls in love. On their first fleeting meeting, however, Orlando thinks that the person he has immediately fallen in love with is unfortunately a man. “[...] no woman could skate with such speed and vigour [...]” (p. 17). His reasoning shows that women’s skills and abilities have been unfairly underestimated by men. Orlando’s discovery that he feels affection for a man torments him because such a relationship would be condemned by society. “Orlando was ready to tear his hair with vexation that the person was of his own sex, and thus all embraces were out of the question” (p. 17). However, their relationship soon comes to an end due to Sasha’s infidelity, who cheated on him. Orlando condemns her behaviour and becomes disillusioned with women. “[...] he hurled at the faithless woman all the insults that have ever been the lot of her sex” (p. 36). There is a clear difference in society’s view of the behaviour of women and men in relation to infidelity. Behaviour that is tolerated in men is condemned in women.

Orlando returns to his country mansion, devotes himself to writing poetry, and withdraws from social life. Here he meets the Romanian Archduchess Harriet Griselda, who, driven by her desire to meet him, repeatedly enters his grounds. Her bold behaviour is surprising to Orlando and, in his eyes, uncharacteristic of a woman. Based on the role attributed to women, he would expect a stereotypically attributed reaction. “Any other woman thus caught in a Lord’s private grounds would have been afraid [...] would have thrown her mantilla across her shoulders to hide it” (p. 70). Orlando notices that Harriet surprisingly displays other qualities uncharacteristic of a woman – she is knowledgeable in wine, firearms, hunting habits, and even armour. Harriet is in love with Orlando, but after her experience with Sasha, he represses his amorous outburst and flees abroad. Later

it turns out that the Archduke is not really a woman, but a man in disguise. The Archduke knows that relationships between men are taboo in society and unacceptable. Under the influence of social norms, the Archduke cannot show his feelings for Orlando, so he disguises himself as a woman. The Archduke deliberately changes his outward identity so that he does not have to hide his feelings for Orlando. The motif of disguising himself as a woman expresses the hopeless situation of the hero who loves a person of the same gender. Under pressure from society, he resorts to disguise and chooses an absurd “solution” to his sexual orientation. Woolf criticizes a society that blindly clings to unchanging social norms even at the cost of hypocrisy.

Orlando flees from Harriet to Turkey, where he serves as a special envoy to Constantinople. It is here that the pivotal event of the novel takes place during his tenure. Orlando falls into a deep sleep lasting several days, during which he is visited by three mysterious figures – the Immaculate, the Modest and the Chaste. These characters symbolize the qualities that have been required of women by society. Together, they try to counteract the author’s attempt to present in her story a truth unacceptable to the morality of the time. “For you flaunt in the brutal gaze of the sun things that were better unknown and undone; you unveil the shameful; the dark you make clear [...]” (p. 87). Despite the efforts of the three mysterious figures to hide the truth, which does not conform to the rules of society and undermines its morality, the truth is revealed and they leave Orlando for: “[...] those who love us; those who honour us [...] those who prohibit; those who deny; those who reverence without knowing why; those who praise without understanding [...]” (p. 88). The fact that society was unwilling to accept differences from established norms resulted in a hypocritical society that rejected inconvenient realities. Gender change and love for an individual of the same sex was taboo in Victorian society.

Woolf denounces society for ignoring inequalities and for blindly following the powerful class, without an opinion of its own. The act of gender reassignment is a unique act, but one that cannot threaten the stereotypical mindset of an ossified society. Woolf ironically refers to patriarchal society as “[...] tribe of respectable; who prefer to see not; desire to know not; love the darkness [...]” (p. 88). Woolf criticizes a hypocritical society that is not in favour of difference, tolerance and change. She condemns society for its unwillingness to accept changes that would contribute to the creation of a better society that respects every individual, regardless of status, gender or sexual orientation.

Despite his efforts to hide and not reveal the truth, thirty-year-old Orlando is changing from a man to a woman. Orlando accepts his transformation into a woman

naturally and without prejudice. Orlando immediately adapts to her new identity and subordinates her new social role to her appearance. Although Orlando is now a woman, her masculine characteristics still predominate. Orlando leaves the embassy, hangs out with gypsies and has adventures unthinkable for women. Turning into a woman brings Orlando relief from the boring male duties of an ambassador and from the pretense. In reminiscing, she scoffs at the “importance” of the activities she would have done as a man. “[...] she should have been making the motions of drinking and smoking over an empty coffee-cup and a pipe which lacked tobacco [...]” (p. 91).

Although Orlando lives in harmony with the gypsies, gradually the differences between them begin to deepen. “Already the young men had plotted her death. Honour, they said, demanded it, for she did not think as they did” (p. 98). Woolf points out the absurdity that even the slightest difference of opinion can spark bloodshed. In a patriarchal society, it is men who try to force their views and make others believe what they believe. Woolf criticizes a society that does not respect diversity of opinions, values and ideas.

