

Women's Changing Roles during Different Centuries

By

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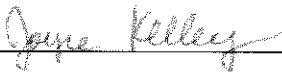
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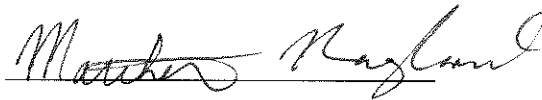
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Introduction

“When any one of them is given the good news of daughter, his face grows dark after this news and he chokes with inward gloom. He hides himself from people because of this disgrace, asking himself whether he should suffer his daughter with disgrace or bury her alive. What an evil judgment they have about Allah!” (“The Bees,” 16th surah of the Qur’an with 128 ayat. [58-59]).

“There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you all are one in Christ Jesus.”
(Galatians 3:28 ESV).

“MISHNAH. ...A man may sell his daughter, but a woman may not sell her daughter.”
(Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Sotah 23a Soncino 1961 Edition, page 115).

“Women are powerless, have no inheritance, and speak more humbly than even a bad man.”
(Krishna Yajur Veda Taittiriya Samhita 6.5.8.2)

When people with varying religious backgrounds mention their holy texts, many topics emerge for discussion, such as equality, justice, respect, love, and good treatment. While different religions encourage different beliefs, most encourage their male followers to follow certain standards of behavior, including kindness toward women, including mothers, daughters, sisters, or wives. In holy texts, God advises his men and gives foundations which his men should follow in their treatment of the female sex, but in fact, these men historically have not dealt with women as well as they ought to. These men instead have often seen the opportunity to show their power and restrict women’s

abilities, thinking of women as soft and weak creatures. Historically, men have long been afraid of women's power, for women not only carry their children in their bellies, but they can bear the heavy world over their shoulders without complaining or being bothered. Accordingly, a global trend through the centuries is that men have followed paths that convince women of their inferior positions and domestic obligations, stressing that women are under men's control in their behavior. So many men have metaphorically blinded women's eyes and made them unable to see their way until given permission. It has long seemed that men have said:

Follow me, my dear woman. You do not have to use your eyes. Stay blind all your life. I am your instructor, your eyes, your ears, your brain, your master, and even your God. Therefore, stay behind me and let me check the street, which enables you then to follow me. Do not be afraid, my little subordinate, because you are under my control and in my protection. I will save you and allow you to stay at my home. I am the master of my palace as you see (do not forget my position, please). My home is a secure place where you can live and I will charge you for that. The only money that you have to pay is serving me and my children, who will be considered your children after you become my property (my wife). Just keep your voice quiet concerning anything you do not like, appear respectful to all, and love my majesty. My dear subordinate, give me all your property, and I will keep it for you. Be careful of thinking too much or educating yourself in anything that could drive you to a reckless ending or block your way. Trust me and listen to my patriarchal system with which I will decorate your way. Your life and dreams will be colorful with my inscription.

In relation to these sentences, whether from the holy books or those I imagine coming from men's tongues, it is easy to conclude that men during different centuries have been successfully able to convince women of their inferiority. So many men have put women under their control and made them weak because men in general have shaped women's minds with many incorrect ideas which have made women unable to live their lives without having men's protection. Through the 19th century in western culture, men's presence played a significant role in women's lives, whether they were fathers, brothers, husbands, or even sons, which gave men a chance to persuade their women that they were only created to spread pleasure and comfort to all people around them, except themselves. Women had many domestic obligations to do while they were encouraged to forget their own desires, rights, and property. Thus, their roles were restricted to domestic tasks such as running a household, cooking, cleaning, taking care of their husbands, nursing the sick, and doing these domestic duties with a big smile on their faces without complaining of tiredness. However, the patriarchal system enabled men to convince most Victorian women that they did not need to be educated; they only had to focus on their missions as wives, mothers, single women, or dutiful daughters, while men had the advantage of being king over women's bodies, lives, and education. This unjust treatment and unequal relationship extended to all women's issues, including their education, marriages, and their legal rights.

Many western women's writings reflected their opinions and feelings about their minimized roles and the unjust obligations which they suffered under in the 19th century. This can be seen in novels and essays, from Jane Austen's *Persuasion* to the writings of Mary Wollstonecraft. In *Persuasion* (1818), Mrs. Croft scolds captain Wentworth about

his view of women by saying, “But I hate to hear you talking so, like a fine gentleman, and as if women were all fine ladies, instead of rational creatures. We none of us expect to be in smooth water all our days” (91). This shows women’s scornful feelings toward the way that men used to look at them: as weak. Additionally, Mary Wollstonecraft, one of the most outspoken women of her era, writes in *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792), after arguing for women’s education, “I do not wish them [women] to have power over men; but over themselves” (Wollstonecraft 134). Western women’s outspokenness has helped them achieve the many freedoms they enjoy today.

The idea of women’s changing roles in different societies has come to my mind when deciding to write my thesis because the history of women’s rights and their great responsibilities have attracted me not only now, but when I was a child. That does not mean that I live in a Middle Eastern society that does not respect or love women, but indeed my Saudi society cannot build, excite, or be developed without the presence of women. I think choosing the topic of women is so hard because it is not merely an academic or feminist subject to write about, but indeed it relates to the other half of the world that consists of the male half of human society. Western women’s issues invaded men’s minds a long time ago even if these men refused or neglected this fact. It has seldom happened in a traditional household that a man enters his house and does not call upon a member of this lovely gender, whether his mother, sister, wife, or his daughter. Women used to hide their strength and intelligence to understand, listen, and help all people around them. I asked myself several times if I can find a sufficient way to answer this question: how could men traditionally ignore western women’s voices and not respect these sacrificing women who not only serve their husbands, children, and parents,

but also help their countries by pushing their husbands, sons, and their brothers to serve, whether politically or socially? So I decided to focus my thesis on the insightful and thoughtful western women in the 19th century who have been neglected and ignored. Moreover, I will extend discussion to women's positions in the 20th century, and allude to some of these western and global women who still wait for full freedom and negotiation even today in the 21st century.

Through my thesis, I will show women's positions, circumstances, and their roles that made their rights so restricted and ignored in the 19th century and how a lot of changes happened in the 20th century. These changes in the 20th century gave western women some of their rights that they were prohibited to ask for or claim during the 19th century in England. Dividing my thesis into three chapters helps me introduce each historical era separately, giving full information and historical resources that I collected through my research. Also, I will show in my thesis the effect of women's unequal education, harsh marriages, and unjust lives in the 19th century. Then I will make a transition into the 20th century through Woolf's feminist book, *A Room of One's Own* (1929). Once considering this book's discussion of women's progress from the 19th century to the 20th century, I can illustrate how western women's lives, education, and their marital system have changed during the second half of 20th century and the early period of the 21st century. In addition, my thesis will show how western women transfer from a more passive era in the 19th century to a revolutionary period in the 20th century. This transfer plays crucial roles not only in western women's lives, but also in lives of all global women in the 21st century. The strength in women's voices, their attitudes, and writings will be apparent in chapter three of this thesis. The last chapter will present

many comparisons between Victorian women who had passive and worthless positions in the 19th century, western women who found liberation in the 20th century, and global women, especially Muslim ones, in the 21st century.

The first chapter in my thesis will show western women's roles in England during the Victorian Era. This period was so important because it allows us to understand men's minds in the public sphere under the traditional patriarchal system and women's roles in the domestic sphere. These differences between men and women allow us to go along gradually with the developing process that western women followed until they reached modernization and confidence in the 21st century. In addition, these differences help us to understand women's inferior position in the 19th century in contrast to men's superior position. Victorian women were influenced by western men's beliefs, ideas, and the traditions of the patriarchal system. In this chapter, I will introduce material from different historical books such as *A History of Women in the West*, *Born for Liberty: a History of Women in America*, and *Becoming Visible: Women in European History* that describe western women's lives and their functions during the Victorian Era. This will illustrate the kinds of hard situations Victorian women suffered in their domestic sphere that greatly affected their public roles and made them absent. Therefore, western women suffered so much from traditional men who made their position inferior. Starting my thesis with western women's unjust roles and domestic positions assures that readers will understand necessary background information about English women's lives in the 19th century so that they can recognize 21st century women's freedom and their power. Overall, it is most helpful to understand women's lives through their own accounts

because women, regardless of the century that they came from, have the ability to be educated and respected if they have a chance to show their great capabilities.

Next, the second chapter in my thesis will discuss women's positions during Virginia Woolf's time in the early 20th century. It is apt to consider the 20th century the western woman's century because women's revolution in the workforce encouraged many changes in women's roles not only in the domestic sphere, but also in different aspects of the public sphere that prove women's ability to achieve success in any field or subject they choose. I will discuss Woolf *A Room of One's Own* (1929), an influential feminist essay which introduces the resistant idea that "a woman must have money and a room of her own if she is to write fiction" (4). My discussion will look at Woolf through the eyes of modern scholars and show her desire for western women to earn equal treatment in the 20th century, whether in education, marriage, or their professions. Woolf discusses western women's past lives, which were full of obstacles and hardships, and compares this with the lives of western women in the present as they become freer from gender constraints in the 20th century, reflecting her artistic skill as a female writer as she does so. Through her essay, Woolf explains how western women can change the world, gain equal education, and have enriching lives, traits which are as important for men as they are for women. This chapter will embody the serious tone Woolf uses in her feminist text which goes along with her message. Woolf recognizes her responsibility as a writer to develop western women's minds, especially young ones of her era, and encourages women to claim their equal freedom and rights with men. Woolf insists that women's lack of a room and financial income greatly affect their ability to create and write. Woolf argues through *A Room of One's Own* that women should demand financial

independence, a private life, and a room in which to write; she reminds western women readers of the progress they still need to make. Overall, western women's increased opportunities in the 20th century serve as a good transition to the 21st century, in which women have greater equality, freedom, and earning power. Even though there are many global women in the 21st century still under men's control, and their oppression resembles that of western women in the 19th century, women everywhere are making progress.

The final section in my thesis will reflect global women's power, especially Muslim women, and their strength during the 21st century women's rights movement. These women have made positive changes in different aspects of lives such as their literary achievement, education, identities, and marital lives. I will show how the majority of men's views about western women in the 21st century have shifted and how women have found more respect and power than ever before through political and social change. During the 21st century, women have confirmed their abilities to have several identities at once (for example, being both a successful mother and a successful doctor), to be respected as a gender as men always have, and to raise feminist voices to get their rights. In the last few pages of my third chapter, I will focus on some women globally who have completely succeeded in their freedom, abilities, and their activities, including some details about their lives, education, and marriages. For instance, I will give some lively examples about Muslim women in the Middle East such as those from Saudi Arabia, Afghanistan, Egypt, and Yemen. This will show how global women, especially Muslim ones, have succeeded in changing their lives during the past several centuries. In addition, I will transcribe interviews with Muslim women who have achieved much success in

their lives even though some of them still face challenges, just as many western women did in the 19th century. Although the 21st century has left the door open for more progress, some global women are still oppressed under men's control.

Overall, my title, "Women's Changing Roles during Different Centuries," refers to a long journey of women's changing roles that will appear dramatically for readers throughout my work. The goal throughout my thesis is to cover western, global, and Muslim women's education, marriage, and lives during the 19th, 20th, and the early 21st centuries. For that reason, these women are considered a good motivation for many women in the world to gain success and achievement in their lives.

Chapter I:

The Subjection of Western Women in the 19th Century

In order to understand the tradition of western patriarchy, including men's perspective and the roles of western women in the domestic sphere, it is important to study the 19th century. During this era, western women's education, wealth, social conditions, roles, and lives were commonly neglected and ignored by traditional men. It is right to say that western women's roles in the 19th century were similar to facing a row of red traffic lights, stopped according to the many prohibitions, obstacles, and limitations that traditional men and their laws created for women. Therefore, western women were "reduced weak and wretched by a variety of concerning causes" as Mary Wollstonecraft says in her famous late 18th century feminist manifesto *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792) (213). While western men benefited from great freedom and enjoyment, they prevented women from having basic legal rights such as owning property, filing for divorce, suffrage, and access to higher education. Eleanor Flexner and Ellen Fitzpatrick show the position of married women in the 19th century when they discuss how they "could not sign contracts; they had no title to their own earnings, to property even when it was their own by inheritance or dower, or to their children in case of legal separation" (Flexner and Fitzpatrick 7).

Western women's obligations can be seen through their domestic lives and tasks of keeping their households, serving their husbands, and taking care of their children. Their roles required them to focus on their domestic duties and leave male public activities behind them, in contrast to western men, who could choose to be outside the

home and part of many public activities. These differences between genders are visible not only in their social lives, but also in their positions, views, and their relationships at home and in society. Nineteenth century men imposed numerous tasks and difficulties on western women by enforcing women's domestic duties to suit their own desires. It is clear that western women in the Victorian era were considered second-class citizens based on their placement within the domestic sphere, while traditional men occupied a privileged and superior position in society. Overall, western women of the Victorian era not only clung to their husbands, but, in fact, they legally belonged to them as a kind of property, whether controlled physically through their bodies, or mentally through limitations on their education, reading, and discussion. Society decreed that Western women should only have certain subjects to know and discuss, which limited their ideas and writing abilities. For these reasons, 19th century women suffered greatly not only from unequal education, but from gender restrictions, social class inequalities, abusive marriages, and harsh lives. For example, "Girls who have been thus weakly educated" were often dependent on their parents or brothers, but when their brothers married, these girls would suffer under a new "master of the house, and his new partner" with no authority or livelihood (Wollstonecraft 237). Through a discussion of women's education, marriages, and lives, my first chapter will present how 19th century western women were excluded from public life and became imprisoned under their domestic obligations and the patriarchal system. Beginning my thesis with a discussion of western women's unjust position and domestic roles can provide readers with important background information about English women's rights and their lives in the 19th century, all of which provides the

first step to understanding global women's progress and development, a later focus of my thesis.

