

# FEMINISM THROUGH LITERATURE



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# **1. INTRODUCTION**

I have two main objectives for this project. The first one is to prove that literature is totally connected to society, and, the second one is to look deep into three feminist literary works from three different centuries and feminism waves, and analyze them so I can compare them and connect them with the theoretical and historical part of the project, thus showing this connection between literature and society previously mentioned.

It is obvious these three authors I will be working on have just one thing in common: they broke society's rules and conceptions.

Because of that they had to either hide behind a pseudonym, live a judgmental life and be called crazy or be seen as "revolutionary".

Following the index, you will be able to see my trail of thought in an organized way:

First, I will kick the thesis off with several definitions of the term "feminism".

This will be followed by three centuries of historical feminism evolution towards what we nowadays call modern feminism. I'll also reflect on the level of acceptance of modern feminism through a survey and its analysis.

And through the analysis of three literary works: *Jane Eyre*, by Charlotte Brontë, *A Room of One's Own*, by Virginia Woolf and *The Vagina Monologues*, by Eve Ensler, and the comparison between different aspects of three centuries of feminism, I will prove my hypothesis.

Before starting, I would like to make my hypothesis clear:

The research through three literary works and centuries to prove that feminism is necessary and more important than we think to society's evolution and improvement and the fact that literature has been, like in many other social phenomena, a powerful vehicle to express and transform this social evolution.

## **2. WHAT IS FEMINISM?**

At first, when we listen to the word “feminism” we immediately think about women. That is where many make the mistake of confusing feminist fight with women’s fight only. Looking up at two important English dictionaries I get to see the way its definition is written follows society’s misconception of feminism.

Of course, we must always remember that feminism began as a fight for women by women, but as times change society does too.

Cambridge’s dictionary says:

**noun** [ U ]

UK /'fem.i.ni.zəm/ US /'fem.ə.ni.zəm/

The belief that women should be allowed the same rights, power, and opportunities as men and be treated in the same way, or the set of activities intended to achieve this state:

*She had a lifelong commitment to feminism.*

Oxford’s dictionary says:

**NOUN**

mass noun

The advocacy of women's rights on the ground of the equality of the sexes.

There is no doubt, even there is proof, that this movement was created by women and was, in its beginning, a women’s deal. But as time changes, and so do generations and ideologies and society, we should start thinking of feminism as a fight meant for all.

Then again, what is feminism?

Any kind of collective union of women, who are and fight against different types of civil and social rights which are, in some way, unfair to them.

In the book *10 palabras clave sobre mujer* by Celia Amorós, it is said that the term “feminism” is defined by the era or century the movement is taking place in. The effect of feminism was not the same in the XIX century as now, for that

matter, the definition of feminism will change depending on the kind of injustice they are fighting against.

Again, in *Historia del feminismo* by Juan Sisinio Pérez Garzón, I find a different point of view of what feminism means.

I relate this difference to the fact that the writer is a man. He thinks feminism is no other thing than a movement which transforms society, politics and culture in a way that equality is respected efficiently.

Simone de Beauvoir, French writer and feminist, says in her so recognized book *The second sex, volum I*, which was published in 1949, that a woman is defined based on what a man is, meaning she is the second sex. She finds the discrimination and inequality after asking herself what a woman is and getting to the conclusion that a man needn't have to answer that question, a man is a man, with no more explanation.

What catches my attention the most of this peculiar woman is one of her most famous quotes: "One is not born but becomes a woman".

Here is where I find her opinion on feminism, after thinking about how she got to that sentence, I make my mind up and say to myself: Every one and each woman should be a feminist because feminism means knowing what we deserve as what we are, human beings, and seeing that there is no such thing as an easy way out of society's structure and at the same time our oppressor.



Simone de Beauvoir

## **2.1 THREE CENTURIES OF MODERN FEMINISM**

This project is focused on these three centuries, from the XIX century to the XXI, or what we could refer to the three waves of feminism.

Anyway, we could say feminism began the moment a woman took up a pen and started writing, Christine de Pizan in the XV century wrote *Epistle to the love of God*, and even before her, many women broke society's rules and expectations.

With the start of the modern era, times of liberty and reasonable thinking, feminism finds its way out of hidden books and secret voices, naming it now, premodern feminism.

Since Ancient Greece, women have been seen, created and educated for the natural objective of maternity and reproduction, making these two traits characteristics of gender identity. Throughout years and centuries women have been at their family's service, at men' service, perfect wife and mother.

And since that era I named before, premodern era, they have been tied to the two-job life: work outside their household and work at home. Which still remains in our modern days.

As we will see, the era in which more changes occurred was the second half of the XX century, with women's body and sexuality liberation, finalizing with what we would call: right of maternity, in the XXI century.

## **3. THE XIX CENTURY**

### **3.1 "LIBERTÉ,ÉGALITÉ, FRATERNITÉ", THE BEGINNING OF MODERN FEMINISM**

It is said that the main corpus of modern feminism started together within "Liberté, égalité, fraternité", freedom, equality and fraternity, main motto of the Illustration era in which women are tied to the ideal of the bourgeois woman: women entitled to please men in all ways, from sexually to emotionally. This motto in opposition to religion, science and law made the fight for equality even harder. During this period of liberal revolution and democratic spheres, equality is one of the most important traits, equality between men.

This is how a misogynist and subordinate society found its outbreak under the name of democratic and liberal thought.

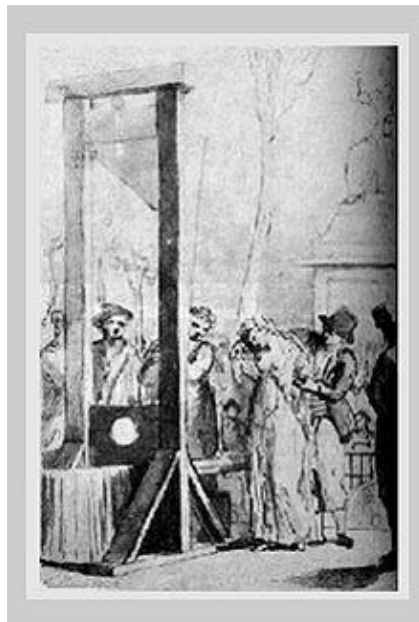


We say the Illustration era is the beginning of modern the same reasons, regard men seeing them as useless unless they were at home, French women were the first to create what we would call a feminist organization nowadays.

We shall not ignore the fact that a singular woman, Olympe de Gouges, sacrificed her own life after writing the *Declaration of the Rights of Woman and the Female Citizen*, and this same work got her to the place of one of the most important early feminists.

In her declaration, she exposed the fact that women are citizens, just like men are, and criticized how the government was only made up by men. Being against the government got, just as many more women and men, to her execution, the guillotine.

feminism because during those times of revolution women demanded the right of fighting next to men for



Olympe de Gouges' execution

Going back to the same time but not the same place, in England, another woman wrote without knowing the basis of the soon to be feminist movement, Mary Wollstonecraft, with her work *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, in which she states that women are no less than men but the difference in education makes them look like if they were, for that, she demands a society in which men and women are educated and treated the same exact way so they can be given equal number of opportunities.

She composed two great ideas of feminism:

- Genre is not a natural thing, it is educational
- Education needs a reorganization in order to get women to the same level as men.

### **3.2 INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION AND VICTORIAN ERA**

With the enormous opening to capitalism and the consequences of the Industrial Revolution such as new factories and job places, came a sad era of exploitation, in which women earned less than what the poorest proletarian man did.

During that time, women started finding their place in a society that wanted them to stay at home. They had to work outside of it now. Jobs for “men” were utterly banned for women to do, so they settled with textile jobs, confection and clothing, teaching and, after many years, nursing, only because of Florence Nightingale, who was the first British woman to open a nursing school after attending wounded soldiers in the Crimea war.

There finally was an educational reorganization which intended to make education equal between boys and girls. But women still finished their studies, only if they could because they were either put together with a man they did not want to marry or had to take care of their family or get a job to help at home, still, if they were lucky enough to finish them, they did not learn as much as a man had: schools and subjects were different for girls.

With the invention of the typewriter, typing started being a job for women, just like telephony jobs later were.

A group of women started asking themselves that if they assisted as much and more than men in economy, why did they not have the same rights? They had more duties and less rights than men.

At the same time, the fact that women spent those hours next to men and society's reality, got them in touch with politics and daily news and issues, which made them realize even more the huge difference between men and women.

(Picture: Women working during the Industrial Revolution. Textile Industry)



Before talking about proper women's suffrage campaigns and feminism's first wave, as it is known, we must talk about Chartism.

The Chartist Movement was a working-class movement which looked for a parliamentary reform between 1838 and 1848, one of the demands they fought for was universal men suffrage, some members of this movement believed in votes for women too yet many others thought it would only retard men's suffrage and, for that same reason, the petition was finally revoked. Anyway, later on this movement many women, mainly in large cities, joined in. It was them who started talking about real universal suffrage, this which talks about women's suffrage too. These women's objective was not only to get universal suffrage, they wanted to fight next to their sons and husbands, something that later feminist movements lacked as a consequence of how society saw those men who supported that type of fight.

An important figure in the Chartist movement, Susanna Inge, said that women first needed to be educated the same way as men, then they could be equal to them, in mental capacity indeed, but not in property matters for example. She, together with Mary Ann Walker, a Chartist lecturer, founded the Female Charter Association in the city of London. It was criticized by many male members and one of them, Mr Cohen, even said he did not think a women's nature would be taking part in politics, later saying they were happier at home rather than aspiring after political and civil rights.

Some years later, in 1841, a group of three leading Chartists launched the National Association which included women's suffrage.

### 3.3 CAMPAIGNS FOR WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE

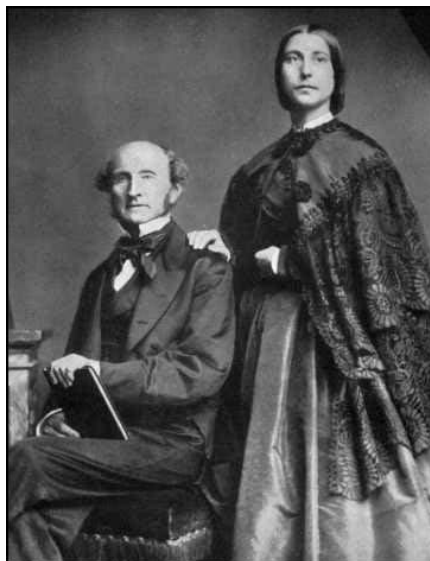
During the XIX century, women started talking about all types of rights for women, "The cause". This movement had no political focus, it was general. But closer to the second half of the century, it became more specific, votes for women or suffrage as a way out of social inequality.

Anne Knight, pioneer of feminism and Chartist member, founded next to Anne Kent the first British organization that fought for women's suffrage, in 1850. Some years before, in 1847, she created the first leaflet for women's suffrage.

John Stuart Mill was elected in 1865, the same year the first Ladies Discussion Society started talking about the possibility of women taking part in public and politic spheres.

This open feminist man wrote in 1861 *The Subjection of Women*, in which he stated women deserved equality and fair education, also defending the abolition of the subordination of one of the sexes to the other, he tried throughout his stay as a member of the Parliament to get votes for women, this was somehow taken as a joke by many members of the government, how could a woman be given the same rights as a man?

I shall remark he was married to a suffragette, Harriet Taylor, and was friends with the Pankhurst family, who I will talk about later on in this section. Both, Stuart Mill and his wife, were influenced by the women who took part in the Seneca Falls' Convention, in New York, in 1848, mainly by Lucy Stone, who participated in the Women's Rights Convention in 1850, and her speech.



Mr and Mrs Mill

In 1865 was also founded the first Women's Suffrage Committee, although the option for women to vote was immediately refused by the government, 1500 signatures were collected in its favor.

These first groups were located in London, the capital, where the early effects of the Industrial Revolution were more notorious, and other important cities such as Manchester (Manchester Society for Women's Suffrage, formed in 1867)

However, the London group ended up being divided in two different groups, the consequence of being tied to politics: conservatives did not wish to cause society's discontent and liberals thought an immediate change was needed.

I shall remark that the first women's political groups did not aim to get the vote, but their other objectives led indirectly towards the normalization of women being able to get to that liberation point.

Helen Taylor, a liberal from London, after the London's group split up, created a strong union with Manchester and Edinburgh founding the London National Society for Women's Suffrage. Lydia Becker, who used to be Manchester Society for Women's Suffrage's secretary and was responsible of many signatures' collection, led the conservatives, later called parliamentaries, was the strongest influence for the suffragists, taking advantage of the leaderless movement after the split up.

We shall divide this movement in two, the suffragists and the suffragettes and place it at the end of the century and throughout the Victorian era.

In 1868 some local groups united and formed the National Society for Women's Suffrage (NSWS), as a first attempt it started with huge potential but it was weakened by some splits.

Suffragists, led by Millicent Fawcett, were a middle class women organization who used peaceful ways of demonstrations, following a moderate line. These various organizations of women formed the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies, the NUWSS, in 1897.

Clearly, middle class women did not have as many difficulties as working class women, and the NUWSS being exclusively for the first ones did not help.

One specific woman, Emmeline Pankhurst, member of the suffragists, saw that the correct and non-violent behavior of the NUWSS was not getting any response apart from rejected voting petitions and political appearance. Her being a revolutionist, decided to create a new and separate group of suffragists, same objective but with a much different process.

She encouraged working class women to join her organization, mainly young women, who were the most exploited ones because of their vitality and working velocity.

In the beginning of the XX century, 1903 exactly, the Women's Social and Political Union or WSPU, leded obviously by Emmeline Pankhurst, was created. They were named after "suffragettes" because of one of *The Daily Mail's* article.

With this organization began a new era of fight for freedom and rights, the XX century.



Mrs Fawcett speaking in front of a crowd during a demonstration

## 4. THE XX CENTURY

### 4.1 SUFFRAGETTE

As said before, Emmeline Pankhurst opened a new window for those women who could not take part in Fawcett's plans.

The word "Suffragette" was used almost as an insult in a disapproving way, the newspaper *The New York Times* mocked an Oxford definition of the word saying:

"A 'Suffragette' (street flagitans) is a woman who ought to have more sense."

The suffix "-ette" in French was used to name a small object, diminutive. Later on, during the 1900's, it was used to refer something small and womanly too.

Although that definition and almost utter press hate might had seemed capable of stopping the WSPU and its members, they used that fame to get to even more women and to the government's ears. Also, they named their own journal *The Suffragette*.

In this same journal they once answered which was the difference between a suffragist and a suffragette, as I think there is no better answer than a suffragette's one, I decided to comment it. Anyone can be a suffragist, indeed a suffragist is known for wanting universal suffrage, yet only women were capable of disrupting public organizations, only women could be suffragettes. Hence the difference, men would not be able to do something as violent as throwing rocks at shops, of course creating wars is not as bad as that.

In the note published in 1914, they claimed that the suffragist wanted the vote meanwhile the suffragette fought for it.

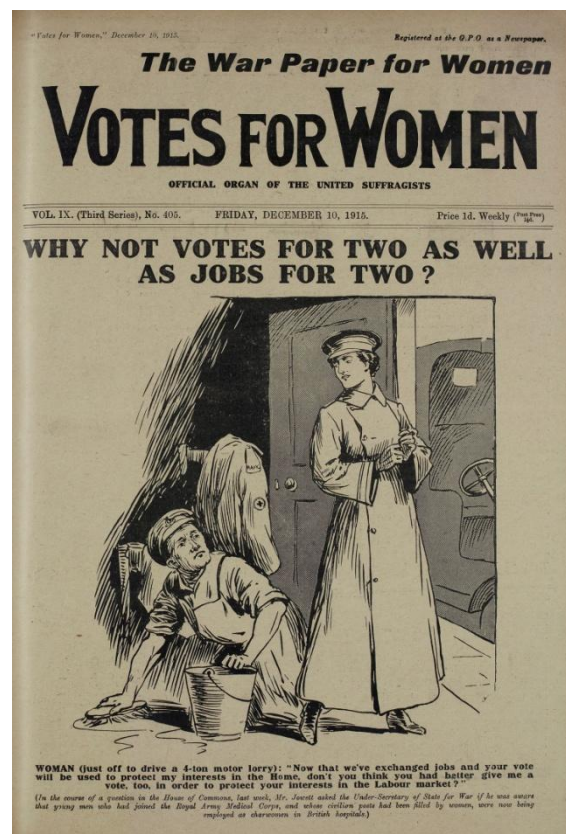
Her violent and active demonstrations were followed after the suffragettes' main motto: "Deeds not words", which was an indirect attack to their fight mates, the suffragists, and their ways.