It is only on the journey back to England that Orlando begins to realise the limitations of becoming a woman. “[...] she realised with a start the penalties and the privileges of her position” (p. 99). Through Orlando, who has been a man for thirty years, Woolf highlights the different perspectives on life through the eyes of a man and a woman. Orlando is not shocked by her gender change, but by the consequences that follow for her. Orlando discovers how free her life as a man has been, while her life as a woman is very restricted. On the one hand, she marvels at the beauty of her dress, but it also hinders her movement and prevents her from swimming. Orlando realizes her loss of independence and her incipient submission to the authority of men. From the point of view of one and the same person, such a difference in the status of men and women seems utterly meaningless. “Lord! Lord! [...] must I then begin to respect the opinion of the other sex, however monstrous I think it?” (p. 101).

Orlando criticizes her earlier views on the need for women to be well-groomed without a single blemish. From a male perspective, women’s concerns appear to be irrelevant, which Orlando, as a woman, challenges. Orlando realizes that, despite men’s ideas, women undergo “the most tedious discipline” (p. 101). Orlando experiences the demands of the role of a woman, for which she was not prepared, because from the male perspective the role of a woman is perceived as unpretentious. Through Orlando, Woolf draws attention to the undervaluing of women’s activities.

The shores of England, to which Orlando sails back, represent for her a strict and ossified society not very friendly to women and women's rights. For her, going back to England meant "conventionality, meant slavery, meant deceit, meant denying her love, fettering her limbs, pursuing her lips, and restraining her tongue" (p. 107).

Orlando, as a woman, must face countless obligations and prohibitions. Orlando realizes how her previously unlimited world of possibilities is shrinking to a minimum. "All I can do, once I set foot on English soil, is to pour out tea and ask my lords how they like it" (p. 103). Although she herself had previously enjoyed the benefits of her superior status as a man, she now sees the unequal status of men and women as an injustice. Orlando blames gender inequality on men who abuse their superior position over women and restrict them. "Ignorant and poor as we are compared with the other sex ... armoured with every weapon as they are, while they debar us even from a knowledge of the alphabet" (p. 104). From a woman's perspective, Orlando finds that men deny women education because women might challenge and threaten the superiority of men.

Orlando, as a woman with the experience of a man, looks at the pretense and lies that women in society have to face. She realizes that the care that women give to men and the fact that a man treats a woman gallantly in public does not guarantee a woman's approval. "[...] this by no means signifies that he respects her opinions, admires her understanding [...]" (p. 141). Women, in their inferior role, are completely at the mercy of men, without any opportunity to refute the traditional prejudices against women. Gradually, Orlando gives up her goal of becoming a famous writer, because women without education are denied a literary career. Male-dominated society takes away women's dreams and hopes of achieving goals outside their narrowly defined space of home. The condescending attitudes towards women, attributed to their low intellect, were often passed on by men to their sons in childhood as "a little secret". "Women are but children of a larger growth [...]" (p. 141).

The status of women was second-class, which Orlando also faces to when dealing with her property issues. As a woman, she cannot own property, and as a result, she almost loses her country residence. She notes that being a woman "[...] amounts to much the same thing [...]" as being dead (p. 110). Under the weight of her epiphany, Orlando loses her former high opinion of men and begins to distance herself from their opinions. Orlando identifies her thinking with that of the women to whom she proudly subscribes.

Although Orlando is a woman, she still has masculine qualities from her earlier life. The stereotypically attributed masculine and feminine elements are intertwined in her

person, with one sometimes dominating the other. The qualities that have been attributed more to men are demonstrated by Orlando's outspokenness, her courage, her disinterest in fashion and housework, her ability to drink, her fondness for gambling, and her horsemanship skills (p. 141). On the other hand, Orlando is modest, compassionate, sensitive, and lacks ambition to have power over others. Such qualities, on the other hand, were attributed to women (p. 141). "Whether, then, Orlando was most man or woman, it is difficult to say [...]" (p. 125). Like Orlando, Archduke Harry exhibits characteristics of the opposite sex. Harry is a man, but he is sensitive, tearful and giggles like a woman. "That men cry as frequently and as unreasonably as women, Orlando knew from her own experience as a man [...]" (p. 118).

Another ambiguous character is the sailor Marmaduke Bonthrop Shelmerdine, with whom Orlando gets along from the first moment they meet. Their immediate understanding seems almost suspicious, as it was not usual between a man and a woman. "[...] an awful suspicion rushed into both their minds simultaneously, "You're a woman, Shel! " she cried. "You're a man, Orlando!" he cried" (p. 167). The unexpected mutual understanding and relationship between Orlando and Shelmerdine makes them question their true gender. "[...] it was to each such a revelation that a woman could be as tolerant and free-spoken as a man, and a man as strange and subtle as a woman [...]" (p. 172). On the basis of gender stereotypes, men and women were attributed certain characteristics that were supposed to be typical of their gender. The surprise that both men and women can have traits that are characteristic of the other sex points to the absurdity of dividing traits into those possessed by men and those possessed by women.