I-Western Women's Education:

Western women's education in the 19th century was a controversial issue that occupied many men's conversations and writings. During the Victorian Era, women's education was influenced by perceived gender differences, including ideas of women's bodily and mental inferiority, and was shaped by social class. It is difficult to define women's educational position in this era because of the number of limitations and obstacles traditional men put in women's way. Mary Wollstonecraft talked about the importance of women's education by saying, "if [women] be not prepared by education to become the companion of man, [they] will stop the progress of knowledge and virtue" (211). She felt that women's lack of education even made them poor wives and mothers and "unfit to manage a family" (238). Yet, home was considered the safe and proper sphere for Victorian women who were to consider domestic duties the first priority and obligation of their lives. Although 19th century women had an unequal opportunity to participate in education and writing, their natural gifts and skills encouraged their minds and pens to interpret the world around them, and these ideas were transcribed in their diaries and drawings. It would be unjust to query Victorian era women about their lack of education when their position lay at the feet of the patriarchal system. Additionally, identifying women's relationship with writing and education in the 19th century is "complex" because these western women had largely relied on specific subjects that men chose for them. Overall, women's limited education in the 19th century was crippling; it

was viewed at best as unnecessary and at worst as something that distracted them from their responsibilities to their families, and exposed their minds to unsavory ideas.

A-Separate Spheres in the 19th Century:

In the 19th century, the general stereotype about genders was that “women cannot be separated from...men” because they would struggle so much if they lived “without a husband or inherited wealth” (Fraisie and Perrote 112). In fact, the patriarchal system invented many unjust differences between not only men and women in a society, but also between wives and husbands at home. Victorian men allocated only certain jobs to women which related to their naturally caring and motherly natures such as nursing and teaching, to take “care of the sick and of children,” while men had “traditional male meeting places” and pushed women “into family homes and excluded them [from] public spaces” (Levine 97). These separate spheres reflect the traditional idea that was popular in the 19th century that insisted that a woman’s place was at home, completing her domestic duties, and monitoring servants, while a man’s place was in the public eye whether at work, in a factory, a shop, or an office. Wollstonecraft in the 1792 already was calling out against women’s “slavish dependence on men as they were brought up in “a state of perpetual childhood” (215). The inequality between men and women fostered unjust power on the side of the men because “men and women were segregated and obligated to carry on distinct activities in their respective domains” (Levine 3). This example shows how men enjoyed their legal “autonomy and right to speak publicly that were either denied women or granted only grudgingly,” while it limited women’s rights, encouraged them to forget their identities, and made them work with a silence benefiting

their weaker and neglected sex (Levine 3-5). Women's silence allowed them to understand all situations around them but not to speak up with their opinions. Men gave themselves advantages and superiority in education; when a man "enter[d] any profession ha[d] his eye steadily fixed on some feature advantage... whilst women [sought] for pleasure as the main purpose of existence" (Wollstonecraft 232).

Due to the assumption that women were the weak gender, women's ability to write and create was reduced because the patriarchal system shaped women's minds about their proper roles as good wives, giving mothers, and prudent housekeepers. For that, they had to present their love and devotion through serving, obedience, and honoring their families and husbands. Virginize Drachman writes, "As a result of this reorganization of women's and men's lives, the home became known as a woman's place, while men claimed the public area as their own kingdom." Overall, women's domestic roles involved "stay[ing] in [their] place, the home, where [they] devoted life to [their] husband[s] and children" (Drachman 227). Wollstonecraft insisted that women were born equal to men and their intellectual inferiority was made by male social constructions. Therefore, girls deserved to have "education and training equal to boys" and women should have "employment equal to men" because human qualities should not differ by sex (Hewitt 276).

B-The Relationship between Social Class and 19th Century Education:

It is true to say that social class in the Victorian Era affected the educational opportunities of both sexes. The opportunities for western women to educate themselves increased according to their goals, which were connected to their social classes and their

needs. For example, women from the upper classes tended to educate themselves to please their husbands, attract suitors, or to learn about conversational subjects in which their male counterparts were interested, even if they had no personal interest in the topics. This reflected men's position not only in the western society, but also in western women's lives. The happiness of men was considered a priority for women; Laurel Lampela writes, "women from the upper class were taught art as an accomplishment to make them fit for society and to make them more attractive as potential wives" (Lampela 66). Middle class women, on the other hand, educated themselves as a way to feel comfortable with more complex domestic tasks. Lampela writes, "Women from the middle class received art education instruction in composition and color, for use in the domestic craft of embroidery" (66). Thus, the only women who educated themselves to earn money to help meet the needs of their families were the lower class women. This was the only way for these women to benefit from learning domestic skills and to help their families financially. Considering education as a goal in itself, Lampela says, "Lower working class women had opportunities in art instruction that were included in the general curriculum along with reading, writing, arithmetic, sewing, and singing" (Lampela 66). So educating working-class girls in the art of domestic roles and home management skills was significant in the 19th century. Higher-class western women were educated in art and music, but only for the benefit of their husbands. As Arthur D. Efland's article states, "Art was introduced into women's education as a kind of finishing school treatment [that prepare[d] them] for marriage" (Efland 133). This era prepared women to be "cultural monitors...for [their] marriage" and allowed them to attend art school in order to please their men. However, western women regarded art education as a

worthy endeavor and saw it as a positive tool which could provide them with a sense of “accomplishment that few could acquire” because this kind of education encouraged western women “to enjoy all its productions and afford the unspeakable pleasure of understanding the character of pictures, statues, etc.” (Efland 134).

Furthermore, the patriarchal system in this era played a significant role in giving western women permission to attend school by dictating when the pursuit of education was allowed. These designated times of study allowed the patriarchal system to control women’s domestic work and determine if their tasks were fulfilled correctly. Overall, Victorian limitations resulted in “education more interested in good breeding than in good teaching” (Levine 117). This example shows how this particular century kept “the power of education” for men and the children-bearing role of the family for women (Levine 117). Most Victorian women still received only a grade school education with touches of finishing school. If a woman in the 19th century wanted to pursue future studies, she would need to have the time and motivation to undertake them herself.

C- Education and Gender Roles:

When women of the early to mid-19th century demanded the right to their own feelings, opinions, attitudes, and the resultant capacity for learning and writing, their demands usually fell on deaf ears. This society considered the extent of women’s roles to be just to produce children, rear them, and serve their men. As Natalie Davis and Arlette Frage point out, the role of western women included their “abilit[ies] to bear children, [but had] relative physical weakness compared to men” (Davis and Frage 112). According to this statement, it is apparent that women’s minds and roles were affected by

ideas of male superiority. Mary Wollstonecraft “attribute[d women’s learning] to a false system of education, [which] gathered from the books written on this subject by men” such as Gregory Rousseau and other male writers. She wrote that these men, “considering females rather as women than human creatures, have been more anxious to make them alluring mistresses than affectionate wives and rational mothers” (qtd.in Abramas 101). Men’s legal and social dominance often caused women writers such as “Elizabeth Gaskell, George Eliot (ie. Marian Evans), and George Sand (Amandine Lucie Dupin)” to hide their real names and replace them with male pseudonyms (Clark College 2). For example, Charlotte Brontë used the male pen name Currer Bell when she received a negative statement from an English poet because many male publishers did not think that the literary world could be a place for women. These female writers intended to hide their identities to allow them to publish what they pleased, and their male pen names helped them to keep their identities secret. This was a clever way for western women to reflect their abilities in their writings, while commenting on the prohibited public sphere outside their home. This also allowed them to analyze their knowledge according to men’s ways of thinking, free from the constraints that womanhood bestowed on feminine writers. These women knew that if women had power, they would “be more respectable members of society... like men” (Wollstonecraft 234). The only two ways that the patriarchal system gave women permission to be educated were through amusing and pleasing their husbands and also through developing their home, considered the best and safest place for them to learn. Many women educated themselves through “watching their mothers go about daily chores: cooking, child care, washing, mending, sewing, and weaving” (Davis and Farge 11). All of these domestic works in the eyes of the patriarchy encouraged little

western girls' fingers to focus on domestic works instead of "unimportant" subjects to women, such as advanced mathematics, philosophy, medicine, or classical languages.

Equal education and opportunities by the century's end provided equality in different aspects of more women's lives. By the century's end, twelve colleges and universities were open to women and even Cambridge (1881) and Oxford (1884) allowed women to take classes, even though the question of awarding degrees to women at Cambridge caused controversy in 1897. This allowed women to expand their limited roles as citizens, mothers, and wives, but some western men in the 19th century still resented this idea of equality between the genders, and strove to keep their dominant positions as long as they could. Women's education was still so controlled by gender stereotypes in the 19th century, behind which lurked the traditional belief that women's education went against the established nature of things and could make them ill. Many western families in England refused to allow their daughters to attend Cambridge and Oxford Universities to study fields such as nursing even when they opened their doors to women. Being a nurse was still controversial work for women in the 19th century; even "army doctors who worked [in the Crimean War (1854-1856)] did not want the nurses helping" (*The National Archives*). Florence Nightingale set a good example of the importance of female roles in a hospital even though she herself faced some rejections from her parents at first. Her parents "did not want this for their daughter. Eventually, her father gave his permission for her to go to Germany where she gained some nursing experience at the Deaconess Institution Hospital for the poor and sick" (*The National Archives*). Nightingale and her nurses became "national heroines," especially when "[t]heir duties consist[ed], in surgical cases, in washing, and preparing for the morning

visits of the medical officer... in dressing bed sores, seeing that the food of the patients [was] properly cooked and properly administered, and that cleanliness, both of the wards and of the person, [was] attended to” (*The National Archives*). In her essay published in 1852 entitled *Cassandra*, Nightingale blames society's obstacles, which prevented middle class women from developing their skills or achieving their dreams. The fear that crippled the men of the 19th century was that public education could make their daughters insufficient wives, bad mothers, and reduce their chances for marriage. It was not important for these women to be educated because they were destined to marry traditional men who had the same lifestyle as their fathers. Wollstonecraft critiqued the ideas of her time, saying that too often “an unhappy marriage is often very advantageous to a family, and that the neglected wife is, in general, the best mother” (Wollstonecraft 227). Women were obligated to read music and play piano, become competent at dancing, handicrafts, floral arrangements, and drawing, all while gathering a limited knowledge of literature which was intended to prepare them to be good wives.

Even after England began to allow women to enroll in colleges in the later decades of the 19th century, western women still faced many stereotypes that challenged their education. For example, most classes were offered only to men, and women were not allowed to enter any library until it was emptied of any men (Lampela 66). Some women had an eagerness to write and educate themselves, such as Elizabeth Barrett Browning, who used illness as a good excuse to write her poetry at the top of her father’s house. Her dedication reflects women’s desires in that time to be well educated and perceived as good writers, but often their circumstances were too oppressive which prevented them from achieving their desires (Davis and Farge 112). As a way to escape

gender constriction in the 19th century, Elizabeth Barrett Browning finally escaped from her father's house and settled with her husband in Italy because her father did not want any of his children to marry. In general, education in the 19th century had many limitations that encouraged western men to neglect women, whether young girls, married women, single women, or widows, and to reduce their desire to be educated to something insignificant. A good example that supports men's ideas about women's education in the 19th century is in Jean Louisivess's article "On the Institution of the Christian Women" when he states, "Women were not to attend classes with men; domestic work should take priority over reading and writing; and the teaching of Latin" (qtd. in Davis and Farge 103). Western women were not only generally "excluded from a university education," until late in the century, but also labeled as having a "weak nature" which hindered them from "[speaking] out in public"; these stereotypes would "lead other women sometimes [to make] fun of young women of letters" (Klapisch-Zuber 448).

Another example that is indicative of the connection between western women's education in the 19th century and gender roles is Laural Lampela's article entitled "Women's Art Education Institutions in 19th century England." Lampela writes, "Typical classes provided by the School of Design included morning classes for males and gentlemen and afternoon classes for ladies, governesses, and females" (Lampela 66). Education in art encouraged many western women in the 19th century to consider it as a woman's tool because it was the only subject wherein western women could express their feelings and attitudes without any need to justify the reasons for their artistic choices. Thus, we find many pictures in western women's schoolrooms that show women's dreams and motivations. Many Victorian writers such as John Ruskin and John Stuart

Mill note women “had a duty to refine the lives of those around them” (Efland 139). In addition, portraying domestic lives and illustrating them in tangible pictures reflected women’s intelligence, superiority, and excellent abilities in depicting the world around them. Carmen Pérez Ríu says, “There were increasing numbers of ‘professional’ women painters in Victorian times especially during the second half of the century” (Ríu 48-49). Even in painting, women still faced an abundance of criticisms from men. To illustrate this idea, Losano discusses Charlotte Brontë’s *Jane Eyre* when Rochester looks at Jane’s paintings and asks Jane if she “was happy when she painted them” (qtd. in Losano 50). Losous writes that Jane’s starkly original watercolors show “Jane’s independence of spirit, imagination and bravery in having chosen such a topic out of her own imagination” (Losano 50). Rochester wants to know Jane’s feeling and creation through her expression in paintings, and understands she reveals her deepest feeling in painting. Because it was an acceptable medium for women, western women participated widely in art in the early and middle decades of the nineteenth century through their painting, sketching, and their drawing.