In 1907, some discontent members from the WSPU's executive body decided to leave their former organization, led in that moment by Emmeline and one of her daughters, Christabel, taking with them part of the WSPU. This conflict occurred after Emmeline cancelled WSPU's annual conference and announced that from then on, all decisions would go through a committee controlled by her.

In that way, the Women's Freedom League was born, in its beginning with only 70 members and at its end with 4000.

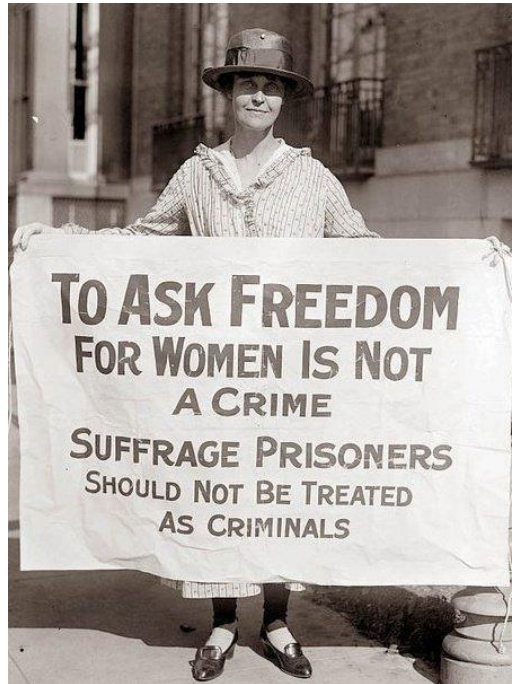
In 1909, the suffragettes launched a new newspaper, *Votes for Women*, which got as popular as 20.000 copies sold per week.

(One cover from *Votes For Women*)





When imprisoned, they were not recognized as political prisoners, they were criminals, that and the harsh and inhuman treatment they received in jail, made Marion Wallace Dunlop go on the first suffragette hunger strike in 1909

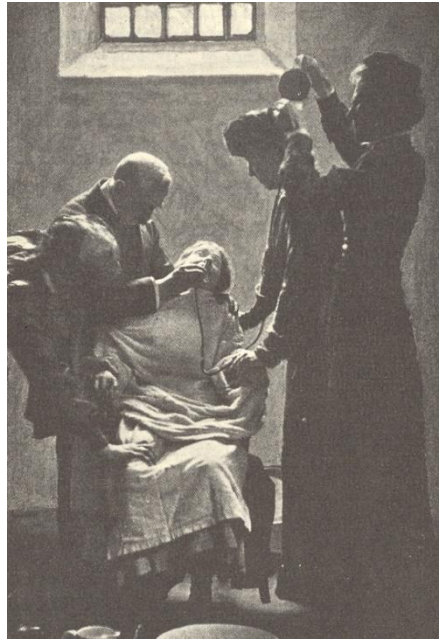


(Suffragette demonstrating against imprisoned women being treated as criminals)

This actually made the government react and, for a while, they released women who went on that action, fearing that some of them would die and it went public, which would obviously give even more support and sympathy to the suffrage movement.

Later though, force-feeding began, as an excuse for medical issues, in that way women ended up eating in a denigrating way and they did not suffer from eating disorders or died. Like any forced action, force-feeding was dangerous for the hunger striker: she was tied down to a bed, a tube was forced down her throat or even her nose (body invasion), food was sometimes wrongly directed towards her lungs, endangering her life.

Many women who went through that humiliation claimed it was similar to being raped, a body violation. Their stories were told as a public outcry, which gave them even more recognition.



(A suffragette being force-fed)

As said before, suffragettes' methods were violent and sometimes got out of control. Their demonstrations ended with arrests but they even took advantage of that, the reasons of which will be explained later on.

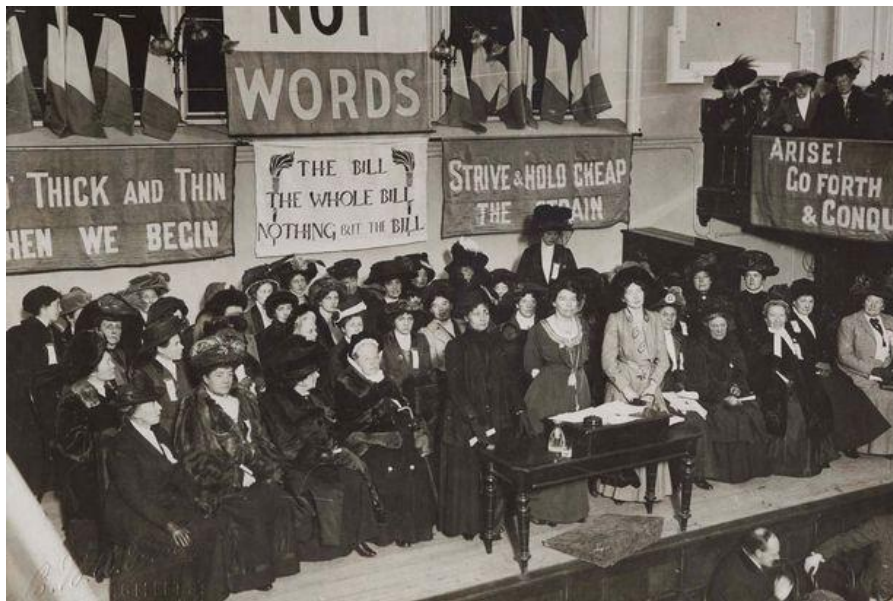
Friday 18<sup>th</sup> November 1910, Black Friday. That horrible day happened because of the first reading of the *Conciliation Bills* in the House of Commons, a parliamentary building in which the members of the parliament or mp's, read and discuss new laws and issues.

The bills were to extend the vote to 1.000.000 property-owning women above the age of 30. This was a problem: many liberal party members did not want women to vote at all, meanwhile many suffragettes did not want only some women to vote either, but, even if that meant they could not vote, they supported the bills, at least some women could and that was something big.

Hence the women who would have been able to vote were property-owning women, middle to upper class women, they were more likely to vote the conservative party, which got many other mp's to say no.

The Prime Minister leading the Liberal Party during those years, Prime Minister Herbert Asquith, was the responsible of the reading. The bills could have had a second reading but the Minister said there was no time left, that got the bills to be refused, lie that the suffragettes noticed.

Just like Mrs. Pankhurst said, in the words of Queen Victoria's god-daughter, suffragette who was present that same day, the suffragettes had followed what the Parliament told them in exchange of a reward, the Bills, and those words were let down by one man in one second. That offense got a number of 300 women to march and protest in the Parliament led by Mrs. Pankhurst.



(Suffragettes' leaders leading a meeting before the Black Friday march)

With a total number of 200 out of 300 women violently attacked and violated by the police and 119 arrests.

They only wanted to exercise their right of demonstration after they had been let down by the Minister's words. But, they did not know that when they got to the House of Commons doors, they would be beaten, harassed, and sexually assaulted by the police for more than 6 hours.

Two days after the events, Mary Jane Clarke, Emmeline Pankhurst's sister, died after being in jail.

Thanks to the press, which supported the suffragettes by posting violent photographs from the attacks, the government and Liberal Party were uncovered. I shall remark that Churchill, a mp, wanted to keep everything covered and said no newspaper could talk about the events, obviously to avoid embarrassment, yet The Daily Mirror, did it anyway, defying Churchill's petition.

# The Daily Mirror

THE MORNING JOURNAL WITH THE SECOND LARGEST NET SALE

No. 2,205. Registered at the G. P. O. SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 19, 1910. One Halfpenny.

**VIOLENT SCENES AT WESTMINSTER, WHERE MANY SUFFRAGETTES WERE ARRESTED WHILE TRYING TO FORCE THEIR WAY INTO THE HOUSE OF COMMONS.**



While finally endeavoring peacefully to enter the House of Commons, great numbers of suffragettes used more drastic methods than ever before. Above is illustrated one of yesterday's incidents. A woman has fallen down while struggling, and she is in a distressing condition. The photograph shows how far women will go for the vote.

(The Daily Mirror posted this cover from Black Friday. The suffragette in the ground is Ada Wright)

The police's violence in front of a more-or-less pacific way of demonstration led the suffragettes to an even more violent tendency towards the police and the government, window smashing. It was a way of saying that the government cared more for a broken window than for a woman. Of course, smashing a window meant immediate arrest and, like said before, arrest meant deplorable treatments. Property was a government's priority, which is why suffragettes started attacking directly to it.



Hunger strikes, force feeding, dangerous measures and demonstrations and ,that so known, outcry, got to the writing of a new act, The Cat and Mouse Act, in 1913.

In the terms of this act it was said that the liberation of women who got sick during their imprisonment was accepted as long as, after their recovery, they were sent back to their previous position. “Prisoners temporary discharge for ill health”

Here is where the position of the cat and the mouse were taken, women being the mouse and the government being the cat.

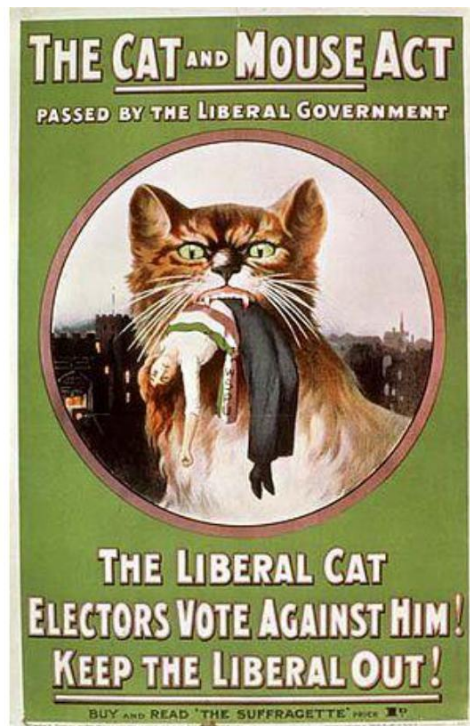
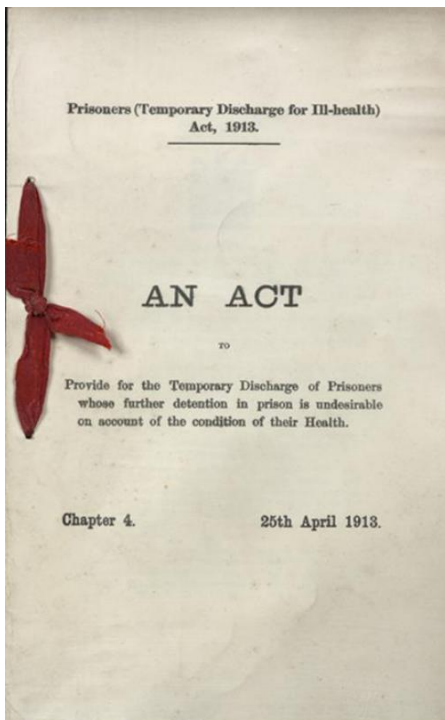
This act was a weak defense by the Liberal government and was finally suspended after realizing it was too late, the public thought: “How liberal can be government which forces humans against their right of demonstration and identity?”

While avoiding the creation of martyrs of the suffrage movement, the government made something worse, the denigration of a human being who could talk about their horrible and violating treatments.

Anyway, the act did not work at all, considering that when women were imprisoned once again, they went on a hunger-strike and the cycle was repeated.

(The Act's official document)

(Poster against the cat and mouse act)



### 4.1.1 MILITANCY

Suffragettes' militancy was something more serious than window breaking, chaining themselves on railings or shops or protesting. The best example of this is Emily Wilding Davison, the Derby suffragette.

The 4<sup>th</sup> of June of 1913, just like every year, the Epsom Derby took place, the king's horse was running that day too, and the suffragette, who was known even by her WSPU collages for using extra violent protest methods, put herself in front of the king's horse, a band with the suffragettes colors on it, latest investigations say she was trying to place that band on the horse but she did not success on her way of protest, she died for days after the Derby from the wounds. One of the best known suffragist movement's martyrs.

Her funeral was celebrated two days after her death, many people accompanied the coffin to the train station. She was buried under Mrs. Pankhurst sentence: "Deeds, not words".



(Emily Davison lying on the ground after being hit by the horse. There is a real footage of the race.)

Militancy, though, has been seen as the reason which suffragettes, on their own, could have never got the vote. By 1913, they gave more importance to militancy than to the real objective. They focused on fighting against Liberals and the government which only lead to gaining hatred instead of respect from many, not from all hence all the disrupting actions got them more public attention. The WSPU leaders thought they knew what would hurt the government the most: property, money and pleasure.

Suffragists got the constitutional basis to get the vote while suffragettes got the public support and vote.

## 4.2 WORLD WAR I

1914. The First World War starts and Emmeline Pankhurst is the first to suspend all WSPU's activities, after her many others choose to do the same. Women's role in society started to change into a much important one.

Mrs. Pankhurst stated that war was more violent and important than militancy, then, the money and efforts spent before 1914 could now be saved and used for a more relevant, at the moment of course, cause, and later on, to get their initial objective. Because what was the point of fighting to get the vote if there would be no country to vote in left. Their name even got changed from "Suffragettes" to "Britannia".

Things at the NUWSS were no different, the organization leaded by Fawcett got divided into two groups: the majority of their members choosing not to fight for suffrage and the others forming the Women's Active Service Corps.

Economy was now in their hands, men were at war and someone had to do "men jobs", that was the perfect opportunity for women to show they could do just the same as men, the perfect opportunity to stop that "household angel" perception in society.

The fact is that, just as historian Arthur Marwick said, women had been working in industry and other jobs for a years without any political recognition, but with the lack of men in the country, their efforts were now highlighted.

Indeed, no fight ever stopped completely, even with militancy being suspended, many others still fought ,in a parliamentary way, for women's suffrage, finally getting in 1916 a response from Asquith's Liberal government, a declaration of allegiance which would later on give women the vote.



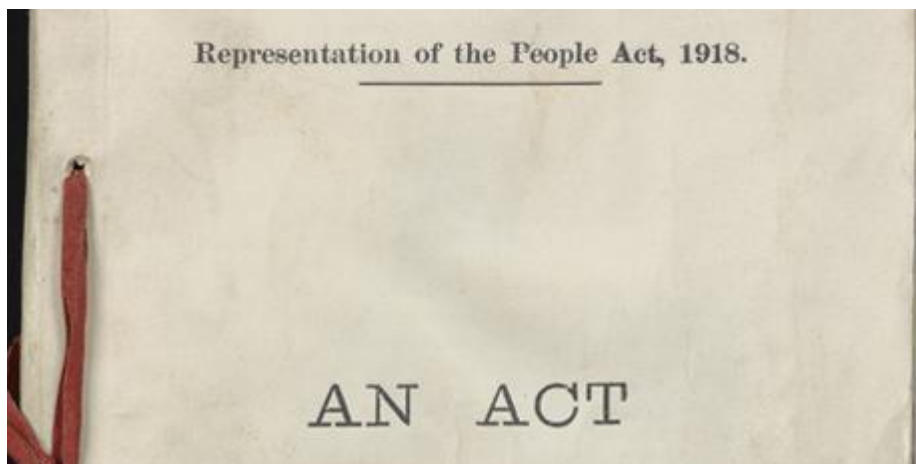
(Recruitment posters to work as munition workers)

### 4.3 1918, GETTING THE VOTE

In December of 1916, Prime Minister Asquith was replaced by David Lloyd George. During that and the next year, the government made a new Speaker's Conference, in which both parties, Liberal and Conservative, discussed a subject in front of the "speaker", who directed the conference. The subject everyone talked about was the idea of giving women an extended vote. The initial idea was to let women over 25 with properties or married to a man who had any. By 1918, the Parliament passed an act, Representation of the People Act, which stated that women over the age of 30 could vote.