Gender identity is also demonstrated by appropriate gender-specific clothing. Clothing is of great importance in the work and through it the wearer influences his surroundings with a certain intention. "Clothes are but a symbol of something hid deep beneath" (p. 124). Clothing is seen as a sign of a certain superficiality, but it also represents protection. However, clothing does not only protect against the cold, but can also protect the wearer from society. "They change our view of the world and the world's view of us" (p. 123). Clothes say a lot about the wearer and can also hide a lot. Through clothing it is possible to deceive one's surroundings, hide one's identity and free oneself from social conventions. "[...] often it is only the clothes that keep the male or female likeness, while underneath the sex is the very opposite of what it is above" (p. 124). Archduke Harry (formerly Harriet), who disguises himself as a woman for love of Orlando, takes advantage of this opportunity. Later, Orlando also finds pleasure in

disguising herself as a man, as it gives her the freedom to roam the streets freely, which is unacceptable for a woman. “For the probity of breeches she exchanged the seductiveness of petticoats and enjoyed the love of both sexes equally” (p. 145). Unlike women, men had plenty of opportunities to realise themselves, to travel and to live as they wished. Women were denied this opportunity.

Orlando’s knowledge of the world of men and now women helps her to understand and comprehend her past loves. Her insight into the life of a woman deepens her love for Sasha. Woolf points out the mutual misunderstanding between men and women that stems from differing social roles and expectations. As a result of her transformation, Orlando now understands things that she did not understand as a man. Despite the fact that, like Sasha, she is now a woman, this makes her love for the same sex even stronger. Again, there is the motif of love between individuals of the same gender who are in harmony with each other and understand each other better.

Orlando has faced discrimination against women even in the last of the four centuries it has gone through. In the nineteenth century, the Victorian era, Orlando witnesses the widening divide between the world of men and women. The strict Victorian morality encouraged hypocrisy in society. Women were under great pressure to start a family. “The life of the average woman was a succession of childbirths” (p. 151).

Orlando feels more than ever that society is changing. Under the influence of society, even Orlando succumbs and adapts to become part of it. Although she realizes that she is still the same on the inside, she does not resist and submits to the dictates of the times. Orlando resigns herself to the idea of getting married, although inwardly she is not convinced of marriage. “There was nothing for it but to buy one of those ugly bands and wear it like the rest” (p. 160).

Orlando would like to finish her poem, *Oak*, which she has been working on all her life, but she cannot. She feels that society is pushing her into the role of a married woman, a position Orlando does not identify with. The role of a subservient wife goes against her beliefs. However, society's influence on Orlando is so great that she partially gives in. “Such is the indomitable nature of the spirit of the age, however, that it batters down anyone who tries to make stand against it far more effectually than those who bend its own way” (p. 161). Orlando perceives her succumbing as her defeat and failure and falls into melancholy. She feels as if she has died. Like other women, she loses her dreams, ideals and hopes. The women had prepared the only socially acceptable future as an obedient wife. According to De Gay (2007) “[...] Woolf satirises the idea of “the spirit



of the age” as a regulatory ideological force. [...] Since marriage has never appealed to Orlando, this development may be seen as the result of violent coercion”.

In a short sequence of events, Orlando marries the sailor Marmaduke Bonthrop Shelmerdine. Unmarried women were viewed as inferior by society, and with her marriage Orlando banishes this sense of her inferiority. The mention of her wedding is very brief, giving the impression that this gives the act a deliberately minor importance. “[...] no one heard the word Obey spoken or saw, except as a golden flash, the ring pass from hand to hand” (p. 174). Orlando married to fulfill her “duty” as a woman. Although married, she retains her beliefs and continues to uphold her values. “[...] she need neither fight her age, nor submit to it; she was of it, yet remained herself” (p. 178).

With her marriage, Orlando satisfied the “spirit of the times” and regained her balance, which is reflected in the successful completion of her poem *Oak*. Orlando reflects on the inaccessibility of the writing career for women. Writing by women is considered foolish and inappropriate for a woman. The distrust of women’s intellect by men constantly knocks down women’s ambition and self-esteem. Any hint of creative literary activity by women is belittled by men. Orlando ironically remarks that the only time it does not matter that a woman is writing and thinking is when she is writing a note to her lover (p. 203).

Orlando becomes a mother and, thanks to her poem *Oak*, becomes a successful woman, fulfilling her dream of becoming a respected writer. At the end of the book, Orlando finds herself in 1928, at the time of the writing of this novel. Despite the obstacles she has faced as a woman, Orlando has managed to go through the pitfalls of all four centuries and achieve success. Although Orlando has had to adapt to the changes of the times and society many times during her life, she remains the same inside. She still longs for freedom and liberty. “Haunted! ever since I was a child. There flies the wild goose. It flies past the window out to sea” (p. 210).