Traditional ideas of family and marriage, as well as the humiliation brought by males and society in general on women stepping out of bounds worked against women’s success in the 19th century. This was often the case in the arts; while women had the chance to show their ability to create and to inspire new forms, some women conformed to tradition. However, women writers found great promise for women in art. Antonia Losann writes:

The female artists depicted by Victorian women novelists [...] are represented as being, in diverse ways, outside the scope of traditional bourgeois culture. Their

artistic impulses are both the psychological cause and the narrative effect of their otherness; in other words, these novelists represent a woman's artistic nature as both responsible for her desire to escape gender norms and the symbol of that desire. (Qtd. in Carmen Pérez Ríu 49)

Furthermore, the patriarchal system mandated that the only place for western women to discuss and work together was in the classroom. It was unfortunate that the patriarchal society in the 19th century looked at women's education as an overindulgence, even as a disease that would change their responsibilities toward their families, and guide their minds to wayward ideas because "their minds [were] not in a healthy state [as men's]" as Mary Wollstonecraft writes (qtd. in Abrams 101).

On the other hand, many educated men in the 19th century felt that female education "should take into consideration a husband's need" which limited women's ambitions in education to sharing their husbands' interests and being good conversationalists, as Levine says (30). Because the patriarchal system asserted that the higher education of women should exist only through their domestic duties and serving their husbands, these women could actually reach higher domestic education from their husbands' rewards. Staying at home, serving their husbands, and taking care of their children were considered the ideals for western women to pursue. Levine says, "Women constantly encountered limits on their bodies, on their desires to learn, and on their choice of a future" (4). It is apparent that western women savored their home lives greatly and felt self-confidence when they served their families, but the situation reversed when their domestic services made them as servants in their husbands' homes and footnotes to his story. "Producing food and bearing children" were not big sacrifices for mothers who

considered their family the most important part of their lives, but limited education and unending domestic work made them as slaves under their families' and husband's desires (Sara Evans 11). Enslaving women happened through "cramping their understandings and sharpening their senses" as Mary Wollstonecraft says (220). Diana Cordea's article "Two approaches on the philosophy of separate spheres in mid Victorian England" speaks of "the typical Victorian women whose legal rights resembled those of children: women were not allowed to vote, to own their property, to have savings accounts, to hold a job or to sue other people" (Ruskin and Cordea 118). In fact, women's citizenship only played important roles in their children's lives as a duty to "raise their children to be good republicans by instilling in them a love of freedom and equality" (Fraisie and Perrot 29).

The relationship between Victorian women and political experience in the 19th century was a complex and complicated one. Nineteenth century women faced many obstacles which limited their political involvement and denied them their political and civil rights. In fact, Victorian women only achieved in the late 19th century their "opportunity to start a conversation with the Houses of Parliament" (Davey 252). At this time, their political participation clearly became apparent, when western women were able to negotiate, meet, and overcome some social limitations and ideological exclusions that women faced in their society. In the 1870s, middle-class women such as Charlotte Anley, Sarah Austin, Clara Lowe and Annie Macpherson played a significant role in political issues. These individual women were motivated by "ideological considerations" which encouraged them to leave England independently, as Dr. Jennifer Davey writes. In his book, *The Political Worlds of Women: Gender and Politics in 19th-Century Britain*, Dr. Davey says, "Charlotte Anley travelled to Australia to investigate the condition of

women prisoners; Clara Lowe and Annie Macpherson promoted emigration as a solution to child poverty and deprivations; Sarah Austin sought economic independence alongside relative intellectual freedom; and many women were inspired to travel to the Italian peninsula to participate” (Davey 252).

It appears that some 19th century male educators insisted “the best way to prevent girls from learning too much was to keep them confined within the home’s four walls” (Fraise and Perrote 150). Men found education for women had “little reason” and educated women would “acquire too much courage or fortitude” so women had to depend on men in “the various relations of life” (Wollstonecraft 216). These men could not find any benefit in the education of women so that they believed that education put “society in danger” and made them “no longer [able to] fulfill...duties as wife and mother” (Fraise and Perrote 153). Keeping women at home and under their family’s control were thought to be the best ways to keep them from dreaming or escaping. As many women could not have any connection with the public world, they resorted to the enjoyment of books as a good link to the society. One such woman was Caroline Schlegel-Schelling who was so happy to read her “books which sent her from her native city” (Fraise and Perrote 154). This example shows how western women considered education and reading books to be a means to travel through an author’s ideas and a good bridge which enabled them to understand the feelings and experiences of women in previous generations. Goethe’s mother, a seventy-five year-old, expressed her feeling of happiness with “novels written by women” in one of her letters to her son when she wrote, “You cannot do anything kinder or more praiseworthy for your loving mother, in her poverty of spirit, than to be so kind as to share such pleasant things with me whenever you receive them” (qtd. in Fraise

and Perrote 155). Reading books and self-educating were great tools for improving western women's minds.

Unfortunately, many women were also “mouthpieces” for many men's phrases and ideas, for men always convinced them to stay in their place by saying, “men will do your thinking for you” (Fraise and Perrote 165). Being molded this way by traditional men helped convince western women to stop thinking, to not care about their intelligence or higher education, and to be more dependent on men. In this way, the goal of female education was just to amuse their husbands' desires and selfishness so that a wife might become “a pleasing companion to her husband and a proper mother for her children” (Duby and Perrot 260). Western women's limited education in the Victorian Era can be shown through Arthur D. Efland when he says, “Art was introduced into women's education as a kind of finishing school treatment that also included elocution, literature, singing, and lessons...to equip them for marriage” (Efland 131). Thus, the goal of girls' education was at first “private and mainly religious,” but as years passed it became “a matter of public concern,” which was in contrast to the 19th century views which considered the “true source” of women's education to be “at home” (Efland 150). It took until the 20th century for women's education to equal men's.

The fact that women were studying at Cambridge or Oxford did not mean that women received degrees. Women were not awarded degrees on an equal level to men at Cambridge until 1948; men knew that if women had college or university degrees, they would gain privileges and advantages such as equal status and voting rights.

D- Victorian Women Writers:

Western women writers had “double vision” because they could speak both as a writer and as women characters. Western women had great vision in their writing even if they were so often limited in their freedom and their choice of subjects. Indeed, the real conflict that western women writers faced during the 19th century was the paradox between “writing for the public [as opposed to] the writing for the self” as Robert Scholes suggests (Wilson 71). Their writings faced male criticism for their opinions and feelings, which reflected the patriarchal attitude that women’s intelligence is substandard. Men sometimes criticized women writers when they wrote about male subjects in the 19th century and accused them of lacking a higher degree of achievement in both their fictional and critical writings. Men felt that women should “focu[s] more on the contemplation of their own lives than on their responsibility to encourage and inspire future generations” as Anne Thackeray Ritchie states in her article “Heroines and Their Grandmothers” (Ritchie 150). Ironically, the reason that men found western women writers lacking in education, whether in describing domestic or public life, was directly due to the patriarchal limitations and obstacles placed before women. This caused women to be subservient to men’s education and knowledge because this system thought that “the only way women can rise in the world, [was]--by marriage” (Wollstonecraft 216). Therefore, male criticism tended to instruct western women writers regarding the kinds of subjects they should follow in their writing; even George Eliot wrote that “women writers must take care not to fall into the trap of being too ‘feminine’ by writing ‘silly’ fashionable novels and tales of high life that lack substance or morality” (qtd. in Ritchie 62).

On the other hand, western women writers and artists invented a method of rewarding themselves that confirmed how educated and good they were as writers even though they felt under men's dominion. They praised themselves after consistently facing men's criticisms as a way to raise their confidence. For example, men disliked the entrance of women into the art of wood engraving, as Lampela writes: "Several male wood engravers protested, saying that the education of ladies in art would interfere with the profession of wood engraving and flood the field with qualified persons" (Lampela 67). This example reflects men's blatant disregard for women's attitudes and the roles they wished to fill in the 19th century, whether these women were formally educated or not. Furthermore, women proved their abilities in education and writing in spite of many obstacles, difficulties, and limitations which patriarchal society put in their paths.

Another obstacle that challenged western women in the 19th century was traditional religion. Old religious ideas persisted with the reading of the Christian Bible, especially when Saint Paul considered "women inferior to men and prohibited them from teaching [religious subjects]" (Klapisch-Zuber 99). Western women were not allowed to speak in church, and their silence was good evidence of their subordinate positions. Many responsibilities prohibited western women from the public sphere, whether marital, maternal, or domestic, which made the reason for attending worship service more social rather than religious. Women were directed to "hold their tongues and let men speak. Women were not allowed in the court; they could not govern, teach, or preach" (Klapisch-Zuber 99). If they had any questions, they were to wait and question their husbands at home. Through women's silence, they were to show their love, subordinate status, respect, and obedience to their men. John Milton's famous line in *Paradise Lost*

states, “he for God only, she for God in him” (qtd. in Evans 22). This example demonstrates how men’s rule over women was paralleled to that of God over men. This is apparent when Milton describes women as the “first frail mother” by saying, “women are formed for softness and sweet attractive grace” (qtd. in Wollstonecraft 217). In general, 19th century men benefited from traditional religious teachings and considered them a fast way to convince western women of submission. Francoise Borin shows this idea in his essay by illustrating how we see this with “Eve and Mary (Eve more sinful than Adam, Mary less sacred than Jesus)” which reflects the general belief about women’s limitations in their thoughts, bodies, and sexualities. According to this thought process, women required help and wisdom from their men who were expected to prevent women “from committing another sin” (Klapisch-Zuberl 259). Men gave 19th century women “limits on their bodies through childbearing,” which kept them at home and reduced “their desire to learn” (Davis and Farge 4). This made the number of girls’ schools and choices in educational pursuits very few in number, and not wholly effective or worthwhile as compared to those of men, especially when women “were taught to please, and they only live to please” which gives men superiority, as Wollstonecraft argues (221). This led western women to only “slow progress [in] education” (Davis and Farge 5). Klapisch-Zuber sarcastically states that the only lesson that Victorian society taught women was to “speak softly to their husbands in the bedrooms while she embraces him” (Klapisch-Zuber 115). One example demonstrating the hardness of this lesson is the early generation of western women who had been only “self-educated” and obeyed their men’s desires of staying at home as a way to keep their relationships with their husbands, children, and their relatives in good standing. Millicent Garrett Fawcett notes, “it is

important to show that higher education would fit women better to perform the duties of married life... [even if] the object of girls' education should be to produce not good wives, but good women" (Fawcett 31). This particular example shows the importance of education in western women's lives according to many women who argued that males' and females' education should be similar because "education did not [only] prepare them in any sense for the world or work," but in fact, it prepared them for their great mission in their lives (Levins 84). In fact, private education cannot create an educated society for that reason so that men and women "must be educated, in a great degree, by the opinions and manners of the society they live in" because strength of men and women can be brought about through their "minds by enlarging it" (Wollstonecraft 219, 221). In contrast, many western men saw that "education and professional activity would destroy women's health" so they did "not care to marry women with set ways [or] independent character, who are able to care for themselves... men want[ed] wives who [were] more dependent upon them and look up to them" as Virginia G. Drachman says (Drachman 221, 249).

Overall, education was a significant factor in western women's lives which played a big role in their positions during the Victorian Era. In fact, 19th century women's limited education leads us not only to understand men's minds in the patriarchal system, but also to know the reasons for women's acceptance of men's roles because these women were influenced by men's beliefs and ideas. Thus, this understanding allows us to see the developing process that women followed in the 19th century until they reached the modern era and could enjoy the fruit of their labor and the resultant confidence it brought. For instance, the Women's Rights Convention in Seneca Falls, New York, in 1848 was

the first formal meeting toward gender equality which encouraged many women around the world to begin demanding their educated rights. This helped them to plant the first seeds toward the changes that would take place in the 20th century.

II-Women's Lives After Marriage in the 19th Century:

The differences between western men's and women's obligations and rights always came back to the differences between private and public spheres. As a result, "man's duty was to supply his wife with the necessities of life: food, lodging, clothing, medicine," while women were to serve their husbands with love and submission (Fraisie and Perrot 100). Marital lives during the 19th century portrayed men protecting women and holding superiority over them, while the image of women was one of inferiority and obedience, upholding their good natures as wives were bound. Western wives' positions were created according to their husbands' priorities, beliefs, and orders as if their missions of subordination were started after marriage by their husbands. Marriage in the Victorian era was a regular custom that most men and women had to adhere to, rather than a choice based on love or sacrifice: "The wife was to be subject to her husband as well, and often treated as a superior servant, not as an equal" (Clark College 1).