Before passing it, all women leaders accepted it, seeing this advance a date to celebrate, taking in consideration the fact that about 8.4 million women got the vote that day, a 40% of the women population. Meanwhile men over 21 were now also able to vote.

(Original document. Representation of the People Act)



Flash forward to 1928. A second Representation of the People Act was passed, that time called the Equal Franchise Act, which gave women the same voting age as men, women over 21, which expanded the women who were able to vote to 15 million in the UK.



## 4.4 AFTER THE VOTE

After gaining the vote, many writers and activists stated that women not only needed the right to vote to be equal to men, they needed recognition not only on the civil aspects of life but on their educational ones too, they deserved the right to full-fill their own potential, this idea gets compacted into Virginia Woolf's idea in *A Room of One's Own*, which will also be analyzed at the end of this historical block.

After war ended, men who were in the war service wanted their jobs back, and the women who replaced them declined, which lead to an increase in UK's unemployment, adding to it that it was women's fault for wanting to be as free as men.

Society went back to separation of sexes and women, little by little, started going back to "women's work". Anyway, many women who had earned experience during war times in industry were hired for some similar jobs.

Of course, having a job gave them more independency and having been given the vote gave them confidence, which was reflected during "The Roaring Twenties" in their clothes and life styles. This decade was not only glorious in the USA. British writer Nancy Mitford defined in her works the society during that post-war years.

Here is where flappers come into page; Flappers were the definition of what a woman should never be. Their appearance was scandalous to traditional thinkers: their short skirts, short hair, not wearing a corset, clubbing and listening to jazz, a rebellious life-style to claim for women independency, or a challenge to Victorian gender roles.

There was also a reform in education which banned school leaving before the age of 14 for women, meaning that women were better educated and that gave them an increase of opportunities.



(Two flappers getting out of a club in London)

At the end of the amazing and fun 20's, came a period of depression, unemployment grew to even a 70% in some northern areas and women could not do more than work at home.

## 4.5 WORLD WAR II

By 1940, 12 women had a seat in the Parliament. And between the 40's and the 50's, the most important achievement was to work, together with the trade unions, for a way to break women stereotypes and get them inside the employment market, getting them out of their ancient family responsibilities.

In 1941, women were called up by the National Service Act, which stated that unmarried women and widows between 20-30 years old with no children, had to be on service or able to work at any time of the day, mainly to produce weapons.

Once again, women found a new world full of opportunities with the beginning of the Second World War, they had an important role just like they did during the First WW. They had to be both at home and in the home front, thing that empowered them and, to a certain point, made them feel powerful.



(women during war-time)

Make-up was important for women and lipstick was a war-time essential. Indeed women were “forced” to be elegant and glamorous during those times, “Beauty is a duty”. It had a reason, called the lipstick effect, a way of normalizing the situation and looking as if war was not affecting the nation.

Even when a woman replaced a man in any kind of job, she was paid much less than the man did, that is why propaganda was aimed at women, they were cheap. Obviously, even working in the home front, they had to work at home too. Propaganda, though, was key to the redefinition of womanhood and got them out of their home.

Of course, no women ever was a allowed to be soldier, they were just in auxiliary organizations and, later on during the war, used for dangerous missions as secret agents.

The discrimination women faced during war-time came from older soldiers or bosses who thought women could never work or fight as much or as good as a man could. Men were impressed by women though, again, women had made an impact on society roles.



(Woman working)

Shall I say that  $\frac{3}{4}$  of women were volunteers in the war forces meanwhile less than a third of men were. Despite being asked to perform the same way as men and to reach their standard , women were limited in their jobs: they got the same war training, lived under the same conditions, but never could be on the war front-line.

In the army, many women who were under really restrictive lifestyles in their home found themselves in a liberating place, just like unhappy married women, that is the reason why the numbers in volunteering increased, the other reason was, as in World War I, patriotism.

At the end of the war, same thing that happened during WWI, women had to go back to their lives and to the man-leader society.

Married women had to leave the front sooner so they could have their home ready for their soldier husband.

## 4.6 A FAIR WORLD

After the Second World War ended in 1945, women started thinking about having all rights they deserved as the individuals they were.

Working outside of their household, like mentioned before, got them to an state of independence and power they had not felt before, and feeling that empowered way got them to see it was not fair for them to work as many hours as a man, earn less, and work at home for free too: they asked for shared house chores and raised payment, or also called, a renegotiation of the old order, changing society roles.



(Ketchup advertisement which clearly shows women's role of submissive and weak. 1950's)

In education, in 1944 the Education Act was approved, this got public school from primary to secondary free. This might have seen an improvement as far as we can read, yet when the kids were 11, there were quotas to enter the "grammar school" which lead families to give their boy children an education before girls, and when more girls than boys started to pass the exams, around 1955, the government limited the number of girls per class.

Discontent and the energy to break society roles and the image of Home Angel and Perfect Wife, got together with the American Feminist Leaders, to the second wave of feminism, the 60's.

## 4.7 SECOND WAVE: WOMEN'S LIBERATION MOVEMENT

The second wave of feminism started in the United States in the 60's. Both, England and the USA, had been leaders together during the first wave of feminism yet, together with the pacifist movement, which started in the US because of the Vietnam war, these feminists started talking about freedom for women, or women's liberation, which ranged from sexuality taboo subjects to family organization ones.

When talking about the beginning of the second wave, I must comment Betty Friedan's book, *The Feminine Mystique*, which is now considered as the opening to this era. In this book, this American feminist and activist, wrote about how women who took the housewife role tended to be sad and unwilling to do something different with their lives, despite being married, having all material benefits and having children.

In the book, we can also find all types of criticism towards the way the state was formed, obviously in a way in which women could not live as free as a man.



(Betty Friedan. "Mother of the movement")

By 1964, the first important and revolutionary change had been made in the US, with the Equal Pay Act in 1963 and in 1966 with the foundation of the NOW, National Organization for Women, under Friedan's leadership.

Yet the movement did not get to the UK until 1967, influenced by the US and Germany liberal ideas. In Britain women still married at a really young age and tended to have large families, and then in 1967 the Abortion Act was passed, which gave a little more freedom of sexuality and choice to women.

Economically, women were still tied to their husband or father or brother, a man. They could not buy things as such as an apartment or even a fridge without their permission.

Things are not much different when talking about salaries; women, by 1970, earned the 54% of what a man earned. And then in 1968 a group of working women in the Ford plant in Dagenham went on a strike for equal pay.



(Women demonstrating against sexual inequality. 1972)

Later that same year, an important newspaper, The Observer, after studying women's position in the country's economy, said that the country was wasting a massive number of women abilities and almost 4 millions of them were under slavery work. Add to it the fact that women earned 5 shillings per hour, which now would be 2.57 British Pounds or 2.8 Euros nowadays.

Thankfully, the sacrifice of the women in the Dagenham plant, had in 1970 a reward. The act that had been passed in the USA in 1963, was now passed in the UK, the Equal Pay Act. And five years later another important act was passed too, the Sex Discrimination Act, which gave protection to both, women and men, in all social aspects: marriage, employment, education...

In 1970, just like every year, the Miss World contest was held in London. That year, a large group of women threw flour bombs to the stage to demonstrate against the objectification of women.

Two years later, a group of four women launched a feminist magazine, Spare Rib, its objective was to reach all women and share life experiences about their oppressive life-styles in all aspects.



(A cover of Spare Rib)

Throughout these years, some WLM, Women's Liberation Movement, conventions had been taking place all around the UK.

Rape was a really discussed topic; marches to demand justice for rape survivors were made. Other discussed subjects in those national conventions were marriage aggressions, male dominance in politics and public life, lesbianism and the right to self-define your own sexuality, legal and financial independency, job opportunities and education, and mainly, the need of liberation.

Therapy centers for women had to be created together with many Rape Crisis centers. Rape and aggression were common things to see during the 70's, and women trying to free themselves from the way society structured their lives of submissive and loyal wives was not a thing that all men liked, thing that led to a polarization of thoughts: In favor or against feminism.

In 1979, Margaret Thatcher became the first women to be Prime Minister, also called "The Iron Lady", hence her hard politics and her 11 years in her work place, those years got her to be the longest serving Prime Minister (1979-1990).





## 4.8 BEGINNING OF THE THIRD WAVE. THE 90's

The Third Wave starts at the beginning of the 90's with the feeling of failure from the Second Wave, which could not get as many objectives as initially promised. One of this wave's objectives is to redefine what is considered to be a feminist.

During the last decades (60's, 70's, 80's) feminism had not included, as hoped for, women from many colors or nationalities, so, this last wave we are living in, corrects the other's mistake by including women with a diverse set of identities and non-privileged women too.

In 1989 the term "intersectional" is embraced as another feminism characteristic. That is why we could talk about the Third Wave as a continuation of the Second Wave.

Just like many revolutions and new movements from the ending of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, this one started with Generation X women, women born during the post-World War II baby boom (Early 60's-70's), Second Wave's daughters.

In 1997 the Third Wave Foundation was created in the US, Rebecca Walker, daughter of Alice Walker, feminist and writer, was one of the founders.



(Picture of members of the Third Wave Foundation. Rebecca Walker is the second starting on the right)

These feminists, saw the problems which patriarchy forms: sexist, racial and classism barriers, which divide the world into two: Lucky and unlucky. There is no way you can change or choose your skin color, your gender or sexuality or your family background. And that is exactly what these movement fights

against. It fights against the fact that someone is judged and margined or even bullied for something they cannot choose.

One way to change society's mind, they thought, must be to change their ideas on terms such as "womanhood", "beauty", "sexuality", "femininity and masculinity", ... Here is where the movement takes "women liberation" to a whole new level:

Take the fact that we are mind-shaped into what our gender has to give to society and what society has to give to our gender

- Example: we have to give birth and society has to be shaped so we can give birth.

Now, still not forgetting the other fact, think about this other one: one should be free to determine what he or she gives to society and society should be able to adapt to her or his demands.

- Example: A woman does not want to have a child and society should be ,in no way possible, in between her choice: she should not be judged for not wanting to give birth.

## 4.8.1 ART

Of course, during this era we are still living, feminism travelled to art.

First, the music movement: Riot grrrl, which was in the punk-rock styles and had its origins in Washington DC, the US. These bands sang about all kind of topics: from rape to racism or sexuality. Some lyrics from one of the most iconic bands who followed the movement, Bikini Kill, say:

*“ Don't need you to say we're cute  
Don't need you to say we're alright  
Don't need your atti-fuckin-tude boy  
Don't need your kiss goodnight*

*We don't need you, we don't need you  
Us girls don't need you*

*Don't need you to tell us we're good  
Don't need you to say we suck  
Don't need your protection  
Don't need your dick to fuck*

*We don't need you, we don't need you  
Us whores don't need you*

*Does it scare you that we don't need you?  
Does it scare you boy that we don't need you?  
We don't need you, we don't need you  
Us girls we don't need you “*

Now-a-days, we could relate it to grunge music.

(Picture of the Riot Grrrl band Bikini Kill)



Burn your bikini

The next important Third Wave's art movement is The Guerrilla Girls. These women, since 1985, have remained anonymous by wearing gorilla masks. Their art consist in culture jamming: they disrupt media culture and their cultural institutions with billboards, posters, books and public appearances. They also, in the art field, fight for women artists liberation.



(Recent picture of one of "The Guerrilla Girls" demonstrations in Washington DC)

As said before, this third wave meant freedom of choice for women, mainly in the sexuality field. This power and level of independence and women pride, led to iconic females like Madonna, women who showed power, and even new television series in which women took the main role, such as *Sex and the City*.

In television program for children, new female roles appeared too, sadly seen as a way of merchandising, but, on the bright side, a way to get to children and show them women are as strong as a man is, with characters like: *Mulan*, *Dora the Explorer*,...



( Girl Power used as merchandise. Recent picture.)

## 5. THE XXI CENTURY

Feminism now-a-days has become a creature with different faces, feminists can have different opinions on the same topics and there is no opinion better than another one. Feminist opinions change depending on the cultural background, what is called, angles of feminism, studying society and the movement from different points of view, that is why, now, feminism requires an open mind.

Going back to the Suffragettes, when the whole movement followed Mrs. Pankhurst's ideas, we can see how we do not have an established leader, meaning that there as a many voices as feminists in the world.

Although the XXI century is considered to be part of the Third Wave, objectives have been renewed within the years: Feminism wants to reach gender equality in a society with no patriarchy, and education on its own is not able to change society, that is exactly why feminism aims for a social revolution. This is, despite different feminist voices, feminism's bottom line objective.

*"The revolution will be feminist or it won't be"*

This famous quote is actually Spanish, born in 2011 in the feminist group *Indignados*.

Feminism is seen as a way of knowledge, if we understand how our antecessors lived, how oppressive society was in those days, we will be able to see how all types of differences between the two sexes come from centuries of inequality and it has turned into our cultural background. Years of repressing women's identity and autonomy have resulted in economic, job opportunities, ..., differences.

A much discussed topic these days is also language. Language is a cultural trait and reflects how society sees some aspects of daily life.

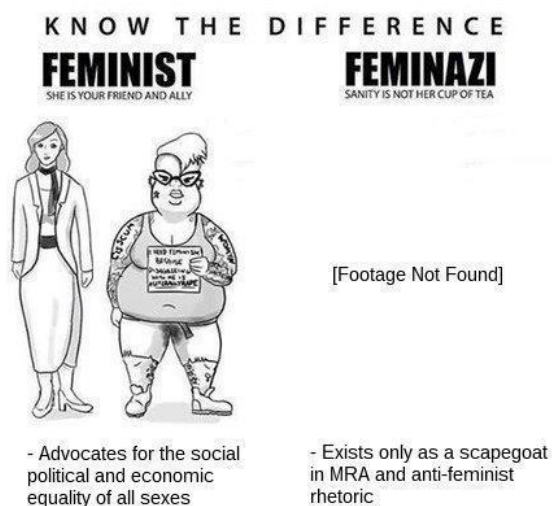
For instance, going back once again to the word "*suffragette*", as explained at the beginning of the project, the suffix *-ette* is used to despise those women who fought for their civil rights. This can be related together with the so-used term "feminazi", which some people use to laugh or attack some feminists.

As a curiosity, going back to the origins of this last term, I will remark it was first used in 1992 by Rush Limbaugh, a radio talk show host who reaches many Americans every day, also a President Trump supporter, and it was used to attack the feminist or women who wanted to be able to abort.

Many important dictionaries are adding "feminazi" 's definition as a neologism with this: Radical Feminist. (As stated by the Real Academy of Spanish Language)

The Oxford Dictionary says a feminazi is : a committed feminist or a strong-willed woman.

By this definition, all feminists should be feminazis.



( Drawing which shows how feminazis, as what its definition says, do not exist )

Anyway, this example is nothing compared to the oppressive vocabulary women are subjected to in our society day-a-day. Insults are something we hear everyday, as an example: pussy, bitch,..., the majority of our culture's insults have feminine connotations, another proof that stereotypes are still present today.

Society still suppresses women's potential by stating that their intelligence, strength and ability is inferior. And all these are some things that feminism wants to heal, changing oppressing vocabulary is one way out of social oppression.

Another point are the things we listen to everywhere, the things the media and internet expand. We have all heard a woman judge another woman for what she was wearing, or for having intimate relations with as much men as she desires. The fact that it comes from a woman is the XXI century's surprise to feminism. We got used to men slut, fat, thin- shaming us, accusing of provoking with the way we dress, victim-blaming, and even feminist-shaming us, but why would a woman want to join the oppressor? That is utterly the media's fault.