In her novel *Orlando*, Woolf presents themes for reflection that were not appropriate to mention because they were unacceptable to society. She reflects on the unequal status of men and women, on gender stereotypes and on a person’s self-concept. Although the theme of the story with the change of the main character’s gender seems amusing as well as the satirical way of telling it, the opposite is true. Woolf criticizes harshly a hypocritical society and its false morals. She condemns the inability and unwillingness to accept deviation from the artificially created norm. She focuses particularly on society’s attitude towards women, who have faced centuries of prejudice,

neglect and oppression from men and the patriarchal society as a whole. Woolf criticizes an ossified society that is unwilling to change its norms in accordance with changing times, science and knowledge.

In the following book, under the theme of women and literature, the author discusses the obstacles that women face in a patriarchal society and highlights the unequal conditions that prevent women from realizing them.

#### **4.4 A Room of One's Own**

The essay *A Room of One's Own* differs from the previous works discussed because it is a direct call for women's literary freedom. Unlike the previous works, Woolf's views on the inferior and unequal status of women in society are voiced directly by the author, not through the characters in her novels. Woolf speaks to her audience and readers in her reflections. In writing the essay *A Room of One's Own*, Virginia Woolf drew on two lectures she delivered read to the women's colleges in Cambridge in October 1928.

In her essay, Woolf reflects on the theme of "Women and Literature", which, according to the author, is not entirely clear-cut and can be viewed from many angles. In her opinion, it is possible to deal with what women are, or what books women write, or what books are written about women, or it is possible to combine all these aspects (p. 218). Within this theme, Woolf addresses the issue of women writers and presents a necessary condition for women's literary activity. "[...] a woman must have money and a room of her own if she is to write fiction [...]" (Woolf, p. 4). From today's point of view, this condition seems insignificant, but in the past, such a condition was almost impossible for a woman. Woolf goes on to clarify her claim, but leaves it to the listener to come to his or her own conclusion. "At any rate, when a subject is highly controversial – and any question about sex is that – one cannot hope to tell the truth" (p. 4).

Woolf, in her fictional description of her preparation for the lecture, points to the obstacles that women face in their literary activities and that they must constantly confront. In order to gather materials for the lecture, the imaginary figure of the author travels to the fictional Oxbridge University. Here, she roams freely on the university grounds, but is immediately prevented from doing so by an angry caretaker. "Instinct rather than reason came to my help; he was a beadle; I was a woman. This was the turf; there was the path. Only the fellows and scholars are allowed here; the gravel is the place for me" (p. 6). Woolf points to men's attitudes towards women's education, which,

moreover, was not at the same level as men's and was still denied to them for much of the 19th century. Movement on the lawn represents freedom and comfortable walking, but these are only allowed to men. Women have to move on an uncomfortable gravel path that is already laid out and symbolizes the predetermined role of women in society. Any deviation from that role is not tolerated by men. Women have been pushed into a subordinate position by men and have been betrayed from their dreams of their freedom and equality with men. The stereotypical oppressive attitude towards women is also evident in the moment of conflict with the university administrator, when the author's character realizes her position based on instinct. On the contrary, reason must be set aside in order for her to submit and not rebel in the situation. It is evident that the subordinate position of women is incomprehensible to the author's character and there is no reasonable explanation for it. Woolf puts forth the idea that the only freedom women have is in their minds, in their contemplation, when they forget reality (p. 220).

Woolf uses her imaginary character to show the injustices that are applied to women in their attempts at self-realisation. The heroine is denied access to the university library where she would like to gather the information she needs. "[...] ladies are only admitted to the library if accompanied by a fellow of the College or furnished with a letter of introduction" (p. 8). Based on this experience, the author ironically remarks that upon entering the chapel "[...] the verger might have stopped me, demanding perhaps my baptismal certificate, or a letter of introduction from the Dean" (p. 9). On her departure from Oxbridge University, the author points to the many obstacles women have to overcome and the reluctance of society to rethink its attitude towards women and recognise their equal rights as men. The patriarchal society tries to isolate women from proper education. It protects education from women as if it were a treasure that it must lock away from women. "Gate after gate seemed to close with gentle finality behind me. Innumerable beadles were fitting innumerable keys into well-oiled locks; the treasure house was being made secure for another night" (p. 15).

Woolf's work emphasizes that one of the important conditions for women's literary creation is their financial independence, which gives them freedom. Woolf criticizes a society that for centuries has been prejudiced against women and unwilling to change. Woolf regrets that mothers did not have the opportunity to earn money that would have given their daughters economic independence, freedom and a better future. She believes that women could be as capable as men. "We might have been exploring or writing, mooning about the venerable places of the earth, sitting contemplative on the steps of the

Parthenon or going at ten to an office and coming home comfortably at half-past four to write a little poetry” (p. 25). The women's situation was very complicated and difficult, because taking care of the family took up almost all their time and earning money was practically impossible to combine. She concludes her reflection on the possible financial security of daughters with a remark that illustrates the difficult position of women in the 19th century. “[...] to earn money was impossible for them [...] had it been possible, the law denied them the right to possess what money they earned” (p. 27).