The passive role of western wives and mothers under the patriarchal system reflected men's treatment of their women, which traditionally was a copy of their fathers' behaviors before them. For that reason, 19th century women forgot themselves under their domestic duties, obligated works, and obedience to their husbands while their men freed themselves from household workings and responsibilities, which enabled them to engage freely in the public lives without the disruptions western women faced. This treatment

allowed western men to obliterate women's identities in different fields through refusing women's roles in public society and even the arts, whether the women were married, widowed, single, or divorced. Thus, all types of western women suffered greatly from traditional discrimination, limitations, and hardships that they faced in their relationships with their men, especially their husbands. In fact, western women in the 19th century often were not allowed to speak freely to men until they got married and were accompanied by chaperones. In addition, the average age of men for marriage was usually more than five years more than their wives, which gave traditional men the right to place themselves as leaders after marriage, while women took second place in their marital lives. The difference in the age between western men and women encouraged married women to make their husbands "the center" of their universe with their first duty that of "lov[ing] their husband[s]," and their second that of "speak[ing] softly to [them] in the bedrooms" as Klapisch-Zuber says (109,115). Diana Cordea tells us, "a married couple [was seen] as one person. The husband was responsible for his wife and bound by law to protect her. While...the wife had her own perfectly defined occupation at home" (Cordea 118). Protecting women in the 19th century only encouraged men's "attempting to keep [women] always in the state of childhood" as Wollstonecraft notes (217). Therefore, western women had to think seriously about their marital obligations of "obedience, temperance, chastity, steadiness, and silence" (Fraisie and Perrote 7).

A-Western Women's Roles in their Married Lives:

This era portrays western women's roles as an exchange of service to their men for their husbands' rewards of love and control. Victorian women's roles appear clearly

in the domestic sphere as they served their husbands and raised their children. Most women in the 19th century had to sacrifice their time, minds, and energies for their husbands' pleasure, not only through their own bodies and bearing children, but also through giving up their property, supervising houses, and raising these children. Nineteenth century women were taught from their childhood that they had to have "a little knowledge of human weakness, justly termed cunning, softness of temper, outward obedience, and a scrupulous attention to a puerile kind of property, [to] obtain for them[selves] the protection of man" (Wollstonecraft 213). They had to be patient, sacrificing, and always giving just to please their husbands who took credit for their wives' proper behavior. The right of custody went to the father directly, and there were no rights for women if they dared to seek divorce. Western women of the early and mid-19th century suffered greatly from their submission and deprived rights because they could not, without their husbands' permission, "enroll in a university, open a bank account, obtain a passport, ... seek treatment in a hospital, [or even file] a criminal complaint against [their] husband[s]" (Fraisie and Perrot 105). Even in work, western women faced unequal payment in contrast to men. For example, "Annual earnings of married women who did work averaged only about 28 percent of their husband's earnings. Because not all women worked, and because children usually contributed more to the family budget than their mothers, for the average family the wife contributed only around seven percent of total family income" ("Women's Labour Force Participation").

In producing and rearing children, maintaining the domestic home front, and earning a living, women were disadvantaged, whether as mothers or widows. In contrast, men in the 19th century savored their legal rights of autonomy, which the patriarchal

system gave them. This autonomy led men to deny western women valuable positions while enjoying their own freedom, even speaking about western women's inferiority publicly just to show their power over them, while women could not separate themselves from men whether socially or materially because "the body and heart of a woman are described in relation to man" (Fraisie and Perrote 6). Relating the expectations brought about by the sexual politics of the time to Biblical expectations was the most efficient and effective way to convince western women to continually submit to their husbands. Men also held a dominating role over women's property and wealth since only single women or widows held those assets and, even then, only with minimal control. Aileen B. Agnew notes this trail of property ownership in her article "Women and Property in Early 19th century Portsmouth": Married women had virtually no specific rights under the laws of coverture. Single women, however, possessed all the rights of property accorded to men, at least until they married (66).

B-Women's Domestic Skills in the 19th Century:

Painting, reading, and writing were considered important skills for western women, which reflects how creative women were. Painting was one of the arts open to women in the nineteenth century, and took a feminist turn because it showed women's abilities in expressing their views through their artistic skills. Reading and writing were also considered crucial for women's lives during the Victorian era. These two activities for a girl were not only a duty to develop, but also they were a means to give these girls "pleasure" and "entertainment" while they were sitting in their homes (Sentilles 416). Renée M. Sentilles says, "Parents and writers encouraged girls to keep diaries as part of

their self-culture... [because r]eading and writing, the twin activities of literacy, became the vehicles to self-culture” (Sentilles 416). During the 19th century, girls suffered from “Depression and boredom” [because] they had little control over their own lives. So [they] daydreamed: they filled their time with fantasies, especially as they completed various mind-numbing chores (Sentilles 416).

Teaching girls at school in the 19th century made them suffer much according to their families’ beliefs and desires. In many cases, families imposed on the girls to do more domestic work, which forced many of girls to leave school regardless of the girls’ dreams or ambitions to be successful women in the future. While some girls’ families “pulled back [their girls] into the home to fulfill domestic duties, many left because of illness” because their families believed that too much women’s education negatively affected the minds of girls and made them insufficient daughters and wives (Sentilles 418).

Choosing between marriage and career was one of the hardest things that challenged western women in the 19th century. The purpose of marriage was “procreation” rather than earning money. Women had to alienate themselves from having careers if they wanted to protect their marital lives; as Drachman says, “the separatist approach [proved] that a professional woman must remain single; [while] the Victorian attitude [shows] that married woman must sacrifice her career” (226). Nineteenth century men gave married women two options, limited careers or their married lives, because the patriarchal system did not allow western women to “combine [their] career ... with marriage and motherhood” (Drachman 232). Thus, a career (such as teaching or nursing) would place too many obstacles and difficulties in women’s private lives with their

husbands and children because women could be taken “out of their sphere of duties, and [if they did that, they would] make [themselves] ridiculous and useless” (Wollstonecraft 216).

In my opinion, western married women played a significant role in their children’s lives because they could change many traditional concepts and beliefs in their minds which could improve the position of women in the eyes of future generations. But too often this appeared only when western women taught “their daughters” various domestic skills to prepare them correctly for the next marital “generation.” Women also worked to educate “their sons to be moral and virtuous citizens” (Duby and Perrot 57). The patriarchal system in the 19th century dealt with women more as domestic workers than as well-rounded human beings, who had to do everything, including have children, feed them, manage their husbands’ wealth, and be a good partner to their husbands. Thus, western women’s roles in the 19th century were not merely “nurture because a baby’s place when not in the cradle was in [women’s] arms. It was [their] job to keep the child[ren] warm, fed, and clean” (Duby and Perrot 36). According to women’s domestic roles, Victorian married women could not find time to be educated because women “who wished to be authors had [difficulties] to overcome” (Duby and Perrot 410). As a result, education for married women in the 19th century was considered a big obstacle in women’s way. In general, marriage in the 19th century was “men’s image of women rather than the reality of women’s activities” (Klapisch-Zuber 323). The social picture of western women in Victorian Era was limited to the home. Nineteenth century men knew that Victorian educated women could deal with “their husbands without degrading

themselves, because intellect [would] always govern” as Mary Wollstonecraft says (104). For that reason, they always benefited from their control over their women.

C-Western Men’s Rights in the Victorian Era:

Western men in the 19th century benefited greatly from women’s limited freedom and domestic roles. They also were able to use domestic abuse as a weapon against their wives, deny wives divorce and child custody, and have multiple mistresses and partners. In contrast, western women were to have only one man, whom they had to serve and love because he was the last and only man in their lives. In addition, the patriarchal system gave the right of pre-marital sexual pleasure to men, but not to women because it was generally thought permissible for men to “experience sex before marriage” (Klapisch-Zuber 60). Conversely, women’s sexual rights were considered to be only “second-hand sexuality, subservient to male pleasure” (Fraisie and Perrot 370). In addition, the patriarchal system gave a man the right to marry “his sister-in-law [when his wife died because she] assume[d] her sister’s place in the care of the children, and in the superintendence of the domestic establishment” (Levine 142). These marriages would often take place without considering whether the sister wanted to act as a replacement for the widower (Levine 142). The patriarchal system even cared more about men’s sexual health; it gave them the authority to put their western wives in a “lock hospital” if they suspected that their wives could spread sexual diseases. This system protected men and prevented any infection or diseases in their population while contrarily ignoring women’s sexual health and their tiredness due to pregnancies and domestic work. The patriarchal system also divided women according to their responsibilities in their societies, but all

these women had to be “a virgin not only through the integrity of her body but also because of the Purity of her thoughts” (Klapisch-Zuber 80). Similarly, the Contagious Diseases Acts of the 1860s made women thought to be prostitutes subject to exam and incarceration, but that was not extended to males visiting prostitutes.

Marriage during the Victorian era limited women’s rights and ignored their health, meanwhile giving men all kinds of advantages to protect their rights and health. For example, western men had the right to decide the number of children they wished to have in contrast to western women’s obligations of bearing children and amusing their husbands sexually without any ability to amuse themselves or determine their children’s number through birth control. Elizabeth Rogers Appleton says, “Here is an account of all my posterity. 6 sons and 3 daughters, 20 grandson and 20 granddaughters, 58 in all” (Evans 21). This example shows western women’s pride in the 19th century about the numbers of children that they delivered even though they did not have any control over the determining of that number.

D-Western Women and Divorce in the 19th Century:

A married woman leaving her husband’s house to return to her family’s house was considered a shame on the family. Divorcing was often prohibited in cases where cruelty could not be proven and was considered taboo for western women in the 19th century. This century gave men the rights to deny their wives “nourishment’ if [they] refused to return home” (Fraisie and Perrote 100,101). Conversely, women were “prohibited... [from the] option of re-marriage” after divorce because the divorce decision “remained primarily a vehicle for male use” (Levine143). The nineteenth

century “took a strict view against divorce, not only legally, but also socially” so that western women had to be careful in choosing divorce because they were certain to lose all their rights as human beings (Fraisie and Perrote 110). Many wives suffered physically or sexually at the hands of their husbands because the idea of superiority and the laws behind it gave them the freedom to treat their women in any way they chose. Nineteenth century laws passed all of a woman’s property, wealth, and earnings to her husband so he had the legal right to do whatever he wanted, which reduced women’s chances to divorce.

E- How Western Women Became Victims to Men’s Selfish Desires:

Fear, violence, physical assault, and economic issues created many obstacles and challenges for many married women in the 19th century, which encouraged them to look for a way to stop their husbands’ violence and bullying. During the Victorian Era, western women often found themselves “victims of a male ideology” in a society that was shaped by male requirements and desires (Levine 132). Ignoring women’s rights and depriving them of the right to divorce or even savor the legal sexual relationship with their husbands was one of numerous elements that led many women to kill their husbands. Even in criminal issues, western women differed from men in court punishment as Knelman Judith writes, “deviant behavior by men was deplorable; deviant behavior by women was unacceptable. Violent women were depicted as fiends or monsters who could not be allowed to remain alive” (Judith 10). This quote shows how marital law in the 19th century allowed men to abuse their wives at will, leading some survivors to consider murder as their only option for salvation and justice. According to

“Women Murderers in Victorian Britain,” Knelman writes, “Ann Crampton was hanged in Durham in 1814 though her victim lived to describe his experience in court. She was guilty of ‘cutting and maiming’ him for being unfaithful to her and seems in retrospect to have been a rather pathetic figure, plain, middle-aged and jealous” (Knelman 10). Thus, unjust treatment was the main reason for many criminal women who murdered their husbands in the 19th century just for revenge.

III-Women’s Lives in the 19th Century:

The nineteenth century was marked by number of distinctions and differences between the separate spheres of men and women. This separation shows men’s power and women’s domestic roles that resulted in unequal levels of treatment. Therefore, the 19th century was still very restrictive and Victorian women were influenced by western men’s patriarchal beliefs and ideas. Women assumed inferiority since it was the men of that time who believed women to be inferior and their obedience empowered the positions of men even if they did not recognize or feel it, while western women often suffered from difficult situations and unbearable circumstances. It took courage to bring criticism to a patriarchal system that abused women. It is most helpful to understand women’s lives through their own accounts which confirms their ability to be an educated and respectful gender whether as mothers, wives, or unmarried daughters, regardless of the century or times that they were born in. For example, 19th century marriage was a benefit for traditional men, but a detriment to western women because traditional marriage meant losing more of western women’s identities, property, and freedom, while increasing their responsibilities.

Victorian women had numerous jobs as wives, mothers, housekeepers, and dutiful daughters just to support their children, brothers, fathers, and husbands, whether in their domestic affairs at home or with men's public affairs outside the home. Victorian women's different domestic works varied according to their ages, and demonstrate the many positions that women occupied during the Victorian era. Therefore, women's positions were full of inferiority under men's control. In fact, women's silence mirrors the image of pregnant women who held their own desires inside and waited for the right moment to achieve their salvations and freedom.

A-Western Women's Positions under Men's Control:

Western women in the 19th century look like fledgling birds under traditional men's wings. These weak undeveloped beings (women) could not have any power or bravery to fight for themselves so they depended on their protectors (men) for survival because those men could provide strength and security. Thus, the good place to protect western women was in the home, which gave them a good opportunity to do their domestic duties and prepare the next generation. Western women's positions in the 19th century, whether as virgins, widows, or married women, were considered as "an intrinsic part of society... [under the] category of 'woman'" (Klapisch-Zuber 73). The positions of women can be seen clearly through men's minds and their classifications of women. Additionally, Western widows played an important role in their society "if they were wise and virtuous" which allowed them to be good role models to teach and correct younger women's behaviors. In the 19th century, most people believed that young girls

were “difficult” to control and teach, while older women had to “[take care of their] famil[ies] [through their] devotions, prayers, and fasts” (Klapisch-Zuber 65).

