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**GENDER CONFLICT AND ITS EFFECT ON WOMEN BEFORE AND AFTER THE
WORLD WAR II**

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Abstract

Purpose: Women and men are completing each other, this is nature, and the conflict of women and men is historical, they both have the right in living, enjoying and producing, humans love power naturally and always seek for their rights. Both men and women are struggling to stand and make remarkable things to show their abilities to each other and to take a role in life.

The purpose of this article is to discuss this historical conflict between the two genders and show the effect of this conflict on women before and after World War II by discussing the *A Room of One's Own* by Virginia Woolf and *The Homecoming* by Harold Pinter. There are many faces of this conflict but this article will discuss two of them, the educational and the sexual ones as they are the main two faces of this gender conflict.

Methodology: The problem that has no name is in fact the rights of women, the role of women in society, and the conflict between gender equality. Women were killed, raped, left without education, abused only because of their gender, from birth her parents teach her not to ask about her rights or think of herself but to obey her husband, father and brother, just like a slave, educated women present threaten to the patriarchal society for this reason they insisted not to educate women to keep the power in men's hand. Although women conditions were very hard and they needed a long time but they also could make some change (Doolittle n.p)

After the end of the Second World War there were emerging issues concerning the role of women in the society, whether they should be part of the small society inside their homes or start working and engage with the large society outside. Such significant issues of women's role in the society escalated conventional notions of male and female roles and responsibilities in the society. The identity of women started developing and emerging as a topic started taking its role in the society. The role-played by women themselves in constructing these identities and the insights gained into the ambivalence of the female role in the 1950s, lead her to urge a re-evaluation of 'consensus' politics and a redefinition of what we mean by work (Shaw).

Findings: After a long struggle through decades asking about their rights women had a great role in the civil society in the 1950s. In the Second World War they found themselves in front of a big challenge, either they survive and defend their homes, country and families, or they lose them. Women start filling the missing part of men who went to war. They involved in different sectors, Industry, Agriculture, Army and others to stand up for the country. After the war ends women tried hard to keep their jobs but many of them were forced by men to leave their jobs and go back home that the society did not give the role of woman the value it deserves (History At a Glance: Women in World War II).

Unique Contribution to Theory, Practice and Policy: The study presented a highly negative image of the society and ignored the presence of virtue and ethics in both American and English societies, which resulted in an unrealistic and flawed depiction of both men, and women in that era. Therefore its recommended that more studies should be done to resolve the conflict of gender roles and dominance in the society.

Keywords: *Gender Conflict, Women, World War II*

INTRODUCTION

A Room of One's Own by Woolf Virginia, is an essay and a good example to understand the difficulties and conditions of women through decades before the World War II and what is the importance of education for women, what women suffered from the patriarchal society, what she went through ages, why do men always want to have the power, are they interested in Women and in which way, when and how women start writing, what was their conditions, should women and men be enemies, what is fiction for women, women rights, feelings, and conditions, the difference between men and women conditions, how patriarchal society expected women writers works, women attitude and fiction, and many other questions and answers discussed and analyzed by Woolf in this piece of art (Wayne 2021).

Adeline Virginia Woolf lived during 1882-1941, she was an English novelist, publisher, feminist and short writer, was an English writer, considered one of the most important modernist 20th-century authors and a pioneer in the use of stream of consciousness as a narrative device. She has been regarded as one of the foremost modernist literary figures of the twentieth century. Her family was a large and wealthy one which enabled her life in the arts. Her father, Sir Leslie Stephen, was a notable author and critic. From her father, she had inherited a sharp critical sense. The boys in the family received college educations, the girls were home-schooled in English classics and Victorian literature. The death of her mother affected her badly which was followed by the death of her half- sister, her father and her brother within the next 10 years. Her family member's death had a very bad effect on her after that she suffered from her half-brothers sexual assaults which later caused her a nervous breakdown. At the age of fifty-nine she lost her battle with the bipolar disorder and commit suicide in Ouse River.

Woolf was a remarkable figure and artist in London's literary society in Second World War period, she was also a member of a group of writers and intellectuals who were gathering and held informal discussion meetings. One of the most affection in her life as a writer was the support of her educated brothers, her father and the father's big library at home in which they allowed to use any time to read and write. In 1912, she married Leonard Woolf (Reid 2021).