Woolf highlights the lack of job opportunities that society offers women. She criticises the lack of earnings because jobs reserved for women did not pay very well. As an example, Woolf mentions jobs that she herself did, although they were not fulfilling and paid little. She suffered from the feeling that “flattering and fawning” was necessary because of the job opportunities (p. 45). Despite her workload, she, like other women, found it difficult to make ends meet with her hard-earned money. Woolf accuses patriarchal society of being behind “the reprehensible poverty of our sex” (p. 24). As a consequence of women’s poverty, their dependence on men deepened, limiting the freedom that money could provide. Women were trapped in a situation from which it was almost impossible to escape. Woolf describes the freedom she was given by an inheritance from her aunt, who left her £500 a year. “I need not hate any man; he cannot hurt me. I need not flatter any man; he has nothing to give me” (p. 46). Thanks to her own self-sufficiency and independence, Woolf gained a freedom that allowed her to free herself from bias against men. “Indeed my aunt’s legacy unveiled the sky to me and substituted for the large and imposing figure of a gentleman, which Milton recommended for my perpetual adoration, a view of the open sky” (p. 47).

In her thinking about women and literature, Woolf stumbles upon an interesting realization. She notices that women are often the heroines of literary works, despite the fact that the actual position of women was not very prominent from the male perspective. “Imaginatively she is of the highest importance; practically she is completely insignificant” (p. 52). Moreover, heroines depicted in literature tend to be beautiful, have character and power. “[...] if woman had no existence save in the fiction written by men, one would imagine her a person of the utmost importance [...]” (p. 52). Literary heroines are portrayed in a totally opposite way to how women are viewed in reality. Woolf’s thoughts are based on George M. Trevelyan’s book *History of England*, which gives a true picture of the position of women in history. “In fact, [...] she was locked up, beaten and flung about the room” (p. 52). George M. Trevelyan describes the plight of women,

whose lives were entirely in the hands of the male part of society, and the mistreatment of women was part of custom and even legal (p. 253). Woolf stresses that fact and fiction do not correspond to each other. “She dominates the lives of kings and conquerors in fiction; in fact she was the slave of any boy whose parents forced a ring upon her finger” (p. 52). Woolf notices that in the literary world there have been significant female heroines since time immemorial, while in history there are rarely any women recorded apart from monarchs. Woolf notes with disappointment that “middle-class women with nothing but brains and character at their command” cannot make history (p. 54).

Woolf tries to find out why, for example, no woman in Elizabethan times made her mark on the literary world. Since it was difficult to establish any verified facts, Woolf creates an imaginary Shakespeare’s sister Judith in her reasoning. She considers the possibilities of Shakespeare’s hypothetical sister Judith given the times. She attributes the same enthusiasm and literary talent to both. While her brother has the opportunity to study, later go to London, work at the theatre and live in the centre of the action, Judith must stay at home. Discouraged from reading books by her own family, Judith runs away from home before her arranged marriage. Like her brother, Judith applies for a job at the theatre but is ridiculed there. Judith does not have the chance to realise herself like her brother. All this is a consequence of being a woman. Although Woolf’s reasoning is purely hypothetical, she concludes that even a woman with a talent comparable to Shakespeare would have had no chance of becoming a respected writer at that time. She argues that any talented woman “[...] would certainly have gone crazed, shot herself or ended her days in some lonely cottage outside the village [...]” (p. 59). Woolf believes that even in the 16th century there were literary talented women who could have become successful writers under more favourable conditions.

Women were discouraged from any artistic pursuit and were mercilessly criticized for their actions. Women’s achievements were stereotypically belittled by men. Mr. Oscar Browning, who examined female students at Cambridge, was keen to assert his point of view. “[...] irrespective of the marks he might give, the best woman was intellectually the inferior of the worst man” (p. 64). Woolf adds the further example of a certain Mr. Greg of the Saturday Review, who said of women that “[...] they are supported by, and they minister to, men [...]” (p. 65). It is said of women composing music that “[...] a woman’s composing is like a dog’s walking on his hind legs. It is not done well, but you are surprised to find it done at all” (p. 66). Women living in Victorian times were often underestimated by men, their intellect was doubted and they often heard: “you

cannot do this, you are incapable of doing that” (p. 65). Artistic activity of any kind was made uncomfortable for women by men, and it was very difficult for women to resist and confront men’s views on their artistic efforts.