On the other hand, women were prohibited from entering the public sphere because it was thought that social activities could cause women to lose their purified natures and become corrupted. Shaping men’s and women’s minds on the idea of superiority and inferiority belonged to the patriarchal system which disempowered women and excluded them from public lives due to the portrayal of women as “a distinct social group” (Klapisch-Zuber 3). The differences between gender roles in the Victorian era made many western women suffer if they shared their opinions, went to college, or read as they wanted from books, whether they were married or single, or whether they were or were not mothers.

Overall, so many things around western married women in the 19th century were prohibited and limited their development, such as lack of higher education and child custody, which made “the number of unmarried women... relatively high” (Klapisch-Zuber 3). I think women’s fear of losing their advantages after marriage resulted in “woman’s interest to live without a husband” (Farrissee and Perrote 109). The word of men in the 19th century was so repeated and respected, that it made women’s positions and their roles absent and passive in the presence of men because men prevented women from accessing any field without their permission. The ignoring of women in the 19th century can be seen clearly through Jane Austen who “wrote in the family living room” which shows that women didn’t have a private room to write their own writings or any type of privacy for that matter (Klapisch-Zuber 413). As a result, many women in the Victorian Era intended to burn their “private diaries” as a way to hide their real identities

from men's eyes. All of these examples reflect the inferior position of women in the 19th century. Mary Wollstonecraft was considered the first voice of women's rights in this early era, especially after writing *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792). This book was later championed especially by women of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, because of its advocacy of feminist issues and women's rights. Although the term "feminist" did not appear until the late nineteenth century, many movements emerged through earlier decades of the nineteenth century that advocated women's basic rights and their equality with men, whether as Nancy Hewitt writes, in "the church and government [or] in the family and household" (Hewitt 276). A lot of women spoke out, including Frances Wright (1795-1852), Catherine Barmby (1847), Ernestine Potowski Rose (1810-1892), and Harriet Taylor (1807-1858). These women combined Wollstonecraft's traditional feminism with advocating for more women's rights, which then moved women into the twentieth century, both politically and socially. Hewitt gives a good example of 19th century women who refused their unjust life and sought better ones. Ernestine Potowski Rose (1810-1892) was one of the 19th women who migrated to the United States when she struggled with 19th century custom. Her family "denied her education equal to her brothers" as was common in that era so that her father arranged a marriage for her; this was considered a good way to make 19th century women busy with marital requirements and forget their legal rights (Hewitt 276). For that reason, Rose went to the United States with her chosen husband and her daughter. After that, she attended and spoke at many women's rights conventions in the 1850s, enabling her to be "a prominent public speaker on behalf of women's rights, antislavery, and temperance" (Hewitt 276). Another example that shows 19th century women's achievements was

Frances Write, who was an English woman who made a good combination between “Wollstonecraft’s tradition of feminism with Fourierist social visions,” especially when she “promoted women’s rights, attacked the pro-slavery leanings of the American clergy, and broke the taboo against women speaking in public” (Hewitt 276).

Overall, the 19th century is considered the starting point for many changes and developments that helped western women to bring about revolution in education, marriage, and life in the next centuries. In fact, many western women had dreams of becoming individuals with legal rights, though it would take several decades of sacrifice before they reached that goal. Western women through their dreaming of achieving their legal rights were seeking “justice for one half of the human race” (Wollstonecraft 213). Also, Elder says, “Educated women [played] a key role in this transformation through collective action and personal life choices” (xvi). According to this example, education was the important key in western women’s lives, whether married or public, once they cooperated with each other and made their voice collectives. The restlessness of women’s freedom led many 20th century women like Virginia Woolf to look at 19th century women’s positions and stand up for future advances. As Woolf says, “For masterpieces are not single and solitary births; they are the outcome of many years of thinking in common, of thinking by the body of the people, so the experience of mass is behind the single voice” (qtd. in Wilson 69). This movement encouraged western women to gain many of their rights, as we will see in the next chapter on the 20th century.

Chapter II:

Western Women's Changing Lives: Virginia Woolf and *A Room of One's Own*

American educator and suffrage leader Miss M. Carey Thomas said in 1894:

Women are one-half of the world, but until a century ago...women lived a twilight life, a half-life apart and looked out and saw men as shadows walking. It was a man's world. The laws were men's laws, the government a man's government, and the country a man's country. Now women have won the right to higher education and economic independence. The right to become citizens of the state is the next and inevitable consequence of education and work outside the home. We have gone so far; we must go farther. We cannot go back. (qtd. in Flexner and Fitzpatrick 229)

This quotation shows the contrast between women's view of themselves and that of men in the 19th and 20th centuries. Thomas's argument illustrates her insistence on women's right to equal education and suffrage, striving for more women's improvement in 20th century society in contrast to their inferior position in the 19th century. Thomas urges women to not "go back" to the mistreatment of previous centuries after their development and progress in the late 19th century. Virginia Woolf and other 20th century feminists agreed.

Virginia Woolf published her essay *A Room of One's Own* in the same year Martin Luther King was born, 1929. Woolf and King carried the same mission of refusing unequal treatment between people, whether the treatment was based on color, gender, race, or even social class. Both fought for equal treatment of oppressed people

under the law and in society. Woolf chose the autumn in which to publish her essay. Writing at the year's end, she symbolically prepared western women for the evolution toward change in their lives. She knew Western women needed to renew and change their lives through continuing to demand their rights. She introduces her feminist essay *A Room of One's Own* with the many differences in the 19th century between western women and men in education, marriage, and home and work life, which contrasted with women's advances in the 20th century. By the 1920s, English women could inherit property, earn child custody, and vote, which led them to add to their rights through writing and seeking equal roles at home and at work. Accordingly, the purpose of Woolf's essay is, as Fernald argues, "not to pretend to present a theory, but [to offer] a collection of persuasive observations" which makes her essay more important and full of details about western women's history (Fernald 172). Woolf gives her female readers freedom to think about themselves instead of waiting for men's decisions. Woolf encourages her female readers to be good and creative writers and uses the example of four middle-class women who dominated 19th century English literature: Jane Austen, Charlotte and Emily Brontë, and George Eliot. This helps her female readers to prepare for the future evolution as "others had gone before them to prepare the way" (Hussey 235).

Through *A Room of One's Own*, Woolf insists that western women must have a room and money to create art, as the title clearly states. She says, "women must have money and privacy in order to write" (Woolf 4). This statement is crucial in Woolf's essay because it marks the starting point for Woolf's argument and criticism about 20th century women's rights, whether inside the home or outside. As Mark Hussey says, "the

image of a room itself also has a profound resonance in Woolf's writing" because a room indicates women's "state of mind[s] or [their] personality" (Hussey 236). Woolf's image of a "room" represents "liberty because inner space has traditionally been associated with women in their domestic lives" (Hussey 236). Woolf considers western women poor in opportunities even though they have children, and their poverty shows in their lack of writing, creation, and foresight in doing what they want because "few women have written" (Woolf 101). To demonstrate women's lack of opportunities, Woolf says, "A woman might write letters while she was sitting by her father's sick-bed. She could write them by the fire whilst the men talked without disturbing them" (Woolf 62). Women need a private room because women need a place separate from their domestic lives. Woolf criticizes "The false superiority of men if compared to [the inferiority of] women," which confirms the difference between genders has a negative effect on women's creation, ability, and writing (Filimin 26). Woolf gives western women steps to follow which enable them to reach their goals of professional writing. As Filimen continues: "the room is a symbol of a very benefic and intimate space... [and her] us[ing] of the modal verb must emphasize the idea of financially independent women ... [which] offers the liberty to create art [and gives] private, isolated, solitary space represented by the room" (Filimen 26). So having a room and money are considered the first two steps that Woolf gives western women writers, steps which provide privacy, freedom, and power for female writers.

To confirm Woolf's idea of the benefit of freedom and privacy to women, she says, "No force in the world can take from me my five hundred pounds. Food, house, and clothing are mine forever. I need not flatter any man; he cannot hurt me...I found myself

adopting a new attitude towards the other half of the human race” (Woolf 38). Therefore, Woolf demands a room and money for 20th century women in order to engage them in public activities. Alexis Annesa argues that Woolf seeks: “empowerment by stressing the need for financial resources and space for self-expression, as well as the necessity of making visible women's mundane activities” (Annesa 5). Through her essay, Woolf advocates for equal rights between western men and women writers when she points out that women writers must have rights of privacy, personal liberty, and freedom to create their own writing. This kind of freedom is emphasized in Tenia Musina’s article when she says, “Virginia Woolf’s opinion, for a writer to be considered a creator of quality fiction, are integrity and intellectual freedom... a writer has to be well-off and well educated, things which had been for centuries refused to a woman” (Musina 191). Having a room and independent income gives Woolf a chance to encourage her female readers to use their abilities in writing; as Woolf says, “I will give her every liberty... [because] she must jump. And, determined to do my duty by her as reader if she would do her duty by me as writer” (Woolf 81, 82). Woolf’s encouragement of western women readers gives her a big role as a female writer as she guides them to translate their feelings and dreams into their writing. Early in her essay she uses the image of “a cat without a tail” (Woolf 11). The Manx cat is introduced as a symbol of woman and particularly of the woman writer, the cat with no tail. Musina says of this moment: “‘The sight of that abrupt and truncated animal’ transfixes the narrator's sense of reality, rousing her ‘subconscious intelligence’ that releases an ‘emotional light’” (Musina 192). I think Woolf through her image of interruption points out that women have the same intellectual ability as men, but they are handicapped by men’s selfishness and unfair desires. Women “cannot have wine

and partridge and servants carrying tin dishes on their heads... [,]cannot have sofas and separate rooms... for all those reasons, women “will have to wait” until they fill their “poverty of [their] sex” (Woolf 20).

In the early pages of *Room*, Woolf tells through her narrator Mary Beton the story of not being able to walk on the grass at “Oxbridge.” When the Beadle with “horror and indignation” interrupts her narrator, Woolf writes, “He was a Beadle; I was a woman” (Woolf 6). She categorizes the Beadle as someone seen as superior to all women because he is a man. She also begins to wonder about the differences perceived between the sexes, and how this has changed since World War I. Woolf through her narrator asks herself if the Manx cat “Was...really born so [without a tail], or had he lost his tail in an accident?” (Woolf 13). Women are still inhibited, just as narrator cannot walk on the grass.

Woolf’s genius benefits her greatly in inventing a new way that not only addresses her female readers, but also addresses her opponents and convinces them of her feminist ideas. This means of persuasion is great because it reflects how skillful a writer she is. She underlines a lot of main ideas about the differences between western men and women in education, financial issues, private rights, and roles during previous centuries. She feels that if these western women get their rights to money and privacy, they would show their abilities in writing and creation as the equals of men. Woolf shows her artistic ability as a female writer and good philosopher, such that we can consider her to be one of the best writers in English literature. Filimon lists her among other prominent European writers: “Laurence Sterne, T. S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, James Joyce and Marcel Proust” (Filimon 25). Furthermore, Woolf’s access to her father’s library greatly helped

her to educate herself. In fact, she was influenced by many books which were not traditionally available to many western women in her time, which shaped her ability as “an essayist, publisher, feminist, [and]critic,” and which made her an unforgettable stand-out in English literature (Filimon 25).

Woolf’s essay reflects her whole knowledge of “women’s nature,” “the relation between women and the fiction they write,” and finally “what is written about them in men’s literature” (Filimon 26). Her mention of women’s weakness, social pressures, and many restrictions that western women suffered from in the 19th century gives her an opportunity to convince “non-feminists” and makes her readers deeply interested in women’s lives (Fernald-170). Woolf transfers women’s suffering, desires, and their dreams into her written lines to portray unequal treatment between western men and women in the 19th century. Many historical books talked about women’s lives, thoughts, and roles only through men’s perspective, so going back to women’s views is a good way for Woolf to inspire 20th century women’s energy and encourage them to play active roles rather than passive. Ideally giving western women the full rights of money, privacy, and freedom enables them to play equal roles in education, marriage, and both private and public spheres without any interruptions. As Wendy Gan says, “Woolf’s desire for spatial privacy was expressed through demands for a more gender-neutral space--a room--hence allowing both opportunities for exclusion and inclusion, solitude and community” (Gan 69). Additionally, Woolf highlights Elizabethan women’s lives and their silence during Shakespeare’s time because they were excluded from parts of society, largely lacked written literature, and were buried in their domestic sphere. Her reason for using Elizabethan women as an example in her essay is to convince females in her time about

the passive roles of these women so that they could become more active. She reminds her readers that “there is nothing known of women’s lives before the eighteenth century”; women during the fifteenth and sixteenth century were “absent from history” because they did not accept being active or visible characters (Hussey 234). Overall, these examples, whether about Elizabethan women who were accused of “witchcraft” or “madness,” or even about Woolf herself, encourage 20th century women to request their rights and demand their equal roles, whether inside the home or outside. The 20th century helped women to access higher education, political participation, and marital rights which helped them to gain equality.