Stereotypes come from the media: the way we should dress, or what would be: the code we must follow to be what society wants us to be, which expands to all aspects of life.

## 5.1 THE QUEER THEORY

The third wave's main characteristic, though, is as mentioned before, intersectionality. And with that comes one of the star social theories in debate.

If feminism accepts all races, it is obvious it accepts all genres and sexualities.

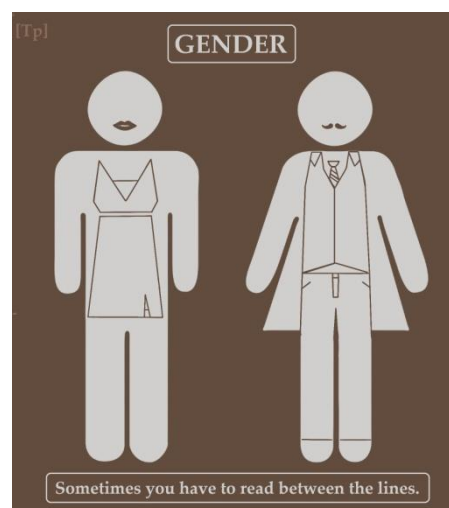
Here is where the Queer theory comes into page.

A synonym for "queer" would be, for example, "strange", as in someone who does not follow society's expectations: someone who is not heterosexual or cisgender in the sexuality matter.

Although this theory might seem complex and difficult to understand, it is not, it is just that many minds forming society still have not got used to freedom of sex and sexuality.

For that, the theory says: Imagine we are all born without a specific gender, without society's hands having touched and influenced our minds, yet.

When we grow older, we start feeling attracted towards a gender, or maybe both, but society has two roles: men like women, women like men, and that is seen as the "normal" thing, what makes people who do not follow what is called to be "normal", bad or different or even feeling as if there was no place for them in society.



Teresa de Lauretis created this term in 1991, inside her sociological work *Queer Theory: Lesbian and Gay Sexualities*. Where three important points are made.

The Queer Theory states that heterosexuality should not be seen as the unique base of all sexual formations, lesbian and gay studies go together not in separate ways, and that race should not be able to shape our sexual tendency.

An opposite term for Queer theory is Heteronormativity: which promotes heterosexuality as the “normal” sexual lifestyle. Here is where the following phrase came from:

- “We wouldn’t have to ‘come out’ if it wasn’t assumed that we’re straight to begin with ”-

The only reason why feminism goes together with this theory is because, apart from supporting equal rights of all kinds, women’s oppression is, to a hundred percent, related to the LGBT+ community’s and this familiarity and fighting motivation forms a tight gap between both movements and puts them together.



## 5.2 SURVEY CONCLUSIONS

Through my survey, which was responded by 49 people, I could see what people, varying from different age ranges, thought about modern feminism and its affect on society.

Something I have to say before starting the analysis is that more women than men answered the survey.

There were some key questions, the answers to those questions got some conclusions out of my analysis:

The majority of the people who answered said they considered themselves feminists and half of them knew the standard definition of the term, from that majority, some said they were “a little bit feminist”, which does not make sense. The people who said they were not feminists were all men.

The fact that many said that social media makes feminism, both, improve and worsen, gets me to say they are right: some things found in the media can be edited by the user’s beliefs, how reliable can be the definition of “feminism” if it is written by a sexist user? This is what got me to realize that social media’s worst enemy is the anonymous.

Also, the fact that racism’s fight is a characteristic of modern feminism is still unknown to many, almost half of the people answering said racism is not a feminism matter.

Another almost half said that men are accepted and respected in the feminist movement, and they accepted that their answer may be subjected to their age or generation. This was another mid-question, most people said that feminism’s definition may vary during the centuries yet its objectives are the same: liberating people, in its origin women.

Few people had ever used an offensive term as “feminazi”, and they used it mainly because of lack of knowledge or to laugh at someone.

Literature is, to the majority of people, a good way of knowing more about feminism, but some others said that there are better ways to do so.

What got a 100% on the answer yes was that feminism is still needed nowadays and that there are still a lot of things to accomplish before reaching utter equality.

## 6. JANE EYRE, Charlotte Brontë

### 6.1 Context and Biography

Charlotte Brontë published her work on 1847 under a man's name, Currer Bell, not even the first wave of feminism had started when this woman broke society's rules: first she did not give her name but, after her works took off, she presented herself as a woman, which gave her hatred and a bad name, how could a woman have such talent?

It is called proto-feminism, individualism of a feminine character in front of a world that does not treat her right, followed by many social criticism elements. The novel itself was called to be "anti-Christian": it questioned society, from educational organizations, family, social classes to Christianity's power.

The novel questions contemporary political issues such as the relationship between Britain and its colonies, women's position in society, accorded marriage, and impossibility of making dreams come true, accepting reality.

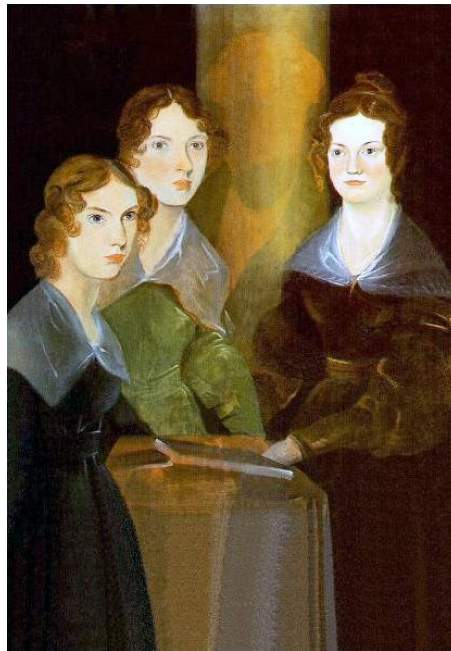
I should remark how in the XIX century, women were not supposed to know how to even write or read, so this is more than a miracle.

## **AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY: Charlotte Brontë**

Charlotte Brontë was born in Thornton, England, in 1816, her being the third daughter of five. Her mother died when she was only 5, in 1821, and her aunt Elisabeth, her mother's sister, helped her father, who was a clergyman, with his child's education. Anyway, she and her three sisters, but not her brother, were sent to a clergy school.

Her eldest sisters became ill and, both, Charlotte and her youngest sister, the also known writer, Emily were sent home after they both died from tuberculosis because of the poor conditions in their school.

Right when they got back to Haworth, their father gave her brother Branwell a box full of little soldiers to play with. The four siblings while playing with the soldiers created two imaginary worlds, Angria and Gondal, of which they started writing stories.



(Anne, Emily and Charlotte painted by their brother Branwell, who appears as a shadow between them)

In 1831 she had to quit school to go back home and teach her sisters. Four years later she went back to that school as a governess. Both her sisters later studied at her school, Roe Head, where she had met during her student years her life-long friends, Ellen Nussey and Mary Taylor.

During that lonely period of her life, like she had done before since she was 13, she focused on writing poems. In 1833, though, her stories changed from

fantasy to being more realistic, and for a while, she compared her reality to the amazing stories that happened in her childhood's imaginary world.

She worked as a governess for two different families between 1838 and 1841, finally going again back home and opening her own school together with her sister, first they had to reach some necessities. Her brother, being a man, had many more studying and working opportunities.



(Portrait by George Richmond, 1850)

In 1842, Charlotte and Emily decided to go to Brussels to complete their studies, having to visit Haworth again after their aunt died, Emily stayed and Charlotte left to Brussels again, where she fell in love with Constantin Héger, a married man and her teacher. Letters from her to him have been found yet no reply from Héger has ever been.

Some years later, in 1844, they tried to open the school they had been working hard for yet it resulted to be an utter failure.

Must I say that all her novels are based on real life experiences and moments of Charlotte's life, which I will remark during my analysis of *Jane Eyre*.

After the school opening failure, Charlotte found some poems from her sister Emily and the three sisters decided to publish their poems, self-financed, obviously under a pseudonym, hence only men could write and have their works published. Charlotte's pseudonym was Currer Bell.

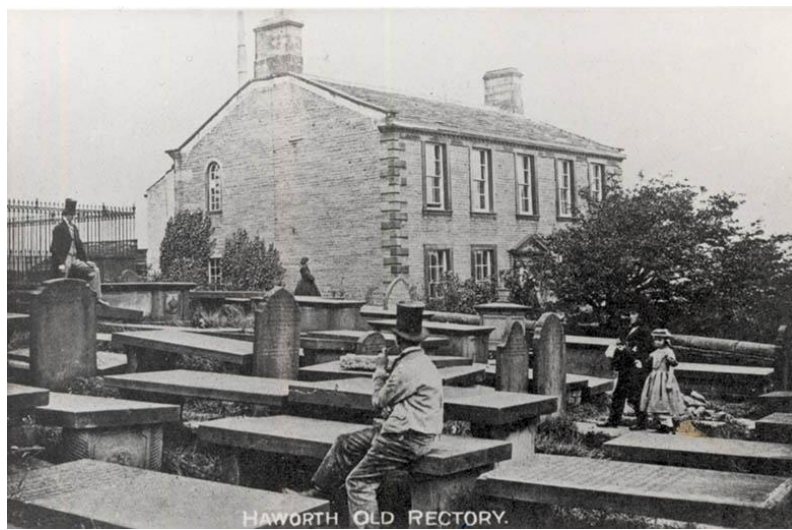
Her first novel was *The Professor*, which called a publishing house's attention, Smith, Elder and Co, but was not published at that moment.

In 1847, Charlotte, always under her “nom de plume”, send the manuscript from *Jane Eyre: An Autobiography* , to the publishing house.

The selling of the book increased even more than the initial selling after the book was named improper because it was suspiciously written by a woman.

In 1848, she started writing *Shirley*, her second novel, but had to stop after her family suffered three deaths in a period of 8 months.

First to die was Branwell, who had started a life of alcohol excesses and addiction. After his brother’s funeral, Emily got sick, finding his death months later after suffering from pulmonary tuberculosis. Anne died in 1849 from the same disease.



(Haworth. Bronte’s household soon after Mr. Brontë’s death)

As a way of grieving, she focused once again in writing, finally finishing her second novel, talking about industry and the role of women in society.

After the publishing, she showed herself as Currer Bell, not leaving Haworth for more than a few weeks because of her father, she formed an intimate friendship circle in London: The sociologist Harriet Martineau, the writer Mrs. Gaskell and Thackeray.

Her last published novel was *Villette*, in 1853. Its main character, Lucy Snow, was criticized for not being enough feminine: she wanted independence and to end the repression society put on her as a woman.

In 1854, after two years of self-doubt and after declining him one time, she married Arthur Bell Nichols, who had worked together with her father.

Mr. Brontë was against the marriage at first too but accepted in the end after seeing his daughter was sure about it.

One year later, after being happier than she had ever been in a new way, she got pregnant but died some months after, in 1855, from what many biographers said, many causes: dehydration, tuberculosis, typhus, morning sickness...

Two years after her death, in 1857, her first novel, *The Professor*, was published.

Elizabeth Gaskell, Mrs. Gaskell, published a biography about Charlotte and showed only the things about her life which were accepted by society. The discovery of the letters sent to Héger were something she could not have said in her time hence she but have seen impure and as a devil.



( Charlotte at home with Mr. Brontë)

## 6.2 CHARACTERS

Jane Eyre: The main character and also the narrator. We see the events through her thoughts and eyes. She is an orphan, intelligent and honest, and that gives her strength to overcome the oppression and inequality of society. That, together with her morality: justice and human dignity, keep her to be her own self in a society that will not let her be herself. Her childhood was a nightmare too; she had to live with her aunt and cousins, who did not like her. She also looks for a full-filling relationship, not for money. Her personality is a complete challenge to the Victorian Era, she breaks all the statements.

Edward Rochester: He will maintain a tight relationship with Jane. He is wealthy and breaks those social statements in order to get together with her, a poor girl. He is a tormented character, someone who during his youth made some mistakes that still torment him to these days, his marriage with another crazy woman being one of those. This tormented and regretful man full of secrets will be the main character of the novel's suspense, Jane's true love.

Aunt and cousins; Sarah Reed, John Reed, Eliza Reed and Georgiana Reed:

They all despise Jane and mistreat her. Her aunt dies alone and unloved. Her cousins are spoiled and envious of each other.

Bessie Lee: She's a maid at her aunt's house, who tells her stories and loves and takes care of her when no one else does. She is one of the positive influences in Jane's life.

Mr. Lloyd: The apothecary that gets Jane to go to Lowood as a way of getting away from her horrible family, and tells Lowood's manager the truth about Jane, she is no demon.

People at Lowood:

- Mr. Brocklehurst: He's the manager of Lowood. He represents Christianity's bad reputation: he starves the girls at his school yet his family lives with all kinds of luxury.
- Helen Burns: She is Jane's friend at Lowood, the school where Jane is sent. She is smart and does not follow the material world, she looks for something else.
- Mrs. Temple: Teacher at Lowood, she is responsible of the girls living better, she is kind and generous and helpful and maintains a tight relationship with Helen and Jane.
- Miss Miller: she is the teacher for the youngest girls at Lowood.
- Miss Scatcherd: She always humiliates Jane's friend, Helen. She is another teacher at Lowood.
- Miss Smith: Teacher at Lowood, she teaches how to sew.

- Miss Gryce: Jane's roommate when she teaches at Lowood

People at Thornfield:

- Mrs. Fairfax: Housekeeper at Thornfield, she is kind with Jane.
- Blanche Ingram: She pretends to love Rochester when she only wants the fortune. She treats Jane badly. She is one of the materialist feminine figures in the novel.
- Adèle Varens: She is Jane's pupil at Thornfield. She is from France and, at first, seems self-centered and seems to show French characteristics, but, turns out to be a great companion to Jane.
- Céline Varens: Adèle's mother. She was Rochester's mistress and she abandons her daughter with Rochester after running away with an Italian musician.
- Bertha Rochester: Rochester's crazy wife, she is closed up in the house's attic. She is foreign too.

(It seems as if the author had anglocentric prejudices, we can see that reflected in all those foreign characters which show mean and uneducated characteristics. With Blanche, for example, she sees her as a good influence after she has got English education, "good education". Pure racism, but it was accepted during the Colonial era, immigration was badly seen.)

- Richard Mason: Bertha's brother. He interrupts Jane's and Rochester's wedding to defend his sister.
- Grace Pool: She is Bertha's keeper at Thornfield, in the attic. She has a problem with alcohol which will lead to problems with Bertha at Thornfield.

St. John: He tries to force her into marrying him but she rejects him. He wants to live from religion, as a missionary.

Diana and Mary Rivers: St. John's sisters. They are independent and intelligent women.



## 6.3 STRUCTURE

This novel has a total of 38 chapters which I will divide into 5 different parts:

### **PART 1: JANE AT GATESHEAD (FROM CHAPTER 1 TO 4)**

Jane Eyre is an orphan, after her parents die, she is sent to live with her uncle and aunt at Gateshead, but her uncle dies too and, her aunt, not keeping the promise of taking care of Jane as if she was her daughter, mistreats, together with her children, the 10 year-old girl.

In the first chapter we can already see the differences between genres and classes, as John, her cousin, hits her for reading a book and for being poor or not decent enough to live with them. She gets grounded after defending herself, she is sent to the Red room.

The red colour, also, has a meaning, as the curtains behind the place where she is hiding to read, are red too. It means fire and strength, something that Jane will show throughout the novel.

The book she reads is meaningful too. She is reading Bewick, a book about birds. She uses reading as a method of isolating herself, as a way of creating a protected zone or bubble.