And they established their own Hogarth Press, in which she published many of her works, Woolf moved with her husband to Sussex in 1940 and stayed there for the rest of her life. Because of her mental illness she attempts suicide many times, at the age of 59 she finished her life by drowning herself (Reid n.p)

Another example of the role of women in the society after the second world war is The Homecoming, it is a play by Harold Pinter; a British play writer, screenwriter director and actor, lived between 10 October 1930-24 December 2008, one of the influential British dramatist, for more than 50 years writing career, Acted and directed in Radio, Stage, Television and film productions of his own and others works Pinter born in Hackney, east London, the only child of British Jewish parents of Eastern European descent 1997) was a ladies' tailor; his mother, Frances (née ; 1904–1992) a housewife. Pinter believed an aunt's erroneous view that the family was Sephardi and had fled the Spanish Inquisition; thus, for his early poems. 's career as a playwright began with a production of The Room in 1957. His second play, The Birthday Party, closed after eight performances, but was enthusiastically reviewed by critic Harold Hobson. His early works were described by critics as comedy of menace. Later plays such as No Man's Land (1975) and Betrayal (1978) became known as memory plays. He appeared as an actor in

productions of his own work on radio and film. He also undertook a number of roles in works by other writers. He directed nearly 50 productions for stage, theater and screen. Pinter received over 50 awards, prizes, and other honors, including the Nobel Prize in Literature in 2005 and the French in 2007 (Britannica n.p).

Among the factors that lead to the confusion of the women role in the society is the dominance of the male whether in the society or at home. The play *The Homecoming* consists of five male characters and one female character, which reflects a lack of balance in powers and expectations. The woman expected to be a wife, a mother, a daughter-in-law, a companion and a sex partner while the male have only one role, as a sex partner, and judges the woman's performance in these roles and adds burden rather than sharing the burden and actively pursue his role in the society or at home. These men behaviors made the confusion of the women role after the Second World War (Lahur).

METHODS

Woolf were wondering and asking questions in her essay, she was wondering how women could have fiction in such circumstances, how women could have fiction while they are poor, while they are with no rights of education, freedom, financial independence or even privacy. She insists that fiction is more truth than fact, does women needs to destroy illusion and replace it with truth, the more the truth the better the fiction will be.

“I thought how it is worse to be locked in, and thinking of the safety and prosperity of the one sex and of the poverty and insecurity of the other and the effect of tradition and of the lack of tradition upon the mind of the writer, I thought at last that it was time to roll up the crumpled skin of the day, with its arguments and its impressions and its anger and its laughter, and cast it into the hedge.” (Woolf 21)

“Why did men drink wine and women water” (Woolf 22)

Woolf raised many questions to reach the answer, women poverty, abuse, suffering, and injustice, inequality all these problems should end, because women have fiction, power, and ability to create work and life by their own without the assistance of men or their control. All what women need is a financial independent and education and then they can fly in the sky of creation and fiction to change the world.

During war, woman had the power on society and country as they took the responsibility during the absence of men and appeared their powers in facing difficulties and discovered their great abilities, after the war ends and men came back and took the power from women hands and limited their roles in home and society, women get confused and felt power is getting out of them, so this made an atmosphere of power war between them that is showed clearly in *The Homecoming*.

The role of women in the society is affected by many external factors. Among the factors is the educational level of the society. The household in London represented a slice of the society who immediately judged the woman as a fallen woman and not worthy of respect, while only one member, with a proper educational level who looked at the woman as a wife and a mother. By that the image of woman in the play was not based on how the woman saw herself but rather on how the society looked at her. Eventually, woman was a tool to show the inner being of males, as good males saw her as a wife and a mother while fallen men saw her as a ‘whore’.

RESULTS

Through history, we can see the power of men is over women's, for different reasons, political, religious, traditional, historical, geographical, physical, spiritual, and many others made the society a patriarchal one which created sexual unequal societies. These societies were and will keep suffering from the lack of the role of women. Woman presents the half of the society, and plays the main role in rising the coming generations. The societies that is aware of women's important role are the most progressive, happy and strong ones.

“A woman must have money and a room of her own if she is to write fiction” (Woolf 5).

The image of woman in the society, at that time, was not standardized, the role of women in the society was very subjective and that caused confusion, in both literary work and society, about the image of woman. This is very much related to the confusion caused by the end of World War II as the societies were very far from civil life for a long period. Gradually new methods of authority and control raised, such as sexuality, instead of weapons.

Discussion

The patriarchal society is a fragile and weak society, it prefers gender on another, and it gives life to one gender and takes it from the other one. These societies suffer from sadness, injustice, lack of creativity, abuse of power, women maltreatment, uneducated individuals, sexual abuse, early marriage, lack of social awareness and many other problems. In these societies women started to be aware of their rights and start raising their voices to make the change.