I- Woolf’s Views about Western Women’s Education in the 20th Century:

The education of western women in the twentieth century not only increased dramatically in order to reduce girls’ desires to marry at a very young age, stay home, and have more children, but also to develop their aims in all aspects of their lives, whether in their professional careers or their literary writing. So education was considered the first step towards equality in England, which engaged women greatly in their society. At the beginning of the 20th century, it was still rare for women to obtain a university degree even though many female students obtained an education at Oxford and Cambridge. Women at the beginning of the 20th century were allowed to attend lectures, but could not take any degrees at these schools. Without a university degree, it was difficult for women to access any professional fields. So western women’s education in the 20th century played a significant role in women’s lives because educated women could find more chances to participate in a society than uneducated women could. Even in the 20th

century, the upper social classes occupied prioritized places in education; these places were taken by upper class women who through their rich families could cover the budget of their education. Similarly, in the 19th century there was a clear correspondence between social class and women's goals of educational fields. Some 19th century women just attended classes to amuse their husbands' desires. Although a few wealthy women's colleges had been established in the late 19th century, the benefit from higher education went to men more than women. During the 20th century, western women were increasingly allowed to be intelligent partners of men who occupied different fields such as medicine and law. Woolf fought for western women's legal rights; Marcia McClintock Folsom says the fact that "women have been excluded from education, power, and money, have been denied experience, and therefore impoverished as artists, seems to some [of today's] students implausible or even hypocritical" (Folsom 255). Many educational supporters in the 20th century found that a higher education was so important to make western women effective mothers, good wives and teachers; it was the same argument Mary Wollstonecraft had used back in the late 1790s. As a result, education became a good means to change women's lives, to give them the same opportunities as men, and to prepare them to engage widely in their society.

Through *Room*, Woolf shows how the 20th century changed a lot of domestic roles and lives for western women by giving many examples of 19th century women. Woolf asserts that western women need a private place and financial independence which can give them time for writing and creation. But gender difference played an important role in female education during the 20th century and the 19th century before it. Woolf sees that women of genius cannot thrive and gain among an uneducated, laboring, fearful, and

dependent class. Those 20th century women who have seen such hardships will take up Woolf's mission through understanding her message quickly, raising their voices, and claiming their rights to equal education in opposition to women still under the traditional system and men's control.

To understand 19th century women's positions, Woolf searched in the British Museum to find a book written by western women about a feminine subject, but she could not find one. As Woolf says, "those innumerable books by men about women in the British Museum are proof of it.... [I]t must have made them lay an emphasis upon their own sex" (Woolf 99). This unequal treatment led her to read a man's book just to understand the traditional men's minds, opinions, and their treatment of 19th century women. This allowed Woolf to understand men's views toward women not only in education, but also in different aspects of life in opposition to the 20th century education that held many developments and progress for western women.

During the 20th century, western women had many more equal rights and played significant roles in their societies than before, even though there were a number of obstacles they still faced in the early years of the century. One of the obstacles can be seen clearly when Woolf notes how western women cannot enter the university unless accompanied by men. As Woolf says: "ladies are only admitted to the library if accompanied by a Fellow of the College or furnished with a letter of introduction" (7-8). Woolf argues through her essay that if women cannot enter men's universities, it is important to 20th century women to have a private room and money which would give them a chance to write, develop, and confirm their abilities in professional writing the same as men do. Because if someone has closed one door in front of women, then we

must open another one to them. So having privacy and money would bring power and freedom for western women not only in their writing, but also in their positions in life. Western men have always shown their power, anger, and supposed superiority over western women, even though they have often made women the central subject of their writing. Men having power, money, and “influence” makes them feel superior when they talked or wrote about western women, so “[women] had been written in the red light of emotion and not in the white light of truth” (Woolf 33). This alludes to the significant role that women have played in men’s worlds and their minds even if these men have pretended to ignore or refuse the presence of women. Woolf creates a good connection between men’s power and their anger when she gives an example about some men who “insisted on women’s inferiority [like] Napoleon and Benito Mussolini” (Hussey 234). The conclusion Woolf reaches is “a man with all this power should be angry” because he thinks that a relaxed attitude can minimize his power over women (Woolf 34).

To present men’s unjust treatment of women to readers, Woolf uses the invented example of Shakespeare’s sister, who killed herself when society did not give her a chance to educate herself, study, and confirm a gift similar to that of her brother. As Louise De Salvo says, “[her society did not] allow [her] to develop, marriage had been arranged for her, [and] while becoming embroiled in a relationship with Nick Greene, becomes the emblem of all women who have been denied the circumstances in which to cultivate their gift for pen and ink” (qtd. in Yang 6). Unequal education in Shakespeare’s time was criticized by Woolf and other writers because men could attend grammar school, learn Latin, and act in the theater, while these activities seemed to be taboo for women in the Elizabethan age. Because of this, Woolf imagined that Shakespeare’s sister

killed herself because a woman of genius could not live her life without lending life to her pen. Woolf's goal when she gives this example is to encourage each 20th century woman, whether young or old, to demand their rights in education. Only in this way could western women give life back to Shakespeare's sister. A good writer cannot live his or her life without writing or portraying his or her feelings through writing. So without freedom, intelligence, privacy, and money, western women cannot write great poetry, be good novelists or essay writers, or even achieve other types of dreams beyond writing because as Woolf says, "Poetry ought to have a mother as well as a father" (Woolf 103).

Women's right to education, even if their circumstances or their lives go against their desires, is a great message that Woolf puts in her essay. Woolf argues that 20th century women must have a chance to learn through formal education as men do. Preventing western women from going to universities, or requiring them to stay at home, was common in the 19th century, which denied women their rights. Men kept women under their control and power because they could not imagine women's ability in writing or intellectual thinking. Accordingly, Woolf shows that the beautiful goal of western women writers in the 20th century was not to collect an audience or bring criticism to their written works, as a lot of men did, but in fact to incorporate their feelings and opinions into their writings. Through a private room, women can write and greatly savor their liberty without any interruption, which enabled them to create different subjects in different fields.

A-Woolf's Discussion of Privacy and Money through Showing the Differences between Men's and Women's Education:

The 20th century brought number of developments and progress in women's education, lives, society, and economy that encourage us to look back one hundred years. Education helped women in the 20th century to engage in political movements and develop their talents, skills, and writings. To present the idea of educational development, Glen H. Elder mentions percentages of educated women in the 20th century, including "women finishing high school and earning college and graduate degrees. By 1980 one out of two twenty-five-year-old women had completed four years of college...By 1980, women were receiving 49 percent of all bachelor's degrees...[which] increased entry of women into such 'male' professions as medicine and law" (Elder 38).

Woolf (who died in 1941) would be proud of these statistics, and only wants women of her own time to take such initiatives. Woolf insists that women's lack of a room and financial income can hinder their ability to create and write. So she argues that women need financial independence, a private life, and a room to live in their own world of writing, as many men did. Woolf has the view that the different genders she discusses in the 20th century, western men and women, are two different creatures, but that they have similar minds, which make it easy for there to be understanding between them. Unfortunately, these is a history of their society shaping people's minds and exaggerating differences not only between their social positions, but also between the domestic roles in the same home. To show the longstanding idea of unequal treatment between men and women, Woolf shows the history of Elizabethan women, especially Shakespeare's sister when she "recounts how Judith's parents would have deprived her of education, obligated

her to fulfill domestic duties, and arranged the early marriage for her that drove her to leave home” (Yang 6). As Woolf says:

Reviewing the story of Shakespeare’s sister as I made it, is that any woman born with a great gift in the sixteenth century would certainly have gone crazed, shot herself, or ended her days in some lonely cottage outside the village... [because] a highly gifted girl who had tried to use her gift for poetry would have been so thwarted and hindered by other people. (Woolf 49)

In this passage, the gender inequality between Shakespeare and his sister shows not only in their education, but also in their marital rights. Preventing Shakespeare’s sister from writing as her brother did even though they were both gifted reflects the gender difference between men and women in the Elizabethan era. Judith was beaten harshly by her father when she refused to take part in an arranged marriage. Leaving her husband’s house and going to London as her brother did made Judith face a lot of denial and ignoring from the theatrical men; they sexually assaulted her, ignoring her feelings or her pain when “she found herself with child by that gentleman and so--who shall measure the heat and violence of the poet’s heart when caught and tangled in a woman’s body?” (Woolf 48). Shakespeare’s sister chose to kill herself because her parents and society deprived her of education and arranged her marriage; she “killed herself one winter’s night and lies at some cross-roads” (Woolf 48). This supports Woolf’s idea that there were smart women during Shakespeare’s time, but intelligent women could not translate their thoughts and lives into paper because it was prohibited. As Hussey adds, “There have probably been many geniuses who never managed to express themselves, women who were accused of witchcraft or who were tormented into madness” (Hussey 234).

Through this example, Woolf encourages 20th century women to demand their rights and revive the life of Shakespeare's sister by achieving her dreams. Woolf believes if western women earned their full rights in the 20th century, they would achieve Judith's dream and return life to her again. As Woolf says, "I told you that Shakespeare had a sister... she died young... she still lives... in you and in me... Shakespeare's sister can be born... she would come if we worked for her, and that so to work, even in poverty and obscurity, is worthwhile" (Woolf 60).

In addition to the differences between men's and women's writing, education, and opportunities to attend universities in the 20th century, Woolf mentions men's and women's differences in university accommodations, especially food, by saying:

At men's college there were sole and partridges 'with all their retinue of sauces and salads' while at the women's college 'dinner was not good,' ...it consisting of plain soup, cabbages and potatoes. (Woolf 4)

This example shows the differences in accommodations between men and women not only in their lives or marriage, but also in their food in college, which is part of the unequal education between these two genders. The food that feeds men's minds was so various and different while the women's food was simple and limited. Filimon has expanded this idea by saying, "The distinction between the two meals symbolizes the unequal educational opportunities that have existed for men and women" (Filimon 26). In addition, men's colleges were decorated with "gold and silver," which implies the wealth used to support them. The wealth also symbolically implies the different kinds of writing subjects that men could study in contrast to women's plain colleges and limited subjects (Hussey 233). These two examples reflect an unequal treatment in writing,

education, and lives. Men tried to satisfy their minds with different kinds of colorful food which benefited their creativity and writing. In my opinion, western men benefited greatly from such educational discrimination, which made their writing varied and more “flavorful” to read than that of women. On the other hand, western women’s writings were too often plain and limited, the same as their food, lives, and environment. For that reason, these western women symbolically had to be accompanied by male writers if they wanted to benefit from men’s wisdom. Western women’s plain treatment prevented them from producing quality writing because women needed love, respect, and education to translate everything around them into their writing. In fact, giving western women too many domestic obligations prevented them from being educated. To support Woolf’s idea, Wendy Gan says, “Women never have a half-hour in all their lives” for themselves alone (Gan 70). The sight of two people “getting into a cab” encourages Woolf to ask herself if the sexes have two different minds the same as their bodies, so she seeks “the unity of the mind” (Hussey 235). This means that 20th century men and women had equal power to communicate with each other which let them attain a level of “satisfaction” and happiness (Woolf 96).

Woolf presents her narrator in the British Museum with “thousands of questions” such as “why did men drink wine and women water?”, “Why was one sex so prosperous and the other poor?”, “what effect has poverty on fiction?”, and “What conditions are necessary for the creation of a work of art?” (Woolf 25). Because of the differences between genders, Woolf introduces these questions to her female readers to support her ideas of the importance of women having privacy and an independent income. Woolf implies that poverty greatly affects a person’s mind, makes him or her restricted and

unable to do anything, and makes the person feels inferior, whether in his or her writing or life. At first, Woolf thinks that the British Museum will be a good place to give her accurate information about western women's writings, but even this place in the 19th century was affected by gender roles. As Filimon says:

The narrator sees the museum as a symbol of wisdom, the only place where her search for the truth will come to an end 'if truth is not to be found on the shelves of the British Museum, where, I asked myself, picking up a notebook and a pencil, is truth?'... [So that] 'she looks at books that have been written about women by men,' because men still have the secret of women's opinion and attitudes. (Filimon 27)

This example reflects the benefit in men's superiority and women's inferiority in the 19th century. In fact, women need to write of themselves, tell their opinions, and explain their attitudes through their own writing without needing to resort to men's points of view or their explanations. Woolf implies that men can fully control women if they disempower their abilities, whether in writing or creation.

II-Women's Lives after Marriage in the 20th Century:

Women have long fought for liberty not to be enslaved under men's control and minds. In fact, western women in the 20th century showed their ability to still be good daughters, wives, mothers, and widows when they were given a chance to express their opinions and show their strength. The roles of 20th century men and women changed greatly also due to economic and technological progress. In fact, technology in the 20th century created many dramatic changes and opportunities for women. These changes

altered women's lives, especially their right to vote and other equal rights, whether in education or marriage. Miriam B. Murphy, in her article entitled "A Look at Working Women in the Early 20th Century," says, "The growth of commercial laundries and expanding factory production of clothing, processed foods, and other household items relieved women of many tasks and created hundreds of jobs for them outside the home" (Murphy 1). All these services, whether in technology or commerce, participated in rapidly changing women's positions in the 20th century. Social positions changed as well. A good example that shows the changing view of marriage in the 20th century was, as Sara M. Evans says, "a new kind of marriage in which romantic love, sexual pleasure, and companionship were central" (Evans 178). The general picture of marriage in the 20th century changed and became based on an equal relationship of sexual desire and romantic love between a wife and husband. Technology and globalization helped 20th century western women, saved their time, and made their relationships better than 19th century marriages. During the 20th century, western women had fewer children than before, and they did not spend as much of their time with their children as the 19th century women had. Not only women changed in the 20th century, but also fathers who "are now expected to participate in their children's lives by providing day-to-day care, both physical and emotional" as Maxine P. Atkinson and Stephen P. Black Welder say (Atkinson and Welder 976).