In the second chapter, we see how Jane fights for the servants not to put her inside the room. When she is there, she starts thinking about the reasons of her being an outcast and why her aunt did not keep the promise she made her husband. After being scared of her imagination, she faints and wakes up in her own room. Bessie, the kind servant of the house, is in front of her, together with the apothecary. Bessie takes care of her and the man, suggests she gets sent to school, something that really excites Jane, not only because she wants to get away but because she wants to learn too.

Things to remark here: one would be the fact that Jane gets pictured as John's, his cousin's, servant. She sees school as a form of achieving freedom, in two different ways: no need of money, no need to be a man.

Another remarkable trait is how Jane is not seen as a beautiful girl and that immediately closes some doors and opportunities for her, here, she is criticizing how women are almost useless if they are not beautiful or follow society's standards.

In the first three chapters, we can see how the narrator is an older Jane talking about her childhood and even feeling regret, love or anger at some of the events she explains.

The fourth chapter is important as Jane's change of direction in life starts to happen. After months of wanting to leave for school, she meets together with her aunt and a man called Mr. Brocklehurst in the sitting-room. There she finds out the man is the headmaster of the school she will be attending. She describes him as stone hard or a black pillar, as if he was wearing a fake mask, as mentioned before: he is the bad reputation of Christianity incarnated, inhumanity.

She is questioned about hell and sin, and she proves her uninterested Christianity. Her aunt takes advantage of that and lies about her, saying she is a liar and a bad girl and that she needs help.

After the man leaves, Jane defends herself in front of her aunt from all the lies she told about her, and her aunt leaves the room, looking defeated.

At the end of the chapter we can see the tight union between Bessie and Jane, and how much the maid loves the girl.

In these four first chapters, we are able to get to know Jane's personality and thoughts. She has a lot of imagination and the red colour is her definition.

## **PART 2: JANE AT LOWOOD (5-10)**

In chapter five, Jane's departure is explained, how none of her cousins are worried or excited about her leaving and how she does not worry about that. The girl is happy about leaving far from her family. The only person she will miss from Gateshead is Bessie.

She arrives to her new school, Lowood, which is based on the school Charlotte attended together with her sisters, where her two eldest sisters died from typhus.

She describes the coldness of those walls and how the school looks like a labyrinth.

In this chapter, two important women are presented, first, Helen Burns, who will become her friend despite their book likes being different and their way of looking at life being different too. Helen focuses on deep things such as heaven and happiness, and rejects material pleasures. After being humiliated by one of the teachers, Miss Scatcherd, she acts neutral, accepting her punishment without complaining, that is something that bothers Jane as in contrast of her own character and personality.

This character, Helen, is based on Charlotte's sister Maria, who is said to have been intelligent and a role model to her.

The second important figure in this chapter is Miss Temple, the teacher that is seen by Helen and Jane as a heroine, she is the opposite from their headmaster, and, after seeing how poor the girls' lunch is, she gets them decent food.

In chapter six and seven, Helen and Jane get to know each other better, contrasting, like mentioned before, their life philosophies.

The headmaster visits the school and humiliates Miss Temple in front of his daughter and his wife, who are really presentable and well-dressed, even over-dressed.

Jane drops her slate, where they write on during lessons, and the headmaster remembers he told her aunt he would make sure everyone in the school knew what kind of girl she is. Placing her in the same position she was in while living with her aunt and cousins.

She has to be on her stool while the man humiliates her, and stay there for the rest of the day. Only Helen is capable of making Jane feel better, so every time she walks by her stool, she smiles, in support, at her.

In chapter eight, Miss Temple, Helen and Jane become closer friends.

After the punishment the headmaster gives Jane is over, she feels as if she had been destroyed by a much higher power, a man, which shows once again inequality of sexes.

Miss Temple listens to Jane's story and believes in her more than in her aunt's words, so she asks the apothecary who attended Jane after the Red Room punishment, Mr. Lloyd, for help. If Mr. Lloyd verifies Jane's version, she will make sure the headmaster knows the truth.

The two girls and their teacher spend time together at tea time, and they share knowledge, something that leaves Jane in awe, as she did not know her friend was so smart.

Mr. Lloyd verifies Jane's version of the story and she is free to live at Lowood with no lies oppressing her.

In this chapter we can see the difference between the headmaster's religion and Helen's religion. Helen is always described by Jane as an angelical figure, more soul than body comes out of her.

In chapter nine we can see the splendor of the difference between the material and the spiritual worlds. Spring arrives in Lowood, but with it comes the typhus and other illnesses. A number of forty-five girls get sick, one of them being Helen, and Jane does not realize how bad is the situation until the nurse tells her her friend is about to die. She had been playing outside the school, where the healthy girls were allowed. The day of Helen's death, she sneaks into Miss

Temple's room, where Helen is resting, and holds her friend until she dies. Helen says she is happy to leave this world and to leave before going through more suffering, she dies from consumption, tuberculosis, not from typhus like Charlotte's sisters did.

Helen looks to God as a father, she does not have a father in the material world, she does not have anyone who will miss her. Helen's last words ask Jane not to leave her alone, which induces us to think that she feels sadness to leave her, no one else but her.

Chapter ten continues eight years after chapter nine.

Jane stays at Lowood for eight years more after her friend's death, six as a student and two more as a teacher. During those years, the building had to be rebuilt hence many students had died the same year as Helen, because of the poor conditions. The headmaster was replaced by a much honorable man and working and living conditions there had improved.

But, after eight years of not going outside Lowood, Jane wants to feel free, liberated. Her only friend at Lowood, Miss Temple, had married and left the school too. So she starts looking for a job as a governess. She gets a fast reply from Thornfield.

Before leaving, she is visited by Bessie, her aunt's maid. She tells her about her cousins and how none of them have had a better future, their lives have gone downhill since Jane left.

In this dialogue, we see how society expects a woman to be, lady-like. Bessie is surprised at how Jane looks like a woman: polite, tidy, responsible, educated,...

And tells her about her uncle John, who had visited her aunt in order to find Jane.

Her cousins, though, still think they are superior to Jane. Here the debate comes into place: is it fair for a woman to be wealthy depending on her surname? Jane has studied for years and now she is educated and smarter than her cousins, yet her cousins have more money just thanks to their surname.

### **PART 3: JANE AT THORNFIELD (11-27)**

Jane meets Mrs. Fairfax, the elderly housekeeper of the Thornfield house. Mr. Rochester is not home, but she meets the little girl she will be teaching, Adèle, who is from France and, just like her gone mother, she dances and sings.

This is a new status and place for Jane, she is entering the upper-class world, her bedroom is the best one she has ever got, and there is difference between the servants, for example, Mrs. Fairfax loves talking to the other servants but she cannot talk too much or else she will lose her authority.

About Adèle, Jane finds a challenge in her. She has earned her mother's French modals and that can be seen even in the song that she sings to her.

She wants to teach her into English modals and morals.

The first mysterious encounter happens when she hears a disturbing noise coming from the upper flats of the house and Mrs. Fairfax tells her it is one of the servants.

In the next chapter, chapter twelve, Jane finds her life too lonely, too sad: she has never seen the city, she has never spoken to a man in a romantic way, she is young and closed up in the house. To this, the housekeeper tells her it would be nice for her to go outside for a walk.

By accident, Jane makes a man's horse fall, with the icy ground not helping, and she offers her help to the man who has just fallen to the ground, her helping the man will establish a feeling of gender equality.

Once she goes back to the house, she sees the man she just helped is Mr. Rochester.

In the thirteenth chapter, Rochester and Jane get to know each other.

Rochester states that Jane is a fairy after questioning her about her childhood, parents and education. He can feel related to her about the not being loved and this will be one of their first unions.

He, though, falls in love with Jane's paintings, he calls them elfish and fairy too, and it looks as if the paintings had had some kind of power over him, or maybe it is the same woman who has had an impact on his thoughts.

In this same chapter, the housekeeper tells her more about his master. How he was put into a difficult position when his father gave his brother the house and he left. Finally coming back nine years before that, after his brother's death.

In chapter fourteen and fifteen, Rochester and Jane maintain a deep and harsh conversation in which Rochester accepts his past of bad decisions, one of them the affair with Adèle's mother, a French dancer. He is not afraid of breaking

society's conceptions, as he proved by having several sexual encounters and trusting Jane, not a woman of his status.

He explains how after Adèle's mother abandoned her, he felt pitiful and adopted her, never thinking of her as his daughter. Giving her an education and living a peaceful life is his way of starting a new life in which he can renew and cure or recover himself from his past.

During chapter fifteen, another horrible encounter takes place: at night, she hears a demoniac laugh going past her room, she gets out of her room and sees smoke coming out of Mr. Rochester's room. She saves him and he asks her not to tell anyone and blames the almost murder on Grace Poole, that servant Mrs. Fairfax mentioned to her, and he excuses himself saying he has to go to the attic.

The next day, chapter sixteen, Jane is mad at Rochester. She finds Grace and she looks peaceful, as if nothing had happened, and this bothers her even more.

She finds out Rochester has left to attend a party where a beautiful lady will be, Blanche Ingram. By the jealousy she feels, she recognizes her feelings towards Rochester and tries to hide them behind her paintings by picturing Blanche more beautifully than herself.

In the next chapter, she finds out Grace earns a lot more than the other servants and sees that there is something going on in the house.

Rochester gets home with a party of upper-class people, Blanche Ingram included. The woman looks at her with disgust, and in a mocking way.

Both, Adèle and Jane, have to attend the dances every night. The first night, after hearing rude comments about her position in the house, she wants to get away from the party but is stopped by Rochester who, when he sees tears in her eyes, lets her go. From then on, Rochester starts feeling love towards her too but has to keep his appearance and act as if he were attracted to Blanche, who only wants his money.

What we see in the next chapters is what a marriage is about: the woman wants wealth, the man wants status. This is something Jane is totally against, as for her it is all about feelings and true emotion.

In chapter 21, Jane is asked to go back to her aunt's house so she can be there when she dies. Her aunt does not want to fix things despite Jane trying hard and even blaming herself for everything. She finds in her cousins good hearts, and they start to confide in her. Before dying, her aunt gives her a letter from his uncle John, from three years earlier, saying that he wants to leave Jane his fortune. The conclusion of this chapter is that her aunt house has not changed throughout the years, yet she has.

After her aunt's death, she stays there to help her cousins with their respective departures, one to London the other to France.

When they are gone, she goes back to Rochester, stating that her home is with him. She says that, despite all her assumptions on Rochester marrying Blanche, nothing happens, there is no wedding. She feels loved in the house and missed all the people there, she feels as if she had never loved someone as much as she loves Rochester, and he looks happier too.

In chapter twenty-three, things get intense when Rochester tells Jane he will be marrying Blanche and that she will need to leave the house. Then, they both accept their strong feelings for one another and he proposes marriage to her, stating that he does not care about society because God approves of their union. They are seen by the housekeeper, who does not approve of them being together.

In the two next chapters, Jane and Rochester look the happiest that have ever been. Everything seems to go perfect, the wedding is all planned, until one night, Jane wakes up to a woman trying her wedding veil on. When she gasps at the scene in front of her, the woman approaches her and rips the veil into two.

Rochester defends the situation saying it might have been Grace in a drunken state.

He wants to protect her at all cost, confusing that feeling with wanting to make her dependant. From then on she sleeps with Adèle.

During their wedding day, once again, everything seems to go to perfection, they are about to get married when Mason, appears. He announces that Rochester is already married, to Bertha, who is hiding in the attic.

This destroys Jane as the pure woman she was, and, for once in her life, she goes back to praying, she trusts in God because trusting herself does not feel enough.

In chapter twenty-seven, we learn about Rochester's relationship with Bertha. They were put together because of the money she was bound to earn. Her mother and her brother suffered from mental illnesses and, some years later, she started to suffer from them too. She confused lust with love when he first met her, and money with feelings. This mistake still haunts him but, Jane cannot be with him feeling as if she was a precious possession to him, so, listening to her mother's voice at night, she leaves Thornfield.

#### **PART 4: THE RIVERS (28-35)**

After running away she is completely poor, no one helps her and she has to sleep in the woods for days. After some days of walking, she finds a house, where she is taken care of for more than four days, she stays there, with the Rivers, for more days, and St. John, the man in the house, promises her he will get a job for her.

Some days later she has completely recovered from her fever, and St. John has found her a poor job as a teacher for poor girls in their village. She has her own small place but ends up asking herself if that is what she needed and really wanted. She expected more for herself, and she questions herself how would be like going back to Rochester.

Some months later, Jane feels better about her work, she is starting to see improvement in the girls she teaches. The focus is on St. John, who is in love with a wealthy girl, Rosamond, who is in love with him too, but does not want to lose his dream of being a religious missionary in order to marry her.

In chapter thirty-three, Jane finds wealth and family and love at the same time.

Having lied about her surname, St. John discovers her true identity. Everyone was looking for her because she has earned twenty thousand pounds from his death uncle John. She also finds out that St. John and her two sisters are her cousins, and she divides her earnings into four parts.

Next chapter, it is Christmas and Jane helps St. John get the house ready for when his sisters arrive. He, also, tells her he will be leaving in six weeks to his mission and that he wants her to accompany him as his wife. This she rejects immediately, knowing she is still in love with Rochester.

He says that if she rejected him she would be rejecting God, which is a clear misuse of religion.

She overcomes the power the man is using on her and makes her mind up: she will go back to Rochester.



## **PART 5: BACK TO ROCHESTER (37-38)**

Jane desperately looks for Rochester, she finds out Thornfield is in ruins, it seems Bertha burned everything down and committed suicide after. Leaving Rochester with no sight and without a hand.

She finds his residence, in Ferndean where he lives with two of his old servants.

She goes there and one of the servants opens the door.

She offers to take the water to his room, and he, after making sure that she is not just a dream, wraps her in his arms.

She then promises she will never leave him again.

## **6.4 CONCLUSION**

Throughout the whole novel, the author leads us from her mind's view, through a traumatic and especial childhood that gets her to be an educated, independent and strong woman, who, without money or love, has found her way out of society's misconceptions on social class or wealth and genre.

Everything that was put in her way, is an excuse to change her plain character into one much stronger, from her aunt's hate, her friend's death, her broken heart and her independence from his cousin, who just wanted to possess her.<sup>7</sup>

## **7. A ROOM OF ONE' S OWN, Virginia**

### **Woolf 7.1 Context and Biography**

Virginia Woolf wrote this book in 1928 after giving two lectures at the only two women colleges in Cambridge by that year: Newnham College and Girton College, about women and fiction, it was published in 1929.

1928. At the verge of the Great Depression, women had just earned the extended vote: all women over the age of 21 could now vote. As an effect of the amazing roaring twenties women had a new feeling of empowerment and independence with the appearance of the flappers and “Girl Power”.

Yet Virginia Woolf brings back to life proof that, even after getting the vote and having a sense of more power after World War I, equality of sexes is much more than that.

She goes, mainly, over education, household topics and public limitations, referring also to writers from the past and their social context, as a way of remembrance of which type of oppression they lived under, and shows, too, the one they are living in.

In a trip to her mind, the writer shows us her trail of thought before getting to her conclusion: A woman needs money and a room of her own to write fiction. And gets us to think about how society is the one that made women writers “worst” than men writers.

## **AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY: Virginia Woolf**

Virginia Woolf, born on 25 January 1882 in London, is one of the authors I luckily get to talk about in this project.

Descendant of an aristocratic and distinguished family, which would be at the time the perfect Victorian family, close-knit family which was torn apart by her other's unexpected death when the author was only 13 years old. Born Adeline Virginia Stephen, is now-a-days really known for her mental breakdowns, which lead to amazing thinking and later on in marvelous masterpieces.

(Virginia Woolf)



Her father first married to a women who was not Virginia's mother, after the woman's death, Leslie Stephen, her father, was left alone with one children.

Julia Jackson had also been widowed and had three children of her own.

Julia and Leslie married and had four more children together: Vanessa, Thoby Virginia and Adrian. Her first depression took place after her mother's death and returned with her sister's two years later.