The patriarchal society gives the power of life to men and makes their power over women, men can work, educate, enjoy, their orders should be obeyed by women, they have the life of a king, while women have limited rights, and they do not own their lives' decisions. From the old centuries till nowadays women were responsible of children, house, cooking, and please their men. For instance in the Victorian age the lady should be beautiful, clean, acknowledged of the house works, and serving her husband. Even in many societies woman are still not called by her name, but by the name of her husband or father or son just because she is a woman.

At the 18th century women were not allowed to finish their education or even work and gain their own money, they used to get married in early age, most of them before the age of 21 had five or six children, were they spend the time in cleaning, cooking, serving and pleasing their men. For instance in the 18th century, the middle class families used to live in one room, women had no room of their owns, they always surrounded by family members and visitors, it was hard for them to have a calm place to think and write .

Women in the 18th century had their fiction, but they could not make it true, because they were busy all the time, their daughter may or may not get a little education while sons can continue till college, high class and rich families like Woolf's family used to homeschooling their daughters. The patriarchal society did not allow women to work, they get their money and needs from their fathers and husbands because women were not allowed to leave the house without their husband's permission (Claudia n.p).

“... the ideal of marriage had been brought to its lowest possible level [...] it emphasized the sexual side of the connection, and almost entirely disregarded the spiritual.”[2] W.L. Blease

In the 17th and 18th centuries when women got married they considered to have neither rights nor properties because by their marriage their properties would exchange automatically to their husbands. So they lived under the power of men till death and never had their own money.

“A respectable woman was nothing but the potential mother of children.” (Woolf 22).

Many of women had not the right to get any education, women from low class or poor families did not have any education, and they did not even know how to read or write. Women from rich or middle-class families had the chance of homeschooling which they had to leave at the age of fifteen or sixteen to marry. After their marriage they had the chance to use their husband’s library and books but many of them did not have the time to use this right because of family and house responsibilities. Some women were writing to empty their ideas and mind on papers and then throw their writings in order not to be judged. This is why we cannot find women writings or works in belongs to the old century (Woolf 21).

Writers of the 18th century had a different idea of women, although they were educated and famous, but they lived in the patriarchal society and agree with it, for instance Napoleon, Mussolini Samuel Butter and Pop. Ibid.

“Wise men never say what they think of women” Samuel Butter, while pop said; “Most Women have no character at all.” Napoleon and Mussolini both insist on the inferiority of women. within these lines we can figure out the reality of the patriarchal society, these men were highly educated and well-known writers and figures but at the same time they saw women as an insect or even did not see them at all. Traditions, family, community and many other reasons affect them to humiliate women and put their power on them. (Woolf 20)

Woolf said that after reading some men writers’ books I felt that they have anger when they talk about women, they made judgments while they had no evidence; most men are just affected by the patriarchal society in a way or another , they wanted women to be chastity, modesty, compassion, and piety. While women had a strong imagination and abilities to show themselves in patriarchal society if they had the chance, power, money and privacy. This feel of anger is not logical it shows that men were afraid of losing their power because they know the ability of women but ignoring it.

Men were mentally independent of women but emotionally non dependent. They may think that if they educate women they will misuse this power to be above them and end their power. It is like the relation between rich and poor people she said, rich people think that poor people are trying to use them and abuse their fortune to have power which creates the feeling of anger.

“When an arguer argues dispassionately he thinks only of the argument; and the reader cannot help thinking of the argument too. If he had written dispassionately about women, had used indisputable proofs to establish his argument and had shown no trace of wishing that the result should be one thing rather than another.” (Woolf 29).

Women had no right to choose their life partners, whoever the man is he will be the master and the lord of the house, and his wife will be under his command. Women had not deprived of education only but also locked up, beaten and flung about the room. They treated like animals, and they wished to have the freedom of a dog. The confusion of women role became from her importance and disrespect at the same time, she was a mother, she wrote poetry but never been in history, she is the main character in the society at the same time she was owned by her

husband, society could not be without women but at the same time humiliate and despise her. (Šalinović 221).

Woolf raised an important question; she asked her readers to imagine if Shakespeare had a sister, and she named her Judith, she could have the same genius and creativity of Shakespeare but would she be able to write, work or get the rights of her brother, of course not, she would be a servant and a toy in her husband's hands, she would have gone crazed, shot herself, or continued the days of her life in a lonely place out of the village, half witch, half wizard, feared and mocked. A clever woman how liked to write poetry or do art would be treated in a different way because she is not following the patriarchal society and traditions, she would be cursed by people's words and looks. Mr. Oscar Browning was a great figure in Cambridge and used to examine the students once said: "The best women was intellectually the inferior of the worst man" (Woolf 45).