Woolf could not understand how western women in the 19th century could bear 13 or 14 children, feed them, and raise them, but they did not even have any authority to hold their own money. Western men used their dominant way of thinking over their wives even in the bedroom. This appears clearly when English women through their

relationships with men sought identity while men sought sex with their women. George Duby and Michelle Perrot say, “A woman is a woman in herself; a man is a man only in his sexual relations with a woman...woman seeks an individual while the man seeks the femininity--the sex-- that will prove his virility” (Duby & Perrot 263). Introducing 19th century women’s dreams to be a “protected sex” appears when Woolf mentions Mary Beton who is “thinking ahead 100 years to women” and their improvement, as Hussey mentions (Hussey 234). Woolf believes that women “should have had a microscope put in [their] hand[s]. [They] should have been taught to look at the stars and reason scientifically...turned with solitude and freedom” (Woolf 61). Woolf, through her narrator’s thinking, reflects the fact that women need a whole century until they reach some of their rights.

Men in the 19th century legally reduced women’s position just to enlarge their power so that they kept women’s own money under their control because many powerful men such as “Napoleon and Mussolini both insist so emphatically upon the inferiority of women...[which] explain[s] in part the necessity that women so often are to men” (Woolf 36). However, Woolf hated the idea of considering women as men’s furniture and spending most of their time in serving their husbands by cooking, cleaning, and raising their children; she felt their roles are more important than these daily tasks. Women’s roles in their society can include many things such as teaching, nursing, and achieving gateways into many traditionally male professions.

A- Married Women's Lives during Virginia Woolf's Era:

During the early 20th century, the idea of superiority “had changed from father/son to husband/wife” (Evans 183). The concept of superiority and inferiority between men and women still restricted western women's roles and put them in a narrow corner under men's mercy, as it was in the 19th century. While the differences of nature, minds, dreams, and responsibilities between men and women are normal and biological, acceptance of these differences should be based on love, appreciation, and respect. Western women in the 19th century suffered so much from ignorance, neglect, and passive actions that made them silent because most families in that time gave males permission to hold the primary power over women. This shows clearly when western women were excluded from social and political spheres by traditional men who made their roles weak and restricted. Nineteenth century men knew if women were still without income and under their patriarchal society, they would continue needing men's money and power. Disempowering women was a good way to keep them away from freedom or judgment. Woolf puts all her hopes in her example of Shakespeare's sister, Judith, to empower western women and encourage them to fight for their rights. This confirms that western women were not less talented than men in educating themselves, controlling their marital lives, and living their lives as they liked, but that women's rights, duties, and marital lives during previous centuries were limited. As a result, the only information Woolf gets from women's history is from the “pen of the men who hated these women” (Woolf 71), when in fact men could not live their lives without the benefit of these women. A lot of western women in the 20th century changed their social and individual conditions; as Elder says, western society “replaced the traditional female role with a

combination of work and family obligations... [which] change[d] women's roles" (Elder 32). Shakespeare's sister lives again "in the young women [Woolf] is addressing, [because] young women may now vote and earn their own livings" as Judith always dreams. Thus, Woolf makes her essay's title a reference to women's "independence" and their freedom (Hussey 236).

B-Women's Rights to Birth Control in the 20th Century:

Most western men in the 19th century believed Western women had no right to decide their family size because that was immoral and against women's nature. Nineteenth-century families were on average much larger than today. Woolf says, "[women] were married at fifteen; they bore a dozen children, and those children died, and they went on bearing children. Moreover, they were uneducated; they had no privacy" (Woolf 56). Through this statement, Woolf shows how western women did not have the right to birth control or to decide the family size, which often prevented them from being educated. Some historians have even suggested that the government "did not just control the access of birth control for moral reasons but as a method of controlling the economy" (Folsom 259). It is true that keeping women at home just to raise their children will increase the number of unemployed and powerless women, and has negative effects on economic development, but at the same time it will increase the number of children, too, which then will affect women's ability to write or have a career. Folsom notes how in one of Woolf's lectures, she asked the students, "Why women are poor" even if they have more children around them. She then connects this to women's poverty and childbearing; thinking of George Eliot, Emily Brontë, Charlotte Brontë, and Jane

Austen, Woolf can think of little they have in common...[but] that not one of them had a child... you can't be a woman who writes literature and a woman who has a child” (Folsom 260). According to this example, Woolf makes a connection between “childbearing” and being a writer because women who have children do not have time to write due to their exhaustion and lack of a private sphere, in contrast to women who do not have children. This example implies that western women should have the right to decide the size of their families because they can bear the responsibility by themselves. If western women got their rights of birth control, they would be more dedicated to their writing and could arrange their time as they wanted. In addition, Bridenthal, Koonz, and Stuard point out that, in the 20th century, “western women [have the] ability to save their families’ health and demand their legal rights” (Bridenthal, Koonz, Stuard 335). As a result, women’s education and the right to birth control help them greatly to have a better life.

III-Women’s Lives in the 20th Century:

During the 20th century, a new generation of feminists, whether aged nine or ninety, called for women’s rights. The first “wave” of feminists of Woolf’s era had insisted that women could be mothers, housewives, activists, and full-time paid workers as well” (Flexner and Fitzpatrick xxix). The improvement of technology, economy, and health played an important role in reducing women’s traditional housekeeping tasks and domestic obligations, and made 20th century western women’s communication outside the home easier after the world wars. Women’s liberation from the home opened opportunities for women to earn and compete for the same amount of pay as men

received for the same job. According to Mitra Toossi, who is an economist, women's participation in the workforce during the 1950-60 era "grew 2.4 percent annually in comparison with 0.6 percent for men...[while] the growth rate of the labor force for women was 3.1 percent per year [from 1960-1970], more than three times greater than the labor force growth rate of men" (Toossi 25). This was in contrast to the 19th century when the only place for women was at home with their limited role as "housew[ives] and mother[s], [their] obligations familial rather than civic or social" because housework consumed married women and the pay was unequal (Flexner and Fitzpatrick 224). Indeed, English women in the 19th century were under the law which had many duties for women, but very few rights. This made them suffer a "civil death" of no right to property, no legal entity or existence apart from their husbands" (Flexner and Fitzpatrick 7).

Woolf's reference to the different genders implies different roles, behaviors, attributes, and activities that a society uses to distinguish between western men and women. This shows in Steve Ui-Chun Yang's article when he mentions how "the narrator's anger...comes from isolation and exclusion derived from interruptions" especially when the Oxbridge Beadle interrupts and stops the narrator so "the anger from isolation..., paradoxically, expressive of narrator's desire to be connected," shows clearly in the Beadle's attitude (Yang 4). Woolf presents the image of western women's inferiority in the picture of the "Manx cat," so this metaphor reflects the gender differences that hurt women. Introducing the image of the tailless cat may refer to "a comic metaphor for feminist poetics" as Patricia Joplin says (qtd. in Hussey 154). The "Manx cat" represents the "buried or stolen tales of women" as a reference to the lost or

hidden right that men got from women (Woolf 29). This example is good evidence of unequal treatment and interruption that western women suffered, especially in education; no one allows women to take a major role whether on Oxbridge's lawn or in the university. Woolf's introduces the idea of women "not only suggestive of a woman being halted at Oxbridge, but indicative of a larger socio-political repression of women" (Yang 3). So what is the point of men disempowering western women? Renate Bridenthal, Claudia Koonz, and Susan Stuard ask this question in their article, "Can men be free if women be a slave?" (Bridenthal, Koonz, Stuard 336). This question shows what kind of achievement men gained if they disempowered western women.

But by the 20th century, women were empowered with the right to divorce, own property (whether married or single), and also vote. Even though some unequal rights remained without change for married women in the 20th century, many changes happened gradually. According to Elder, 20th century "women are still discriminated against in a number of ways and are not prepared....The laws are vague, and a woman is not apt to make a case of it if she needs her job to live.... [Therefore], [w]omen need to be told what it is really like out there before they finish their education. [Because] It's still a man's world" (Elder 364). The 20th century provided a good chance for western women to work outside their home because of new inventions such as dishwashers and washing machines that saved these women time and made a good balance between domestic work and work outside the home. It is true to say that equality in the home started in the 20th century as western women argued to get their equal rights and pay in the work fields the same as men.

Empowerments in 20th century women's lives led to major changes in the workplace. As Donald M. Fisk says, "more homemakers were able to shift some of their time from home production to paid jobs... [and e]lectricity [was] in less than 10 percent of the Nation's homes at the turn of the century, but it was almost universal by the end of the century" (Fisk 4). In the 20th century, new machines such as "the refrigerator, dishwasher, clothes washer, dryer, iron, vacuum cleaner, microwave oven, [and] automatic toaster" benefited women who also saved time through "prepackaged food, frozen food, and a host of other convenience items" (Fisk 4). Women could choose to work outside the home if they wanted to. The English Bureau of Labor Statistics shows that "The biggest [rate] increase in labor force participation was among those aged 25 to 34 [which rose] from a level of 34.0 percent in 1950 to 76.3 percent in 1998...[while in] 1950 women aged 16 to 24 had the highest labor force participation rate (43.9 percent)". Thus, the number of women aged 16 and over in the labor force rate "was 33.9 percent in 1950, compared with 59.8 percent in 1998." Additionally, "[i]n 1900, only 19 percent of women of working age participated in the labor force, whereas 60 percent of them did in 1999. Furthermore, there was a marked change in female occupational employment" as the current population survey by Bureau of Labor Statistics shows. Thus, the 20th century is considered the century which first allowed for many feminist activities.

Thus, technological and economic changes helped women so much to gain the same rights that men had in different fields. These rights include owning property, gender equality, and the right to work and vote. In contrast, the 19th century was known for traditional beliefs, separate spheres, unequal genders, and unjust relationships between western men and women, whether in work, payment, or even in their romantic

relationships. In discussing women in literature, Folsom introduces three poems about 20th century women's social experiences: Phyllis McGinley's "The 5:32," Marge Piercy's "The woman in the," and Denise Levertov's "Stepping Westward." Reading these poems provides a good comparison for *A Room of One's Own*; as Folsom says, "In all these poems a woman's identity is associated with images of food and cooking domestic casseroles; yams, pepper, and spice; fresh bread. Is this a 'feminine' way of writing?" (Folsom 256). This image reflects the western women's domestic responsibilities and their roles in the 19th century in contrast to the province of men, whether in public society or in their home. However, the relationship between western men and women in the 20th century, whether at home or in society, changed because western women began to participate more and more in public life and claim their right to vote, even though some powerful and economic issues were still under men's control. In fact, these words show that 20th century women wrote about women's lives, as Woolf wanted. Many men during the 19th century intended to "make women's work in the private sphere invisible, focus[ing] on women's experience of subordination in western societies" (Anne 5). Woolf presents women's public and private spheres more visibly to see and appreciate. To understand the 20th century women's thoughts, lives, and their rights, Woolf's points out women's fortunate positions and their rights through reminding them of the violent, cruel, and harsh treatment that women suffered from their parents or their husbands in the 19th century. This explanation gives her female readers more ambition to work and fight for their freedom and rights. Woolf discusses the condition of married women in the 19th century who were legally beaten: "'wife- beating,' I read, 'was a recognised right of man, and was practised without shame by high as well as low.'" A lot of 19th century daughters

“who refused to marry the gentleman of [their] parents’ choice [were] liable to be locked up, beaten and flung about the room, without any shock being inflicted on public opinion” (Woolf 42).

The enforced differences in the home between wives and husbands as opposite genders leads to many enforced differences between men and women in their society. Tania Musin says, “Virginia Woolf gives her point of view in as much as the solution is concerned, namely that of ‘a marriage’ between the opposites... [because] [t]here must be freedom and there must be peace” which reflects their continuing differences in the 20th century society (Musin 190).