Woolf repeatedly alludes to the subordinate position of women in her reflections and concludes that men suffer from an inferiority complex. Woolf recognises that life is difficult for men too and she believes that it is important to have self-confidence to cope with it. Men try to achieve this at the expense of women by putting them in an inferior role, which gives men a sense of power. Men’s restriction of women, which prevents them from achieving equality, stems from men’s fear of losing their superior position. Men see women as their rival, so it is important for men to keep women in a subordinate role so that they do not threaten their status. “He is protesting against the equality of the other sex by asserting his own superiority” (p. 121). Woolf believes that men succeed at the expense of women. According to Woolf, women give men the self-confidence needed for men to be successful. “Women have served all these centuries as looking glasses possessing the magic and delicious power of reflecting the figure of man at twice its natural size” (p. 42). According to Woolf, men cling to the subordinate role of women because they are afraid that “[...] if they were not inferior, they would cease to enlarge” (p. 43). Men try to maintain their dominance over women so that women cannot challenge their status, confidence and power. “For if she begins to tell the truth, the figure in the looking glass shrinks; his fitness for life is diminished” (p. 43). Woolf notes that men take criticism from women far less well than from men. Criticism from women, who occupy an inferior social role, is perceived by men as unacceptable and threatening.

In her essay, Woolf mentions the case of Mrs Behn, which she considers an important moment in the history of women’s literature. Aphra Behn was an ordinary middle-class woman who, after the death of her husband, managed to write for a living. Aphra Behn's importance lies in the fact that she became a role model for her followers, to whom she showed that writing provided an opportunity for women to make money. She proved that “writing became not merely a sign of folly and a distracted mind, but was of practical importance” (p. 77). Aphra Behn became a role model and motivation for other women writers who had not had the courage to pursue literary activities until then. Writing became a paid job, which encouraged spiritual activity among women. These women gathered in the late eighteenth century to talk about Shakespeare and translations of the classics. Woolf attributes these activities of women to be more important than the Crusades and the War of the Roses (p. 274).

Woolf emphasizes the importance of Mrs Behn to women's literature because, according to Woolf, it is extremely important for other women writers to be able to build on their predecessors and create a tradition of women's literature. Woolf believes that without female predecessors, other women writers would not be able to write as they do. Woolf sees the importance of literary continuity. "For masterpieces are not single and solitary births; they are the outcome of many years of thinking in common [...] so that the experience of the mass is behind the single voice" (p. 78). Woolf highlights Aphra Behn as an example of women's strength, proof that women can assert their abilities despite the obstacles placed in their way.

Aphra Behn was followed by other women writers, and by the early 19th century Woolf was recording more women writers. Woolf points out that writers are influenced by their own lives, which is reflected in their works. As a result, according to Woolf, it goes without saying that women's and men's values often differ. In a patriarchal world, however, male values prevail and carry more weight. This fact is negatively reflected in the evaluation of books written by women. "This is an important book, the critic assumes, because it deals with war. This is an insignificant book because it deals with the feelings of women in a drawing room" (p. 88).

Woolf observes that many women writers preferred to suppress their feminine writing in order to approximate a masculine style. Woolf criticizes that women have adapted their writing to conform to society, to critics, to the male point of view. According to Woolf, women should remain themselves and not subordinate their specific creative ability to anyone. "[...] for it was won by centuries of the most drastic discipline, and there is nothing to take its place" (p. 105). Woolf encourages women not to give up on their issues, to stand up for their opinions and to write like women. Woolf believes that by retreating from their original vision, women harm their literary work. "There was a flaw in the centre of it. [...] It was the flaw in the centre that had rotted them. She had altered her values in deference to the opinion of others" (p. 89). The position of women writers was not easy and under the pressure of the patriarchal society many of them adapted their writing to the men's perspective. Among the women writers who have managed to maintain a feminine way of writing, Woolf highlights Jane Austen and Emily Brontë. "[...] they alone entirely ignored the perpetual admonitions of the eternal pedagogue – write this, think that" (p. 90).

During the 19th century, women writers gradually increased in number, and Woolf points out that women almost equalled men in the number of books written. Women

writers began to focus more and more on a variety of themes in their works, and women's literature in general saw great development. "There are books on all sorts of subjects which a generation ago no woman could have touched" (p. 95). While researching the works of women writers, Woolf is introduced to Mary Carmichael's *Life's Adventures*, which she considers groundbreaking. In her book, Carmichael focused on the relationship between two women, which Woolf believed was "[...] perhaps for the first time in literature" (p. 98). Until then, the relationship between two women was rarely mentioned in the literature, and it was mostly a mother-daughter relationship. Women were portrayed in relation to men and from a male perspective. In Virginia Woolf's view, a man cannot grasp all aspects of a woman's personality. "[...] a man is terribly hampered and partial in his knowledge of women [...]" (p. 99–100). Carmichael has brought a taboo subject into the literary world, but Woolf believes that even more openness in the portrayal of women is yet to come. According to Woolf, even the courageous Carmichael is influenced by the morality of the times. "She will still wear the shoddy old fetters of class on her feet" (p. 106).

Woolf is aware that writing a "work of genius" is difficult for women and equally difficult for men. According to Woolf, it is therefore necessary to free oneself from distractions that would interfere with the author's creative spirit. Besides money, Woolf considers the second necessary condition for literary creation to be having one's own room. Such a condition seems very difficult for a woman to realize. For a woman, having her own room represents both material and personal independence. Having one's own room provides its owner with protection from the adverse and disturbing influences of the outside world. Having one's own room is a symbol of creative freedom without conforming to the pressures and demands of society. According to Stevenson (2014) "Woolf sees the room not simply as a physical space but as a mode of comprehending the self in the world".