The woman who likes to read or to be a writer or a novelist or even create things in other fields and become a successful intellectual one, the patriarchal society will connect this to a man in her life, that a woman cannot do or think by herself there will be always a man behind these women to make her reach these levels, as if they are always have to depend on men and not to be free or independent. The main theory is that women should always be inferior and man is superior.

Woolf gives some examples of women writers in the 17th and 18th century like Lady Winchelsea who wrote;

How we are fallen! Fallen by mistaken rules,
And Education's more than Nature's fools;
Debarred from be dull, improvements of the mind,
And to be dull, expected and designed;
And if someone would soar above the rest,
With warmer fancy, and ambition pressed,
So strong the opposing faction still appears,
The hopes to thrive can ne'er outweigh the fears,

These lines are explaining the fear and anger from men and the patriarchal society, men are ruling women, take their rights from their hands bar their way in doing what they want which is writing.

Women writers suffered a lot to do their writings, maybe they locked themselves into a room, and maybe they faced so many financial, social and psychological difficulties till they wrote something. It is a pity that such clever and talented women did not have the chance to exercise their most normal right which is writing. Now we can imagine these women lives, Woolf says "Women live like Bats, or Owls, Labour like Beasts, and die like Worms" (Woolf 52)

In the 19th century people's life style start changing, they start moving from towns to cities, their vision of life changed, their belief in religion also start changing after the growth of since and industry, before women were not allowed to go to schools and lucky women were getting homeschooling but in the 19th century women schools start opening, and they start getting education not only from their house library but from schools, and they start writing literary

works. The first great literary works by Victorian women were Charlotte Brontë's, Jane Eyre and Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* in prose fiction, Barrett Browning's *Sonnets from the Portuguese* and Aurora Leigh in verse (Wayne n.p).

Women writing in the 19th century was not completely accepted yet, women writing considered worthless unless she has a real reason to write, like that she is the only worker in the family and needs money to live and look after her family, otherwise they do not accept the idea of her work, women faced all these difficulties and challenges and start writing in different fields and edit their works.

When women start writing, they were not writing by their real characters, but they were confused between the many characters they play which confused the reader about what is right and what is real, they were criticized by men writers who were able to write freely, they had to face this patriarchal society with integrity and genius, some women writers succeeded in writing like Jane Austen and Emily Bronte while others failed (Woolf n.p).

In middle and late 19th century women were allowed to enter the exams of London University, after that women education right and her role gradually developed. Women at that time were not allowed to work only as a teacher or governess and in rare situation, it was so hard for them to find work opportunities, even if they were teaching children, people saw this job as prostitution because this was the way that some poor women of that era work in to gain money. People and society vision to writing and teaching works for women were changed within time, people start accepting women writers, and they start earning some money by working as writers and editors in women and children journals for instant, Geraldine Jewsbury was an editor, Mary, Howitt's diverse, wide-ranging literary career included *Howitt's Journal*, a joint venture with her husband, and Eliza Cook, a poet, published *Eliza Cook's Journal* from 1849 to 1854 (Mermin, 1993, p.44). Between (1850-1860's). First women's movements came to become stronger and grow in popularity, their aims were to make a change in women rights like education, divorce, women's property and others (Šalinović n.p).

Women sexual abuse were the second big problem which faced women through decades in *The Homecoming* we can see woman sexual abuse clearly when Ruth, a wife and a mother came to her husband's family for visit, she was sexually abused by her brother-in-law, and at the same time her family in law men planed to make her work in prostitution, so they can abuse her financially, her brother's in low and her father-in-law defined her as a whore because of her gender, they did not see her as a mother or a step-daughter all what they saw was her beautiful physical appearance and how can they make money from it. when it is time for the couple, Ruth and her husband Teddy, to go back her brothers-in-law and her father-in-law planned for her stay and asked her to stay to serve them and work as a prostitute, her husband did not mind it and went back alone. Ruth had no chance to finish her education at the same time she had no financial independent, she needed men to look after her needs at the same time tried to pay them back by allowing them to abuse her sexually. Her husband were treating her as an object without emotions and her family in low did too. Her father-in-law, Max said; "She can make us all happy. We'd take it in turns to give her a walk round the Park". (Max) here we can clearly see Max talking about abusing and disrespecting his daughter-in-law (Pinter 66).

The confusion of the role of woman at that era reflects the real life of the individuals in their homes. The play presents the conflict on power between men and women and how are the women trying to keep their roles and power on men, after being marginalized and forced to

continue in a specific way by men. The play presents many important conflicts in the society and the way that women reflect to these conflicts, while she left without education or money she used her body to take the control.