Her childhood was enriched by Victorian literature influence thanks to her father's friends and interests, him being a biographer and literature critic and editor.

Victorian writers such as William Thackeray or George Henry Lewes used to visit her household. After her father's death, which caused her worst nervous collapse and depression, her family helped her by moving from Hyde Park Gate to Bloomsbury.

As it is known, we cannot judge a book by its cover, and what seemed like a model family soon turned into jealous sibling relationships, mostly between Vanessa and Virginia, one art-passionate and the other a writer since she was 9.



.(Virginia's family, she is next to her brother, second starting on the left)

Women, as we know after going over this century's characteristics and feminism's position in society, did not have much access to education or books, yet Virginia enjoyed from unlimited access to her father's library.

She never went to school but was determined to be a writer, she never went to college either yet her brothers did, they were sent to Cambridge and she took profit out of that. Her, being a self-taught and educated women, got to meet her brother's friends, later called The Bloomsbury group, one of its member was her future husband, Leonard Woolf.

Her writing career started with several articles and reviews for some journals and newspapers and after getting married on 1912, she and Leonard, decided to live as writers and earn money from that.



(Virginia and Leonard)

Virginia had already started her first novel, *The Voyage Out*, by the time she got married, it was supposed to be published after she finished it on 1913, but she

suffered another mental breakdown after her marriage and its publishing date got changed to 1915, her recovery date.

As a therapy method, they moved to Richmond and created the Hogarth Press, their own publishing and printing house.

Having a publishing house of her own got many women published, following Virginia's idea of the "Outsider's society", which consisted in forming a reading society in which different and uncommon points of views were finally heard and launched to the public. Although she never got to create that society, the Hogarth Press was the closest to it, giving women freedom of speech and a voice that did not require a pseudonym to be taken into consideration.

The Bloomsbury group also gave an idea of sexual liberation which was followed by Virginia consummating with one of the group's members wife, Sackville-West, also a writer. She helped Virginia with her depression and was a really important key to her impossible happiness, together with Leonard.

She reflected her relationship and affair with Sackville-West in her work *Orlando*, which is considered by many as the longest love letter.

We know the author kept a day-to-day diary in which she defined all the people close to her as a kind of mosaic, she wrote many events exalting the relation between the action and the subject and she even defined herself and her own mosaic of life in it.

Anyhow, her most known works were written from 1925 on, starting with the publishing of *Mrs. Dalloway*, all of them written in London.

Her influence and importance on the genre is not debatable, she got to talk about all aspects of society, art and its relation to women always reflecting her different and much critical point of view.

Her suicide letter was only directed to her husband and how he had been the most important person in her life. She also say that she has only been utterly happy with him but cannot keep fighting and feeling like a burden.

Her depression had taken over her mind, stronger this time, after finishing her last manuscript, *Between the Acts*, which was published shortly after her death, in 1941.

She was found weeks later in the River Ouse.

## 7.2 CHARACTERS

The Narrator takes the most important part in this work, she names herself “I”, first person, and tells us to name her “Mary Beton, Mary Seton, Mary Carmichael, or any other name you please...” in chapter one, and throughout the book she will adopt these names.

She does that to give us the image of different voices, different women. History applies to all women, not just her.

Anyhow, the narrator, not identified with the author whatsoever, uses a subjective and relative point of view in which she proves facts by mixing fiction (storyline) and reality (trail of thought).

## 7.3 STRUCTURE

This narrative work, which could be called an essay too or be considered as a monologue, is divided in 6 chapters in a total of 96 pages:

### - CHAPTER ONE:

Chapter one goes from page four to page twenty-two:

The author introduces us to the way her essay will be written and the topic developed. Via a narrator, who she claims not to be herself, she will show us how she got to her conclusion on the subject she was asked to give a lecture about.

The first time the narrator speaks, she is sitting in a bank close to a river, in Oxbridge (Oxford and Cambridge Universities, she fictionalizes the place). She is trying to connect the two given topics: Women and fiction. When, suddenly, she has an idea. She starts walking towards somewhere but forgets where exactly after realizing that the Beadle is looking weirdly at her, oblivious to her surroundings, she had been walking through the grass, which is no place for a woman, she corrects her mistake by walking on the gravel. While walking, she remembers where she was directed to, the library. She has her idea of checking Charles Lamb’s book but, when she gets to the library, she is told a woman cannot get inside without a man or fellow by her side.

Still torn about not being able to get in, she hears music from a chapel, and, once again, she feels excluded at not being able to get in there either.

It is lunch time, time for a luncheon party, where people have lunch together and share rational conversations. She describes abundance (food, wine,...) but

feels as if something had changed, we are located in the post-war era so she relates the conversations to the way poetry is written, and states that literature/poetry has changed as well as the type of conversations, and both have turned to completely new thoughts, words and emotions.

After the luncheon, she makes her way towards the “women’s college”, where she has another meal, but discontent with the gossip conversations and the difference of food in front of her, she leaves to her friend’s dorm, Mary Seton, where she discusses the differences between men’s college support and women’s one and conclude in the huge amount of efforts women had to do in order to habilitate the college and how men have always counted with financial and political support, which means they did not have to reach women’s efforts.

After talking to her friend, she keeps thinking, if Mary Seton’s mother had worked and saved her own money, future women generations could have lived better or cheaper, but, of course, everything in a woman’s life is put together so she cannot have money of her own, at least in 1860: getting married young equals getting pregnant, pregnancy means maternity, if she is tied to housework and her children, she cannot get a job or at least not one which gives her enough money to save and be independent or opportunities at all, and that is just how society has kept women out of society’s power for centuries, because no one wants women to be given a good education, even while she is working on this essay, she knows women do not earn loads of money, only high class women have that opportunity, for example Mary Seton is a professor at college and does earn money of her own.

One of the most significant analysis of this chapter is the fact that the prosperity of one sex equals poverty for the other, Virginia goes over this topic without mentioning it during the whole essay and we can see it here reflected in how men getting all financial help to build and enrich their colleges left women with no money nor help to build theirs.

## **CHAPTER 2**

In this second chapter, the narrator writes from London, and she goes all over again through the asked question: women and fiction.

Her thought takes her to Oxbridge again, thinking about how men drunk wine and women water, and how, once again, if one sex is more prosper than the other it means the second one is in poverty. That leads her to think of how poverty affects fiction and what is really needed for someone to be able to write. For that, as she is in London, she decides to go to the British Museum, in research of an objective truth.

There, she finds out that men write a lot about women yet women do not write about men. She starts reading some thesis, but, she looks deeper into one of them, Professor von X titled his work *The Mental, Moral and Physical Inferiority of The Female Sex*. Reading this hate towards her sex, gets Woolf angry. Yet, she did not want to get angry, it was the same author of the book who led her to that state. She asks herself: “Why are they angry?” , why do men write angrily about women and what makes them that mad? This question is badly answered with the fact that those books are not credible, they cannot write about a sex from a subjective point of view.

Men, though, do need women. Women had worked as looking-glasses through centuries, they had been used so that men could feel superior and good about themselves, just like Napoleon Bonaparte and Mussolini did. She uses these dictatorial and extreme examples so she can show how treating women as a reflection of what a man is is, in no way, an example to follow.

The next part of this chapter is more important than what it might seem; Woolf criticizes the fact that money could give women more opportunities than the vote itself. The same day women got the vote, the narrator got her aunt’s legacy, 5000 pounds per year, and, at that same moment, money opened her up to the world more than being able to vote did, money gave her freedom. This, in her point of view, money and economical freedom, is key for someone to enjoy to its fullest writing fiction.

She thinks, as she goes back home, about womanhood as an occupation, it is not paid, its importance changes during the years, but it is necessary, and women have been doing this free job year after year, they have been taught it is their job only, slavery of work and mind we could say.

Going over this chapter’s hidden opinions, it is remarkable how she does not directly blame men for mistreating women during the centuries; she blames education and traditional behavior, the inability of society to adapt. Of course, society has rules for men too, some expectations that are hard and tough for many to follow, and the author is completely right and honest about that, yet men earn their own money after a hard day of work, men are still people if they do not get married or if they do not have a family and men are not tied to another individual in any way possible: if a woman wants the divorce even if she gets hit by her husband every and each day, all the shame falls on her, which shows how women are treated as a possession before being treated as human beings.

Going to the British Museum and only finding women being talked about by men only is another obvious hidden opinion: She goes to the Museum in order to find objective sex studies yet she only finds women putting women in an inferior page and authors driven by subjective hatred towards female individuals.



### **CHAPTER 3:**

In this chapter we can find one of the most famous theories by Virginia Woolf. But for that I will follow with the chapter analysis.

The narrator finishes her way home after the disappointment found in the British Museum, but finds in that disappointment some useful conclusions: facts not opinions, that is what she looks for in order to be a hundred per cent objective.

In research of those facts she goes back to the Elizabethan era, a period of time in which literature found its way out of the dust and improved to a proficient and excellence top, only for men, of course.

She talks about Shakespeare and his works, his excellence, his brilliant mind and how he does not talk about fictional feelings: he talks about human suffering, material suffering, money, love, heart-break, death...

His talent could never be revoked or criticized, what can, in his place, is the fact that a woman with Shakespeare's talent could never be recognized as he has been through centuries and even art and literature movements. Women rights were inexistent during the Elizabethan period, and here is where Woolf's famous theory comes into debate: Imagine if Shakespeare had had a sister, who she names Judith Shakespeare, and his sister had had such talent as he did, she would not have been able to even develop that talent, without mentioning being able to travel to London like Shakespeare did on his own, she would have never been given the opportunity to write a play which later would be represented, and, just like many geniuses in that era who had to hide, she would have been talked to be queer or crazy. Virginia gives us the answer to this, she says Judith's family would have expected her to follow her social role to perfection, she might have been able to write something in private, and one day she might have escaped from home in order to follow her dreams and, the closest to a theatre that she must have got, would have been marrying a theatre manager and having his kids, which would lead her to commit suicide.

That is the reason why many strong female characters have been highlighted during these oppressive eras, you had to be strong to keep all the ideas, all the boiling potential, and to be forced to keep it all inside, to yourself. Woolf gives us a paradox to remark that even if she was strong, smart and capable to do what any other men did at the time, she was still just a possession. Women gave name to "Anonymous".

Yet, at the end of her theory, she states that it was almost completely impossible for a woman to have Shakespeare's genius, once again, because of lack of education and compulsory society roles.

Again, the narrator compares how personal and social circumstances affect men and women and their writing and, even though both sexes are obviously affected, women find themselves under worst circumstances. One and maybe

the worst obstacle for a woman was growing up knowing she could not achieve nothing more than what her mother had, and being used to being told to not be able to do whatever they wanted, women, then, were educated to be or to think they were inferior. These facts lead only high class women to get an education and a room of their own, following her conclusion, opportunities to write.

Throughout this chapter, Woolf time-travels us to as far as 1470, when wife-beating was something common. She mentions marriage: women were married whether they wanted or not, if not, they were “condemned” to chastity. And states that women have no history before 1800, when suffrage ideas start to appear. This is the reason why she can only imagine how society affected women in the Elizabethan Era, and shows how imagination can be objective too sometimes.

#### **CHAPTER 4:**

The narrator keeps on tracing a chronological order until she gets to the XVIII century, where women, even knowing they were going to be badly seen by society, start speaking their minds on: education, work and economic topics.

Of course, the first ones to get their point straight openly, were high-class women, aristocracy’s daughters. Money, like the narrator proved in chapter two, gives freedom, and a women with money was not scared of being judged, society could not take her power or her economic inquires, maybe not hers but her family’s. Something in common between these women who wrote in the XVIII century is they had no children, so they did not spend time doing house work because they were wealthy and they did not spend time taking care of their children and, even if they had had children someone would have taken care of them.

The narrator makes another point in this chapter: why did women in the XIX century write mainly novels? She claims one of the reasons to be the fact that they wrote in a shared-room, could it be their living-room, but not in a room of their own, which meant that they were exposed to constant distractions. The second statement that justifies her point is the fact that they did not get a proper education, few women can be highlighted for their writing in the XIX century, only those who went against the odds and broke through criticism and hatred.

This chapter is based on the narrator’s point of view on women’s literary tradition, which was somehow lucky, or not, for those first women writers, such as Emily Brontë or Jane Austen, not to have, hence they were the first to write women sentences, which Woolf conclude to be much different than men

sentences, as in the way of feeling and expressing what is around them. For example, Charlotte Brontë changed her writing after a period of grief, yet that did not stop her from finishing and publishing her novel.

## **CHAPTER 5:**

In this chapter, the narrator finds books written by living authors, and she sees how there is no difference between the number of books written by a man and by a woman, which is something that a century before could not have happened, women even write about topics of which they would not have heard some years earlier, more into the scientific field. She is experiencing the change between: needing literature as a self-expression and a critical method and seeing literature and writing as art.

She starts reading a new book by Mary Carmichael and immediately thinks how she has got nothing on Jane Austen's art, she thinks her writing has been led by someone else: criticism and maybe society's influence.

She talks about how the way she writes is only in spite of breaking instead of creating, yet, at one point, she makes a step back and thinks that she is also free to do with her work as she pleases.

She waits for something new, and it arrives. The author of the book she is reading makes one character, Chloe, to like Olivia, another woman. Here, the narrator, values Carmichael's break-through thought, she thinks she really pictures a reality that society has not yet accepted, woman can like woman, never forgetting that Virginia Woolf herself established a romance with another woman, and that is something I think to be relevant in reflection of what she thinks about lesbianism.

She sees, too, how the main characters in the book she has in front of her hope for something outside their household, and, of course, that is something no one dared to speak of before the XX century.

The narrator, though, feels disappointed at how Carmichael directs the relationship between Chloe and Olivia, it may not be like what she was hoping for, and maybe there are no hidden intentions, which would mean that Carmichael has kept herself in the comfort zone, out of a killing self-consciousness.

She stops talking about the author, she focuses on how science has hidden women too, how it could have been a woman the one to discover America, or how even Newton could have been a woman. Progress has no place for women, and there is no way possible to measure how good a mother is, or how good women keep the houses.

She also criticizes dependence and its relation to fiction. Women have been always seen in fiction as the loved ones, the fragile and the ones in need of protection.

She mentions, in an indirect way, the muses of those romantic poets; stating that the only thing they got out of them was something that their own sex and body could not give them on its own: comfort, flattery and pleasures of the body.

Woolf enforces her theory in this chapter. In the previous one, we saw how she thinks women have their own sentence, which has not ever been written by a man or influenced by him, then, she thinks, if women writing becomes an art, will the women sentence disappear? Her point here is easier to understand than what it might seem; she thinks women and men are rich in their differences, both having different sentences enriches culture and society too. What she is against about is the fact that these sentences lose historical meaning and that women start talking and writing like men do. Remarking that she wants equality in education and equality of opportunities, yet, we shall not forget about the oppression women have been under for centuries, the same oppression which created the women sentence.

She sums up this fifth chapter with her conclusion on Mary Carmichael's writing, showing her utter disappointment on modern writing. She feels attacked at the ignorance of Carmichael in front of Austen's, the Brontes', and recognizable women writers' sentences, finally stating that she is just a clever girl who will have her book promoted by some publishing house.

She recalls all the prohibitions she has gone through: "no walking on the grass, it is only for scholars", "You cannot get in the library in your own",... And, as if she was talking to Carmichael she says that she cannot even stop to curse them, she cannot laugh at all those prohibitions either, it is useless, she cannot do anything against society. But, she finalizes, give her a room of her own, give her 5000 pounds a year, give her a voice and freedom in her writing, and she, indeed, will be able to change it.

## **CHAPTER 6:**

This last chapter of Woolf's essay is located again in London, she wakes up, looks around her and realizes that no one is worried about fiction's future, about poetry disappearing or about the lack of expression in the new women sentence.

Another important theory by Virginia Woolf comes into page: the androgynous mind. She thinks that both sexes have man and woman elements in our minds, which means that there is a kind of harmony between the sexes that should not be repressed, to none of them. This could also be called the theory of

unification of sexes. We are mistaken for not using and liberating both parts of the brain, therefore, sexism is a result of not being able to open our minds.