In her essay, Woolf reflects on William Coleridge's statement that "a great mind is androgynous" (p. 118). Woolf considers the ideal state of mind to be one in which the masculine and feminine forces are in harmony. However, in each person, the strength of his or her gender is predominant, but regardless, the two forces should work together. Such a spirit Woolf considers creative. Conversely, a unisex mind, according to her, is not creative. She believes that it is important for writing not to be burdened by one's gender. Woolf thinks that in order to achieve freedom, freedom of spirit, and self-awareness, one must free oneself from gender. The author suggests that unless a writer



considers both forces in his mind, his work will not appeal to both sexes. “It is fatal to be a man or woman pure and simple; one must be woman-manly or man-womanly” (p. 125).

Woolf’s theme of “Women and Literature” touches on many areas of the problematic position of women in a patriarchal society and reflects on possible causes. In the course of her reflections, she makes some interesting findings that reveal possible reasons why patriarchal society is so hostile to women. Woolf criticizes the unequal settings of society and defends women’s right to personal and economic autonomy and independence.

Woolf concludes her essay by urging women to make the most of their opportunities. She summarises the progress that was made on women’s rights. Woolf urges women to study, to develop themselves, and most importantly to remain themselves. She reminds women that they now have the opportunity to earn money and pursue careers that were previously unavailable to women. All of these opportunities give women the freedom to devote themselves to writing books. Woolf stresses to women that they have their future in their own hands and that it is largely up to them. She warns women that, given the opportunities, they can no longer make excuses for lack of opportunities and should therefore not be passive. Woolf’s optimistic conclusion encourages women in their efforts and her speech gives them courage and confidence. She encourages women to pursue their goals, not to submit and not to give up.

In Woolf’s works, there are both heroines who personified traditional notions of women and heroines who represented the opposite. However, there were elements of Feminism evident in both types of heroines, which were presented in different ways by each heroine. The depth of their despair, sadness and dissatisfaction with their own lives can be sensed in the heroines, who succumbed to the pressures of Victorian society and outwardly fulfilled their roles. Through the ideas of women oppressed and restricted by society, it was evident that the unequal status of women was deeply rooted in society. Related to this is the issue of the ossification of the society encountered by the emancipated heroines who personify the rebellion against the immutability and adherence to the unequal system in the status of men and women. Although the heroines presenting feminist ideas assert their freedom and oppose the dictates of society, they still have to constantly face the pressures of society on their person.

## CONCLUSION

In my bachelor's thesis, I examined selected works of the important English writer Virginia Woolf. I examined the selected works from the perspective of women and their position in society. I focused mainly on the features of Feminism, of which Virginia Woolf became a representative.

In order to examine the features of Feminism in Virginia Woolf's works, it was first necessary to get acquainted with the author's life and the context of the times that influenced her work. Approaching Victorian society and the position of women was important in order to understand the reasons for the emergence of the feminist movement and the importance of the themes that the feminist movement brought with it into society. Although Virginia Woolf was not born until the end of the nineteenth century, the Victorian society of the time and its values profoundly influenced the author's thinking, opinions and attitudes, which were strongly reflected in her work. An important factor influencing Virginia Woolf's work was her mental state, marked by childhood trauma. All of these factors play an important role when analysing Woolf's works, which often contain autobiographical elements, therefore it was important to get to know them.

Woolf defied traditional Victorian morality and also departed from traditional literary style, becoming one of the main figures of literary modernism. Woolf rejected traditional gender stereotypes that disadvantaged women and demanded the equal status of men and women, contributing significantly to the spread of the feminist ideas. To properly understand her conception of Feminism, it was important to delve into the status of women and their rights in the society of the time, which was closely linked to the spread of the feminist movement.

In the selected works analysed, Virginia Woolf focused on female protagonists, through whom the author highlighted the absurdity of women's inferior status within partner relationships and within society as a whole.

Although the heroines in Woolf's selected works are different, what they have in common is that they face discrimination based on their gender. In *Orlando*, through the main character Orlando, who has lived his life as both a man and a woman, Woolf contrasts the different positions of men and women in society. Orlando sees how senselessly women's lives are restricted by social rules. After her transformation into a woman, she fully realizes the absurdity of the different approach to women that negatively affects their lives.

The fate of women was to become wives and later mothers, which most of Woolf's heroines try to fulfil anxiously. In *Mrs Dalloway*, Clarissa, and in *To the Lighthouse*, Mrs Ramsay, both have already fulfilled their mission and feel useless and unnecessary. Sally Seton, who had big dreams for her future with Clarissa in her youth, also succumbs to social pressure and adopts the Victorian family model. In the book *Mrs Dalloway* Rezia, the wife of a war veteran, longs for a child to fulfil her life. In the book *Orlando*, the heroine Orlando also marries as a woman under pressure from society, although she does not have the best opinion of marriage. Marriage in Virginia Woolf's works is portrayed rather negatively from the perspective of women.