The name of the play *The Homecoming* itself refers to the concept of home. In the play we can see that the men vision of home is different from the women. Men see home as a place they have their control on and a place to enjoy and relief, while women sees it as a place of work and duties. Men powering their family members at home and control them as bosses, women are playing the role of a worker, they play many roles like mother, wife, daughter-in-law, each role has responsibilities and efforts. In the *Homecoming*, Ruth, prefers to stay in the family house and play the role home of a female and power the four men by her beauty and physical characteristics than going back to America and play the role of mother and wife without power. On the other side ,Teddy, refers to go back to his house in America that he has enjoying the power of father and the only man in the house instead of staying in the family house and share his power with his father and brothers. The idea of man power connects to the age too thought, Sam, the father and the household is showing more powerful than the younger members of his family (Saunders 177).

Conclusions

In *A Room of One Owen's* we can conclude the idea of Woolf as man is terribly hampered and partial in his knowledge of women, as a woman in her knowledge of men. Men used women to inspire them of her beauty and physical appearance and relate her with man in their writings as a lover but not a friend or solider or even a thinker to show man's power on her. It is a pity that women become like men, women and men are not enemies they are naturally partners and completing each other, it is natural for both sexes to cooperate because the union of man and woman makes the greatest satisfaction and the complete happiness.

Woolf thought that although man and woman are two bodies, and they need to cooperate to make the most complete satisfaction, so they can also be two brains which need to unite and complete each other. So men and women need to cooperate and connect their soul, body and mind to reach the complete pleasure and happiness (Woolf 82).

Last Woolf emphasized on the importance of women writers, many women writers were genius, talented, creative, but they had no chance to write and now they are dead under the ground, actually they are not dead they are inside each women asking to write and show women abilities and talent to be heard and read about throw history in order not to be forgotten and continue their presence even after death (Wolf 49).

The reality is that women should never give up writing even if they had hard conditions, they should have the economical independent and a room of their own, to teach, create, love, fight and gain their money by their pens.

In *The Homecoming*, These men behaviors made the confusion of the women role after the Second World War. During the war woman had the power on society and country as they took the responsibility during the absence of men and appeared their powers in facing difficulties and discovered their great abilities, after war, men came back and took the power from women hands and limited their roles in home and society, women get confused and felt power is getting out of them, so this made an atmosphere of power war between them that is showed clearly in *The Homecoming*.

Women identity and role, whether at home or in the society, is highly connected to the idea of love. However, love had two main conflicts and contracted aspects, one is physical and connected to sex and not love making, and the other one is intellectual and connected to the emotional fulfillment. The type of love defined the role and position of woman in the society. However, in the play Ruth had a role in linking her to the physical type of sex and sexuality.

Family in *The Homecoming* does not abuse and humiliate only, Ruth, (the wife of Teddy) they also humiliated, Jessie, (Teddy's mother) even after her death. The husband, Max, (The household) calls her whore in many parts of the play and at the same time calls her mother. These manners show the confusion of the women role not only from the side of women but from men side too. Pinter shows this confusion in a small family shape which represents the nucleus of society, and brings readers to analyses the view of the society at that era.

The role and position of woman in the society is linked to the setting and location. The word home affected the view of woman all over the play, as Ruth is a mother of three children and a wife at the home in America and turned to a whore at the home in London. *The Homecoming* in the text works on a literal level, with both Teddy and Ruth are returning to their homeland in Britain. However, the return home is also useful as a metaphor because Teddy and Ruth both come home to themselves. Teddy fundamentally realizes that his commitment to his philosophy is more important than anything else; he also fully commits himself to the masculine world of his youth. He submits to his father and brothers and essentially abandons his wife to them. The play can also be seen as Ruth's homecoming, for she realizes that staying with Teddy is not enough for her. She is not emotionally, and it is assumed sexually, fulfilled. She has little power with Teddy, but now has a great deal of it (Bartucca n.p).

The writer's approach to women' role in the society is neither neutral nor comprehensive, as he focused on the negative role of women rather than depicting both the negative and the positive. The depiction was highly subjective and loaded with degrading words, like whore and bitch. The play presented a highly negative image of the society and ignored the presence of virtue and ethics in both American and English societies, which resulted in an unrealistic and flawed depiction of both men, and women in that era.

The writer indirectly reflected the dominance of woman at home at the end of the play by centering the woman and submitting all the male characters to her, whether through narrative or setting. This reflects the dominance of woman in her small society, family, and provide an open end to whether she will dominate the outer society or not.

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