She opens a book written by a man, and she sees his confidence, his education and his freedom reflected in those pages. Centuries of education and prosperity turned into a selfish “I”, an “I” that talks maybe too much about his lucky free mind.

Women having a voice and progressing together with men, from the narrator’s point of view, has made men more self-assertive and self-conscious, just because women finally feel and have earned the right to feel self-conscious.

Getting to the ending of the essay, the narrator goes back to the titled paper. Women and Fiction.

## **7.4 CONCLUSIONS**

Going on in chapter 6's analysis, the narrator or, we could now call her, Virginia Woolf, finally gets to her conclusion on the lecture she is supposed to give.

She states that is no good for a writer, be it a man or a woman, to think of their sex; it is perfect to have both points of view and minds ready in order to be objective and correctly subjective. If it is written for only women minds, the writer has to take into consideration that her fiction will be only understandable to women minds, which, to some point, is of no interest to a writer, who wants to reach as many minds and eyes as possible.

Mary Beton, or whichever the name of the narrator was, has told us until the end, her trail of thought, while doing that, many society and public prohibitions have gotten in her way, and so she has told us each and every one of them.

As a total and round conclusion, the author repeats that a woman needs a room of her own and money of her own so she can be, in her privacy, utterly free of any influence that could change her woman sentence.

Of course, her references to material things such as a lock on a door or money itself, are symbolisms: money, as in being able to be the one leading and making the decisions in your life, a sense of freedom which sometimes money gives you. And also the right one has to think for herself without anyone saying she cannot do so because she is a woman, she is inferior.

She blames the difference and inequality of sexes on competition; on always wanting to be superior to one another, on needing the poverty of one sex so the other can be prosper.

She proves that intellectual freedom depends directly on material things and that poetry depends on intellectual freedom, that is why women have not written much poetry. They have never been granted the right to earn their own material things, which leads to not getting intellectual freedom and not being able to write poetry.

The ending of Woolf's essays recalls all the mentioned social inequalities and the remembered oppression that, at her moment, formed and created women and their writing, once again, their sentence.

## 8. *The Vagina Monologues*, Eve Ensler

### 8.1 Context and Biography

This work, unlike the other ones, is a play.

Eve Ensler wrote *The Vagina Monologues* in 1996, in Manhattan, New York, where the play is placed. The play was first performed in the basement of a café in the suburbs of the city (Cornelia Street Café), to be precise, in Greenwich, Manhattan.

From that moment, the play has been translated to 48 languages and has been performed in over 140 countries.

This work is totally located in the third wave of feminism, the same wave we are living in at the moment.

In 1996 some topics were still taboo, difficult to talk about, and what Ensler does breaks a big wall in the art and literature world.

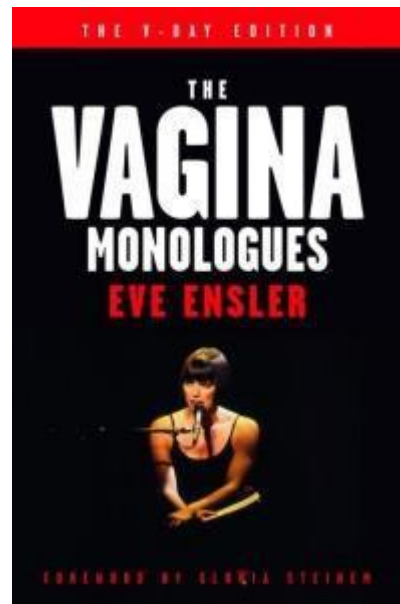
She takes the word “vagina” which is, like I said, a term people do not like talking about or saying out loud in public, or even in private. It is a kind of metaphor towards the oppression women suffer.

To show that, she writes a play based on some interviews to women who suffered to extremes that “vagina oppression” , and she even talks about personal experiences.

We can compare this work to the theory part of my project; in the definition of third wave, it was explained how modern feminism includes all type of races and sexualities, and that is exactly what the author does, she writes an international spotlight, where women from different parts of the world explain their experiences too.

A question that might come up is: why did you choose an American work?

It is easier and more reasonable that what it might seem. Third wave feminism has its main focus and importance in the United States, the largest movements are going on there and the decade which sparked the beginning of this modern feminism was their 90's, that is why I thought of this work: it has enough to show what the wave and this modern movement is about and the international complaints feminists have.



## AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY: Eve Ensler

Eve Ensler was born in Scarsdale, a northern suburb of New York City, in 1953. She was the second of three children. Daughter of a Jewish father and a Christian mother, and she grew up in a Jewish community yet she identifies herself as a Buddhist.

While growing up, from the ages five to ten she was sexually and physically abused by her father, which made her a sad and angry kid, she states she did not fit anywhere.

She went to college in Vermont, Middlebury College, and started her activist life as a feminist militant.



After her graduation in 1975, she had some abusive relationships that lead her to drug-addiction and dependence. Then, she met her now ex-husband, Richard Dylan McDermott, who got her to go to rehabilitation.

Three years later she adopted her husband's son, who taught her how to be a loving human, like she says. Some years later she suffered from a miscarriage and her son, Mark, changed his name to Dylan, the name the baby would have had.

She started writing as a way of facing her childhood and relationship traumas.

She got divorced because she wanted to be free and independent, which suits her traveler lifestyle.

In 2010 she received treatment for uterine cancer, which has now overcome.

She published her memoir in 2013, where she talked about her cancer experience.

She has written many plays yet her most important work is the one I will be analyzing, *The Vagina Monologues*, which has been called by the New York Times to be "the most important piece of political theatre of the decade".

She is also a volunteer in some charities, social services and humanitarian right agencies; all these got her to win in 2011 a Tony Award.

She, together with other feminists, launched V-Day, a feminist movement that has raised over 100 million dollars for violence against women through benefits from *The Vagina Monologues*. She has also been to Ted Talks for four times.



## 8.2 CHARACTERS

There are two versions of this play:

- The “original version” which has only one character: The author, Eve Ensler. This I have seen the play.
- The V-Day version, which includes three other characters apart from the author. This is have read the work.

As an interesting analysis, for this part, I will talk about the second version, the V-Day one.

We could divide this work into two main characters:

-The first one would be the same author, Eve Ensler, talking to us, to the public, in a monologue form, about the different topics that come up, for example the first one is “hair”.

The second character are actually three women who the author calls “woman 1, 2 or 3”. In order to write this play, though, Eve interviewed over two-hundred women, just like said in the first introduction by a “woman 1”:

- “So there were vagina interviews, which became vagina monologues. Over two hundred women were interviewed. Older women, young women, married women, lesbians, single women, college professors, actors, corporate professionals, sex workers, African American women, Asian American women, Hispanic women, Native American women, Caucasian women, Jewish women. “ –

A mix of the author’s voice and the interviews make the monologue.

In the intro of “hair”, the first part, the author tells us how the monologues may be from different stories mixed together or they may be from just one story; she clarifies that at the beginning of each part.

This keeps the stories anonymous.

The second voices, the “woman” characters, talk in dialogue form. Depending on the part, a woman may ask the question and, another one may answer it, always keeping the anonymous or a mix of anonymous.

## 8.3 STRUCTURE

Like mentioned before, the play is divided in different parts, in a topic criteria.

I chose to analyze the original version, because the material for both versions is the same, the only difference is that, for the V-Day version, some lines the author said are given to the three other characters.

There are 10 parts in total.

But first, we have an introduction.

### **INTRODUCTION:**

In this introduction, the author tells us how worried she is about vaginas. Not just about the physical vaginas, of course. She is worried about what people think about them, and why women do not think or take them into consideration. She talks about how getting to know your vagina takes time, how getting to know yourself as a woman takes time too.

I must remark that this work is utterly directed to women, that is something critics are not okay with, yet, women are the ones who have, suffer and take care of their vaginas, so there is no better public to direct the play too, no one who would understand better than women.

In this part we get to understand where the title of the play comes from. There were interviews, interviews with women, interviews with vaginas, which turned to vagina monologues. Because, women feel insecure to talk about them, it is still something taboo, but when you give them the freedom to talk about them, they turn their thoughts into monologues, monologues about their vaginas, their story.

Those interviews were made to all type of women, from all races, all ages. Diversity.

To finish this intro, she talks about how worried she is about what we call or not call “vaginas”, how their name may change depending on where we live, and how that influences its name, its cultural importance or taboo level.

## **PART 1: “HAIR”:**

Every part has an introduction in its beginning. In this one, the author tells us that this first monologue is based on one woman’s story, even though the topic was always brought up in all the interviews, this one really caught her attention.

She tells us, in first person, as if she was the interviewed woman, how her first husband hated hair. This is something us women feel conflicted or torn about sometimes, society’s pressure on us or just someone’s preferences. She tells us how when she stopped shaving herself, her husband had sexual affairs with other women, and used as an excuse that it was because she would not please him sexually, because she did not shave. Clearly we can see how pressure gets to another level: you do not do as I tell you, I do not like you. She shaved it thinking that could solve her marital problems, but her husband never stopped having affairs. Hair is something natural, something we should not feel pressured to take out of our bodies. Like the author says “Hair is there for a reason”, one of the reasons, in some places, is protection.

The conclusion I get from this chapter is how preferences and pleasure can turn into control, a subtle way of sexism that is still noticeably present in our society.

## **PART 2: THE FLOOD:**

Eve interviewed a group of women between the ages 65 and 75, she talked to women who had never been asked about their vaginas before, women who had never seen themselves. She dedicates this monologue to a 72 year-old woman in particular.

She first laughs at how easy it is for Eve to talk about sexual topics, when they were young they could never talk like that about those things. Thinking about it, not talking about the topic made it seem as if it did not exist at all, it made it even more taboo.

Then, she gets into her story. She talks about a man, a really handsome man who she really liked, Andy Leftkov, he took her out on a date, they kissed, and she “flooded”, the man noticed and embarrassed her. Since that day, she has not had sexual experiences. That man made something regular, common and normal seem something she should be ashamed of. Later on, she tells us how she has nightmares about what happened but with another guy.

In the end, she tells us how she does not feel self-conscious about it anymore because she suffered from cancer and their functions stopped; she says that if her vagina could wear something, it would wear a “closed due to flooding” sign.

She asks to the author if she is happy now, she got an old woman to talk about something embarrassing to her, something she had never shared before. But she accepts that talking about it really helped her.

As a conclusion for this part, I will remark how society can makes us think of something normal and natural as something disgusting and even embarrassing.

This is what happened to this story's owner, she was told to hate a part of her, she was condemned to a life full of regret and repression.

This is what society does. At least we can say that we are trying to break this wall these days. Acceptance.

### **PART 3: THE VAGINA WORKSHOP**

This part is based on an English woman.

She attends a vagina workshop, which is similar to a self-discovery lesson, and there, through different steps, she finds not only her clitoris but herself. There is not much to say about this part, although it being one of the longest ones. The most remarkable thing to learn from this chapter is that no matter how long it takes, self-discovery is the key to confidence,

It is the "vagina" as women's identity and, the clitoris as the pleasure for women, something that has been underrated and ignored for years.

### **PART 4: BECAUSE HE LIKED TO LOOK AT IT**

This part is, once again, based on a personal story from just one interviewed woman. Not just a woman, but a woman who did have a good experience with a man, the author pictures that as something strange, she uses sarcasm as if it were a joke yet she is completely serious.

The woman here starts to tell us how she started loving her vagina. She recognizes how the hate we give to ourselves women, comes from society and its patriarchy. We are told that fat thighs are ugly and that vaginas are not something to be proud of, but, if we were told fat thighs are beautiful, we would not care about how much or what we eat, for example.

So the character hates her vagina, we could compare it to hating herself, and she imagines her vagina as something it is not, something that in her mind is beautiful.

One day she met Bob. Bob was an ordinary guy, not much interesting. She went to bed with him and the first thing he told her was that he needed to see her. Not her as in her skin, he needed to see her vagina in order to see her.

So he did, he looked at her for an hour, smiling, until he told her how she looked: elegant, deep, innocent and wild. The way he saw her vagina was the way he saw her.

Bob got her to love her vagina.

There is only one message here: You cannot love yourself until you do not see yourself completely naked, inside and out. Your inside will be reflected in your outside even if you do not notice it.

Sometimes we need someone to makes us see who we really are, maybe we all need a Bob at some time in our lives.

### **PART 5: MY ANGRY VAGINA**

The character here starts talking about how an army wants to murder, harm and abuse her vagina. This I compare it to how sexism is present in our society nowadays too, how women look as if they were objects or possessions someone is in the right to use or hurt at any possible moment.

Publicity, too. How publicity hurts our image: we need to keep beautiful even in our sixties, we have to take care of ourselves and buy their creams and all the stuff they try to sell us.

She talks about her vagina as if it could really talk to her, as if it could complain about how badly are tampons made, how badly the gynecologist treats it and how uncomfortable thongs are. She talks about what her vagina would say if it could speak: she would complain about how she wants everything after having brought a baby to the world, how she just wants everything.

### **PART 6: MY VAGINA WAS MY VILLAGE**

This monologue is dedicated to a woman from Bosnia. During the war in Yugoslavia, twenty to seventy thousand women were raped as a way of punishment. Europe did little to nothing in order to stop that violation of human rights. In the US, though, even nowadays, two-hundred thousand women are violated or raped every year.

To show how horrible it is to be raped: physically and psychologically, the author writes in two different ways, the before and the after.

In the first paragraph, she talks about how her vagina was like her village: green, alive, happy. Her boyfriend giving her pleasure as a normal couple would. Now, she feels as if there was something different in between her legs, something she does not recognize.

Second paragraph, her vagina was always happy but now, now it has nightmares, horrible nightmares that make her remember what it suffered.

Her vagina used to sing songs too, it used to sing all the time. But it hasn't since some soldiers raped her, shoving anything possible inside her, she would have rather one of them had shot her.

Her vagina used to be and feel clean, but it does not feel the same now, not since it was mutilated. This, although savage, still happens in some places of the world.

Her vagina was her essence, a woman's essence. But she would rather not feel like that again, not after they had taken turns on her for a whole week, abusing her, raping her, dehumanizing her.

She finishes this part talking and comparing once again her village to her vagina: soldiers invaded her village, her vagina, they burned everything down, they destroyed it and her, and now she is living somewhere else, now she hates and cannot even see that part of her.

One of the hardest pieces to read. The comparison between the invaded country and rape seems so real, makes it so visual it hurts. It hurts to see too how, the fact that it does not happen in our country seems to make it better when it is actually something that could happen to any women anywhere anytime.

## **PART 7: THE LITTLE COOCHI SNORCHER THAT COULD**

It is relevant to mention the woman on whom the story is based is a woman of color, because of racial discrimination and everything that that contains.

She starts by telling us a story of when she was five years old: she tries not to hurt her "little coochi snorcher", and she tries to cover it too and prevent it from anything getting in it. At just the age of five, she had already been harassed.

Two years later, a boy in her class punches her down in her coochi snorcher, and her mother yells at her for letting him touch her there.

At nine, she hits herself with the bedpost and they have to take her to the hospital to sew the cut.

At ten, she is at her father's house, her father is having a party and everyone is drinking, one of her father's friends rapes her, her father shoots him.

At thirteen, she keeps getting raped, she calls her coochi snorcher a "bad-luck zone".

At sixteen, she meets her Bob: she meets a woman that teaches her how to love her coochi snorcher.

Strength is my personal favorite characteristic from this monologue: she faces a horrible childhood, she finds motivation and love in someone, she grows as a person. This is what society should teach us, not that being raped is something common we cannot fight against.

### **PART 8: RECLAIMING CUNT**

This is a really short monologue dedicated to a woman in Pittsburgh who was obsessed about the use of the word “cunt”, which is a derogatory way of saying “vagina”.

It is just phonetics of the word in debate, she is embracing the way it sounds and the way society hates it and rejects terms such as vagina.