In keeping with Victorian conventions, both Clarissa in *Mrs Dalloway* and Mrs Ramsay in *To the Lighthouse* are completely loyal to their husbands and are forced to adopt their opinions, even if they are not always convinced in their minds of their correctness. They both perceive that they are not equal to their husbands and that they must recede into the background. Both Clarissa and Mrs Ramsay realise that they are as intelligent as their husbands but that they cannot fulfil their potential because they are women.

The intellect of women was doubted by men. In *To the Lighthouse*, Mr Ramsay doubts that his wife understands what she reads in the book. Peter in *Mrs Dalloway* is surprised when Lady Evelyn says something clever. In *Orlando*, Orlando witnesses a situation where a father tells his son that women are just big children. Woolf states in *A Room of One's Own* that the themes of women writers have been undervalued and considered unimportant by men.

Mrs Ramsay in *To the Lighthouse* gave her life to her family and husband. So did Rezia in *Mrs Dalloway*, who sacrificed herself for her husband. Although unhappy in her marriage, she would not leave her husband even in spite of his mental illness due to the horrors of war.

Women lacked education, which was denied to them by men, and this negatively affected their lives. In *Mrs Dalloway*, Clarissa suffers from low self-esteem due to her lack of education. She feels inferior compared to her educated husband. Similarly, education has an effect on Mrs Ramsay in *To the Lighthouse*, who looks up to her educated husband. In *A Room of One's Own*, Woolf's imaginary heroine, eager to gain information at the imaginary Oxbridge University, is banned and denied access. Woolf's female characters realize that their lack of education limits them in life and is one of the factors that helps men keep women in a subordinate role.

The women, who represent the opposite of the heroines, who live by Victorian rules, face obstacles and prejudices from men. Such a heroine in *Mrs Dalloway* is Lily Briscoe, who wants to realize herself in painting. However, her artistic talent is doubted and underestimated by men. Similarly, in *Orlando*, Orlando would like to become an acclaimed writer but almost gives up her dream because women writers were not supported and had to overcome many obstacles. In *A Room of One's Own*, Woolf highlights the difficulties of women writers who were discouraged from their literary realization. The works of women were mercilessly criticized and belittled by men. Women composing music were derogatorily compared by men to dogs walking on their hind legs. Women were hindered from any artistic realization by men and gifted women were not allowed to fully develop their talents.

The children of the heroines represent a rebellion against the stereotypical perception of women, against expectations and prejudices against women. Clarissa's daughter Elizabeth in *Mrs Dalloway* and Mrs Ramsay's daughters in *To the Lighthouse* dream of a different future from that of their mothers, who accept Victorian values. Elizabeth wants to study and become a doctor. She has no doubts about the future she thinks of because she is determined to make her dreams come true regardless of any obstacles. Mrs Ramsay's daughters dream of their independence, when they will not be inferior wives to their husbands and when they will make their own decisions. On the contrary, the men had a privileged position that assured them the obedience not only of their wives but also of their children who had to submit to their will. In *To the Lighthouse*, Cam and James want to defy the authoritarian father who personifies the position of men in the Victorian era. The heroines' children represent change and hope for improving the status of women in society.

By comparing the analyses of the selected works and heroines, I found common features of Feminism across the works under study, thus I managed to fulfil the stated aim of my bachelor's thesis. The ideas and desires of women facing oppression from a patriarchal society corresponded to the ideas of the emerging feminist movement. By studying the heroines portrayed, it became apparent that there were probably far more women in a patriarchal society who were not satisfied with their duties and almost no rights than it might seem at the time. However, most of the women analysed bore their fate obediently and quietly, although they suffered internally and longed for the same opportunities and possibilities that men had. After my insight into Victorian society, I believe that most women wanted to be free to make their own choices and live life as

they saw fit. From the insights gained from studying individual heroines, I think that discrimination against women and the suppression of their rights ruined the lives of many women living at that time. Women fighting for their rights had to face prejudice and also the reluctance of many men to participate in improving the status of women. The difficulty in enforcing change and the slow improvement of women's status in society show that the perception of women as unequal was strongly rooted in society, which was an important factor making the struggle for women's rights more difficult.

Virginia Woolf made an indelible mark on women's literature with her literary works and became an integral part of the emerging feminist movement. In her works, she highlights the unequal status of women in society, a very controversial topic at the time. Women's status, rights and opportunities have improved immeasurably since Virginia Woolf's time. Just like society, feminist ideas have evolved over the years depending on the changing situation in society. From the perspective of women today, the position of women in Victorian times was completely unthinkable and unacceptable. However, even in today's modern society, the issue of the status of women and their discrimination in various spheres of life is still relevant. Even today, equality in the status of men and women is a fragile and emotive issue and a great deal of mutual tolerance and respect is needed to maintain it.

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