That is all, but its shortness and fastness to be read gets us to the point the author wants us to see: for as many times as you repeat it, you can make it sound good but society will still think the word “cunt” implies something bad.

### **PART 9: THE WOMAN WHO LOVED TO MAKE VAGINAS HAPPY**

This is from another important woman view: a sex worker.

She is not just a simple sex worker; she loves to please women, she only attends women. But she started as a lawyer, she broke that misconception of sex workers being women with no studies whatsoever.

She talks about the importance of moans, she thinks of moans as a way of showing you are liberated, you are free from whatever that it is on your mind, an opportunity to just think about yourself. Moans are a hidden language, a way of speaking about yourself and at the same time not speaking: finding a moan is finding the deepness of a woman’s mind, finding her impulses and her freedom.

I find this comparison beautiful: a moan is something that we release when we feel comfortable with the situation surrounding us, just like our voice, we do not give it to anyone, we expect to share it with someone who will pay attention and take us into consideration.

## **PART 10: I WAS THERE IN THE ROOM**

This is an experience by the same author, Eve. She tells us about her thoughts will she attended her granddaughter's birth.

The comparison she makes is between a vagina and a heart. A heart heals and forgives and gets back into its place, it recovers, just like a vagina after giving birth.

She remembers all the details, how the woman was suffering, was shouting, and the nurse was talking to them in a natural way as if nothing was happening.

This could be social criticism once again, we give birth and we suffer, and the husband just counts to three to help us wind down, but we are bleeding and stretching to inhuman measures.

And the author was there to see all that, to see pain in the woman's eyes, to see a new life.

## **8.4 CONCLUSIONS**

The author of this play takes us to a small trip inside all different types of women's minds, in order to show us how society is structured, how different from reality things are created from society's point of view and the lies and misconceptions society brings about.

She personifies the vagina, moans, and even a clitoris, to show us how our body is essential to get to know ourselves and to accept and love us outside society's rules, making our own rules.

She even shows and proves how generations change the levels of taboos, for example, the old woman was having more trouble while talking about the same topic a twenty year-old did not have.

I am glad I chose this work because it openly and directly speaks the truth about what many of us see and are afraid to talk about, it is an essential work to understand what the third wave of feminism is about: accepting ourselves, lesbianism and other sexual interests, no difference between races, and acceptance of everything implying a woman's body.



## 9. ANALYSIS' CONCLUSIONS

Having read and gone through every part of these three works, I have seen much more than what I first expected. Starting first with Charlotte's Brontë. *Jane Eyre*, we can clearly see that she was lucky to have received a much higher and opened education than all the women of her generation did. Her art to reflect social matters in her words made men doubt of her genre, she wrote like a man, she could not say her name before her novel was known.

She explains through Jane, a vision on the real and cruel world, a world that gives no opportunities to those who have no money or are born as women.

Some years later, Virginia Woolf gets called crazy for saying that there is still inequality after getting votes for women. She goes much deeper than that.

She even mentions the Brontës and their majestic minds, those which enriched themselves despite being told they could not.

Through Charlotte's protofeminism, the one that states that a woman needs independence and education. Later from Virginia's point of view, she calls herself a feminist, so that is an improvement. She points out true suffragist's feminism traits, lack of civil rights, which are shown through examples such as not being able to get into a library because of her sex.

And finally, Eve Ensler breaks a wall of taboo words and incommodities, her openness about the word "vagina" and everything around or implying it, gets into our mind in a completely direct way, through abstract pictures which get her point straight. She can openly call herself a feminist.

Here we can see it, feminism has been accepted and normalized together with women having almost the same opportunities, yet the fact that it is normalized and that I can say I am a feminist, does not mean I will not be subjected to stereotypes and judgment.

Of course, I will not be called a witch or crazy and I will not be killed for being a feminist like, for example, Charlotte's mother could have been for just wanting independence.

We can see how literature reflects society and all kinds of matters going through the author's mind: *Jane Eyre* was worried about being inferior than the man she loved or feeling like a possession to him, the narrator in *A Room of One's Own*, was worried about not being able to walk on the grass for being a woman, and finally, Eve Ensler is still worried about how women are taught to not know themselves mentally and physically, and society makes them think that talking about taboo topics is rude and not feminine. What is femininity?

## 10. CONCLUSION

I am pleased to see I have accomplished the objectives I had for this project, this way making my thesis both interesting and emotional for me to uncover.

The hypothesis was confirmed in the conclusions of the works' analysis, these three authors show how society has changed throughout the centuries and how feminism has moved along with these changes.

Virginia Woolf could have said that feminism had worked wonders in order to improve Charlotte Brontë's future generations' lives, and Eve Ensler can say the same now about Woolf's future generations, which means that maybe some future feminist writer will be saying the same about Eve Ensler in some years' time.

I can base the most important part of my thesis, that is, the reading and slow analysis of the three literary works, on the theoretical part of my project, an extensive part which took many hours of this research.

In all three works I can and have reflected the three waves of feminism with all their characteristics, something that could not have been done without a deep theoretical background.

To conclude, the survey has been an incredibly useful tool to me in order to see how our society really sees feminism. It has been a good surprise to see that the majority of people think of it as a nice and necessary movement that has many things yet to accomplish.

The historical research, the works' analysis and the survey have given the expected results. Reflecting the historical part of the project on each work, seeing that the authors talk and write differently from all points of view: topics, narrator, storyline,... depending on the situation they are living in, and seeing their interpretation of how women should live or what they should fight for and how that changes depending on their century and society's structure, makes me confirm, once again, my hypothesis.

Like mentioned before, Charlotte Brontë, XIX century, fought for independence and women's education, Virginia Woolf, XX century, fought for women's suffrage and social limitations, Eve Ensler fought, and is still fighting, for complete women's bodies and minds liberation.

To finish this conclusion, feminism has proved to be capable of evolution and has accomplished, through the years, things that might have seemed impossible in the XVIII century, the clearest example of this is women's civil rights.

Literature writes those accomplishments, they may be reflected on the strength of one character, like Jane Eyre, or in the trail of thought of a lonely narrator who just observes the oppressing world she lives in. Literature makes those accomplishments seem beautiful, and it makes them unforgettable.

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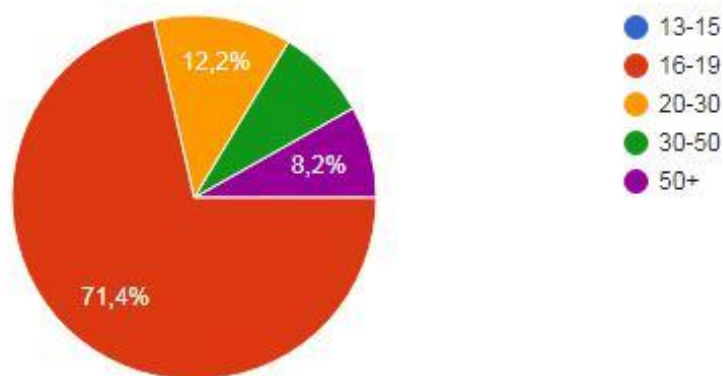




## ANNEX: SURVEY RESULTS

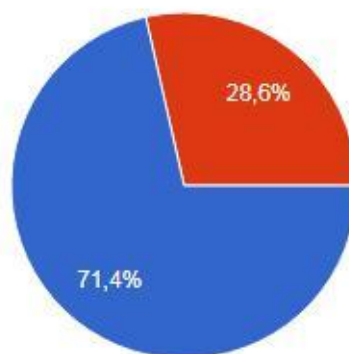
In order to understand where feminism stands in society's mind nowadays I sent this survey to some of my contacts, I got 49 answers, 49 different opinions.

In the first place, I wanted to understand the generation in which the person answering the survey grew up. Studying different age ranges, this is what I got:



- No people between 13-15 years old answered, 35 people between 16-19, 6 between 20-30 and 4 both for 30-50 and 50+.

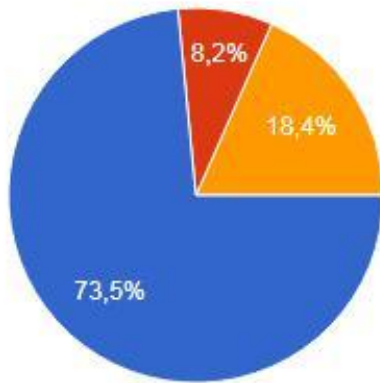
The second obvious question was the person's sex which got 35 women answering the survey and 14 men.



For the third question,

- “Are you a feminist?”

I put a trap for those who consider themselves “half feminists”, there is no thing such as being half feminist, yet 9 people chose that option, while 36 others said they are feminists and 4 more said they are not.



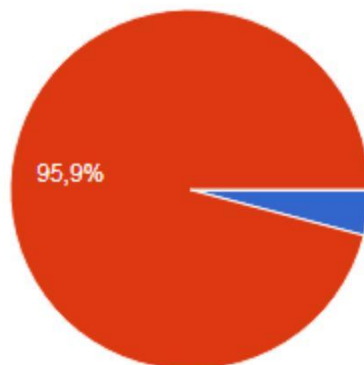
In blue: the percentage of “yes”, orange “half feminist”, red “no”.

The fourth question was a topic starter one,

- “What do you think feminism looks for?”

I gave 3 possible answers:

- Women superiority (Blue)
- Equality (Orange)
- Revenge for the oppression lived in the past



As you can see in the graphic, 47 out of 49 people chose equality as the answer, which objectively correct, even though some might take feminism's definition in a different way, equality is what modern feminism (XXI century) strives for.

The fifth question was an open one, which means I gave the option to develop their answer.

- “Do you think our society needs feminism?”
  - 44/49 said feminism is necessary in our society, for several reasons:
    - There is still oppression towards women
    - In order to reach equality
    - Gender violence is more than just an example that proves we need feminism
    - It would be nice to say that we do not need feminism, hence that would mean there is no inequality.

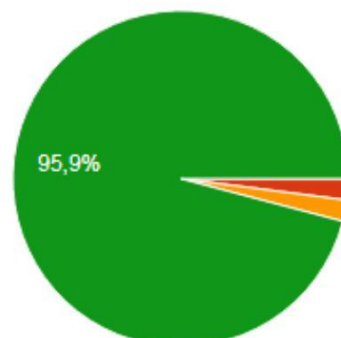
Question number six had no trick in it,

- “Do you think there is still discrimination and that for that reason there is still fight left?”

To which I gave 4 possible answers:

- No, there is no discrimination (blue)
- No, there is no total discrimination (orange)
- Yes, but there is no need to fight (yellow)
- Yes, we still need to fight (green)

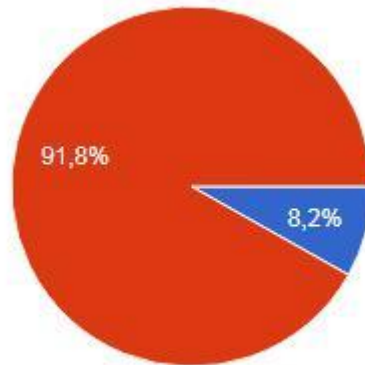
47 out of 49 answerers chose the last answer.



This next question, I understand, had a lot to do with who said they were feminists and their gender:

- “Do you think feminism is just a women’s fight?”

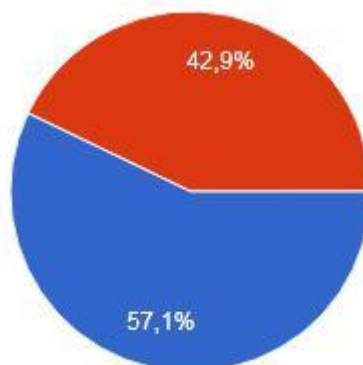
And yes, the 4 people who did not identify themselves as feminists said that it is a fight meant just for women, meanwhile, the other answerers said it is meant for all, here is the graphic:



- “Do you think being a male feminist is accepted?”

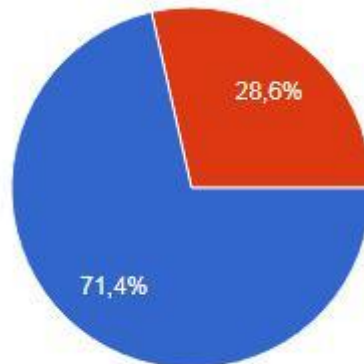
This question varies depending on the answerer’s gender, despite some women or vice versa saying it is not or it is accepted.

- 21/49 were negative answers
- 28 were positive



This next question goes together with the last one, as I said, the answers depended mainly on the genre but

- “Do you think your last answer may vary depending on your generation?”
  - 14/ 49 answers said “No”
  - 35 agreed



Another open question:

- “Do you agree with the sentence ‘Feminism does not have an established definition, each era has a different type of feminism’?”

Many answers can be seen here because there were no established ones.

- 8/49 were strict “No’s”
- 7/49 strict “Yes’s”
  
- We learn and correct mistakes from the other feminism era (evolution)
- Ideologies and generations change
- Yes, but they have always had the same objective, equality
- No, its definition has always been the same, equality
- There were different needs, so they needed a different fight

This next question, once again open, reflects one of the most important revolutions in our century, technology and the media.

- “Do you think social media has helped or worsen feminism?”

The answers vary between:

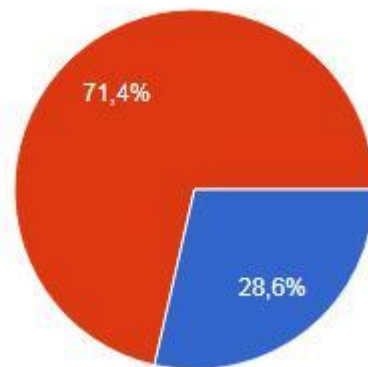
- Helped/worsen it
- Depends on the user’s mentality
- Both things

- Have you ever used offensive terms like “feminazi”?

This question has a meaning behind it, like said on previous points of this project, some terms were invented and people use them without knowing their meaning.

To this closed question, 35 people out of 49 have never used it and 14 have.

This is the graphic:



- “Given the case that you used it, why did you did it?”

Obviously, there were only 14 answers to this question:

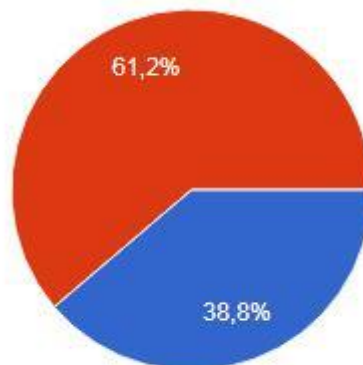
- 5/14 – to laugh at someone
- 5/14 – to attack or offend someone
- 7/14 - I didn’t know its meaning

- “Do you think racism is feminism matter?”

Since the beginning of the third wave, racial fight and feminism have been tied together hence feminism promotes equality of all kinds.

Yet people seem to not know about this characteristic of feminism.

- 30/49 answerers said it is not a matter of feminism
- 19 said it is

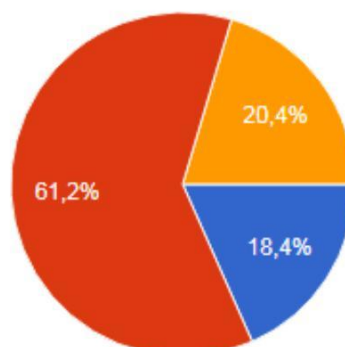


Going over the subjective field, I decided to ask something a little bit more personal, something towards the future:

- “Do you think feminism will be able to fix and even eradicate social problems such as beauty types and idealizations?”

Surprisingly, the answers were hopeful:

- 30/49 thought it could be possible
- 10/49 thought it is going to happen
- 9/49 thought it is not going to happen



The last question of my survey was asked to round it up with the practical part of my project:

- “Do you see literature as a good way of seeing the problems feminism denounces?”

To this question, which I was personally hoping for a worse response, people answered:

- 30/49- Yes, totally
- 17/49- Not the best one
- 2/49- Not at all