A-Gender Inequality through Woolf’s Tragic Figure

Throughout *A Room of One’s Own*, the narrator emphasizes the main reason that caused many western women to produce fewer written works than men: the unequal treatment that women faced in their society. To understand this idea of inequality clearly, Woolf creates Shakespeare’s sister as a good example to help her readers to imagine her female status and understand her real feeling. Woolf uses this imagined figure as a smart way to show how a society in general, and Elizabethan society specifically, discriminates against women, even when women and men have the same natural gifts, advantages, and traits. Woolf creates the tragic figure of Judith during the Elizabethan century as a way to show how western women in that time were treated differently and faced many obstacles, which made their chances to succeed impossible. For that reason, this unfair treatment negatively affected the numbers and success of women writers. To reach her mission, Woolf largely addresses her feminist essay to the young generation who can put

themselves in Judith's place and imagine her feelings of disappointment and dismay over being ignored, which encourages them to call for their equal rights with men. This desire from Woolf shows through Folsom's article. She says Woolf is "Telling young women that they must write; that their lives must not vanish, that the pressure of dumbness must not fall on their experience or that of their own mothers, sisters, grandmothers" (Folsom 254-255). In this way, Woolf lights the revolutionary fire in the mind of each young western female to refuse any kind of inequality or bad treatment, whether in education, marriage, or work. This creation shows how a woman like Shakespeare's sister, reluctant to accept a role of discouragement and injustice, thought to commit suicide when she could not use her gift as a talented woman the same as her brother. So committing suicide is evidence that the Elizabethan century treated women badly and ignored their desires, especially when a gifted girl chose killing herself instead of living in an unjust society. Woolf addresses the western young women by saying:

Now my belief is that this poet who never wrote a word and was buried at the crossroads still lives. She lives in you and in me, and in many other women who are not here tonight, for they are washing up the dishes and putting the children to bed. But she lives; for great poets do not die; they are continuing presences: they need only the opportunity to walk among us in the flesh. (Woolf 113)

Woolf, through addressing young western girls, hopes for future generations of women that will earn their full rights in writing, which will enable their pens to live forever and never die. For that reason, these future women could return the life to Shakespeare's sister through achieving her dream of equality between men and women.

B-Western Women and their Right to Vote:

Western women considered the vote as the collective voice that gave them strength to access their public rights and made them more influential in their society. Voting gave women opportunities to participate in political activities which made many women speak out in public. In fact, many western men were afraid of letting women vote because they knew they would lose their social control. On the other hand, Western women in the 20th century saw the vote as a symbol of the political power which empowered their roles in a society. Sara M. Evans says, “Women needed the vote to protect their own special interests, whether as mothers concerned for the education of their children, as working women subjected to exploitation without protection, or as the abused wives of [physical assault from] drunkards” (Evans 154). This made 20th century women claim their right to vote, which enhanced women’s capacity to revise a lot of traditional roles, defend their rights, and teach citizenship to their children. Moreover, western women in the 20th century found their right to vote as a way to express their opinions, make their own decisions, break the traditional picture of women’s weakness, and also identify themselves without men’s control or their opinions about women. A lot of opponents fought women’s right to vote and justified their attitude by claiming it was against women’s nature and that they lacked knowledge. Even Queen Victoria felt women should vote through their husbands; 20th century English women fortunately recognized the benefit of the vote in their lives and achieved it in 1918 for women over 30. Of course, Woolf knew that more progress was necessary.

C-Interruption:

Woolf makes her narrator interrupted in *A Room of One's Own* to show that every woman needs a private room to write without interruption. Interruption in general not only leads women to lose their concentration in writing, but also it leads them to fail in their domestic and public work. In contrast, many western men benefited from many basic necessities without facing the same kind of challenges or interruptions. Woolf, through her discussion, does not mean that western women needed isolated society to write, but in fact that they needed private time and a room to create, think, and engage in their writing. Folsom says:

[W]riting cannot be considered in isolation from the social, political, and economic realities in which the writer lives. In fact the very texture of the essay suggests that women's writing cannot be considered in isolation from the physical world, human moods, the landscape, food, houses, rooms, emotional climates which make up the writer's reality as well.

(Folsom 257)

Overall, Woolf mentions that giving western women independent income and privacy provided them freedom and power, whether in their speaking or in their writing.

This helped western women to challenge a lot of obstacles in their lives. As Woolf says:

Indeed, I thought, slipping the silver into my purse, it is remarkable, remembering the bitterness of those days, what a change of temper a fixed income will bring about. No force in the world can take from me my five hundred pounds. Food, house and clothing are mine forever...I need not

hate any man; he has nothing to give me...I found myself adopting a new attitude towards the other half of the human race. (Woolf 38)

Through this example, it becomes clear that if women have money and privacy, they will be full of bravery, power, and dependence on themselves rather than stand on men's shoulders. The 20th century gave western women the freedom to engage in more political and social activities, show their abilities, and confirm their artistic skills in a private place which empowered them greatly to be more creative in their writing. Woolf's work helped open the door to later 20th century women writers. Making a contrast between different eras helps us to see the progress of western women in the 19th and the 20th centuries. Woolf's idea about western women's right to freedom and power not only encouraged a response from women in her time, but also that of many 21st century women. This makes her claim enduring and valid across time, and leads us to look at women's lives, especially those of non-western women, in the 21st century in the third chapter.

Chapter III

The Power of Global Women in the Current Century

The 21st century saw the dawning of a global world, especially in the Middle East, where Muslim women represent modesty, beauty, and even freedom. In fact, Muslim women are not the only ones to have benefited from the 21st century's advantages, for other global women have benefited greatly. During this century, Muslim women, whether in the Middle East or around the world, have advocated for educational rights, gender equality, and social justice. Accordingly, Islamic feminism is considered a major part of the global feminist movement in the world because Muslim women have brought about many changes and developments in most aspects of their lives, whether in the domestic or public spheres. They follow the patterns other progressive women's movements have traced through the 19th, 20th, and 21st centuries. For example, P. C. Hota writes:

[I]n the 19th century, it was considered bad manners for a lady to be seen in a restaurant in London... [while] in the 20th century about 40 percent of ladies in developed countries are in full-time professions...[and women] occupy a major role in decision making in the 20th century.... [Today] ladies are flying sophisticated B-52 bombers (Hota 7).

According to these accounts of women's positions in different centuries, it is clear that modern women in the 21st century have succeeded in achieving their legal rights and aiding in the victories of other women.

Elizabeth Fernea writes, "Women's movements have been important in the Middle Eastern countries since the turn of the 20th century" (Fernea 198). The 21st century is considered the most progressive one for Middle Eastern women because it has given them power and freedom which has enhanced their positions in their societies.

Women in the Middle East have been fighting for their rights, especially during “the Arab spring” revolution that started in 2011. Egyptian women in the Middle East are some of many women who have faced a number of challenges and difficulties in their lives. Therefore, they have benefited from this revolution as an attempt to reach full liberation. Many women in Egypt “spent 20 years of their lives in front of an oven... baking bread just to feed their kids” as Umm Ibrahim and many other women in Egypt remind us (BBC News). Egyptian women have demanded to be significant women in their society; as Fatma Awad, 25, says, "I really need to feel that I'm a significant human being, that I can express my opinion. I do not want to remain marginalised. I want others to listen to what I have to say” (BBC News). These examples demonstrate how Arab women have limited rights, especially Egyptian ones, even though we are in the 21st century. While the 20th century inarguably gave women better lives, marriages, and education opportunities compared to the 19th century, it is the 21st century that has established more equal rights between genders in education, work, religion, and politics. These personal and social gains from one century to another have enabled global women, especially Muslim women, to participate in different activities, whether in the literary, scientific, cultural, or general social spheres. This recent engagement shows that Muslim women have earned the right to more sophisticated roles in their own lives, both inside and outside their homes.

Many religions all over the world have long believed that Muslim women are oppressed by their religion and Islamic traditions. This idea seems to be global. Dr. Samia Al-Amoudi says, “Male dominant culture is a phrase that is sometimes connected to the religion of Islam, but there is a big difference between cultural factors and Islamic

rules and regulations” (Al-Arabiya News). Feminists have long used Muslim women as examples of women’s oppression. There are even passages in Mary Wollstonecraft’s essay *Vindication of the Rights of Women* when she claims that the Quran says that women have no souls. She says, “In the true style of Mahometanism, they are treated as a kind of subordinate beings, and not as a part of the human species, when improvable reason is allowed to be the dignified distinction which raises men above the brute creation, and puts a natural scepter in a feeble hand” (Wollstonecraft 214). A footnote in the modern Norton anthology reminds its reader that this was a “common, but mistaken opinion among Europeans that the Koran...teaches that women have no souls” (note, 214). There is no question that Muslim women around the world struggled throughout the centuries due to unequal, limited, and restricted roles in education, marriage, and work participation as well as within their family life, yet these same restrictions were not applied to just Muslim women, but to women across the globe. Interestingly, it was not the Islamic faith that dictated that Muslim women assume subservient roles, but the men who believed themselves to be superior to women. Muslim women, in fact, have more rights than acknowledged by many common religions. Historically, the Islamic religion fights for Muslim women’s rights and gives them numerous roles, in contrast to many western women in the 19th century who were not allowed to enjoy the same advantages as Muslim women. For example, Islam gives Muslim women around the world legal rights to own their property. It also allows them to keep their own last names after marriage, and to ask for divorce if they so choose. Muslim women have benefited from many of these advantages since the seventh century. This is in stark contrast to western women in Wollstonecraft’s day, who until 1882 were forced to give all their property to their

husbands after marriage and were allowed neither to ask for divorce nor apply for custody of their children. Levine says, "Many women cut their feminist teeth within this era of protest and through addressing the problems of property within marriage" (Levine 140).

The Holy Quran, the book that is central to the Islamic faith, is clear in its direction for the roles of women and men, both of whom are seen as equal in the eyes of God. Like their western counterparts, however, Muslim men changed the perception of meaning in the Quran to be of greater advantage to themselves. As a result, the oppression of women the world over often happened simply because of men's selfish desires, dominating roles, and cruel natures. This appears when Islam directs its followers about polygamous marriage and its cases by saying in Chapter 4 Verse 3, "*...Marry of the women that you please: two, three, or four. But if you feel that you should not be able to deal justly, then only one or what your right hand possesses. That would be more suitable to prevent you from doing injustice*" ("The Women" is the 4th sura of the Quran with 176 ayat. [2-3]). According to this verse in the Holy Quran, it addresses Muslim men who want to marry up to four wives to deal with them justly; if they fear that they will not be just, then to marry only one will be more suitable. For example, when Islam allows men to marry up to four wives, it puts certain restrictions on them. However, Muslim men often have changed the meaning of this marriage and made it suit their own needs. So the oppression of Muslim and global women happened according to men's ideas of dominion. Muslim women in the Middle East have been so smart in recognizing the importance of a united and collective voice within their gender. This unity gave Muslim women strength and power in the 21st century to demand their rights, do their duties, and

improve their marital lives. Muslim women realized that if they were to work together to reassume their rights as well as men had worked together to take away their rights, they would stand a greater chance of success in their pursuits. Indeed, this unity and collective voice gave Muslim women the strength and power to demand their rights and improve their lives in general.

It is an incorrect assumption that it is Islam that orders women to wear a purda or hijab (a kind of veil that Muslim women wear to cover their hair and most parts of their bodies) when it was Muslim men who instituted these practices as part of their oppressive regime. This hijacking of holy rules becomes more evident when comparing the treatment of Islamic women to the treatment of Christian, Hindu, and Talmud women. The comparison indicates that men in each of those religions tended to modify the rules in their holy books to be much more advantageous to themselves rather than to women. Regardless of religion, 21st century women are writing a new history for themselves, a history built on better education, equal marital rights, and a fuller and more idealized life. Global and Muslim women in the 21st century occupy important roles in their society such as doctors, lawyers, and business women and books talk about their achievements and success such as *The Emergence of Feminism Among Indian Muslim Women* and *Modernizing Women: Gender and Social Change in the Middle East*.

To better understand the development of Arabic Muslim women's lives in the 21st century, it is most beneficial to compare their lives to the lives of their mothers and grandmothers before them. In this way, it is easy to see how significantly women's lives have changed and developed, even though these women vary in origin and traditions. This chapter highlights Muslim women's changing roles and demonstrates how these

changes have affected their education, marriage, and lives. Furthermore, interviews with Muslim women about their education experiences and the state of their lives after marriage will enrich our understanding of the 21st century lives of Muslim women. It is a goal of this thesis to help others understand the culture of Muslim women, whether through their relationships with each other, their husbands, or their families, and how those relationships affect their dreams and goals.

I- Middle Eastern Women's Education in the 21st Century:

During the 21st century, the education of Muslim women has been influenced by a lot of changes in political, economic, and social circumstances. These women, whether as teenagers, wives, mothers, or widows, have earned the opportunity to be educated and have established their identities in much the same way men have. Muslim women in the 21st century have fearlessly fought and proved to themselves, their societies, and the global world that they can earn multiple degrees in different fields. Joseph Chamie supports this idea by saying, "51 percent of Saudi students are women" (Yale Global Online). Women have been so successful in their pursuits that the gap between Muslim educated men and women in the Middle East had all but disappeared by the beginning of the 21st century. Muslim society no longer believes in segregation between genders except in public school, and Muslim women's eagerness for education and their ambitions have collapsed the difference between men and women in education. A prime example of this is that the number of girls' schools and universities has become the same or more than those for boys. The reason for this change is that many educated scientists, professors, and doctors within the Middle East acknowledge that Muslim women are the

platform of Muslim society and that, to have a better society, the foundation must be one that is strong. Thus, supporting women's education can support all of society, including women's husbands, sons, brothers, or fathers even if the society gives them the same service and interest. Sara Mels writes, "Many young females in the Arab world today are not only better educated than their mothers, they are also better educated than their fathers and husbands" (Mels 148). When Muslim Saudi women attended colleges and universities and studied subjects of their choosing for the first time in 1957, this allowed them to network more effectively and have the ability to compete with men in their chosen field. Muslim Saudi women's educational ambitions were clear when it was noted that in 1982 more Muslim women than men earned bachelor's degrees. "[T]oday it stands at around 93 men per 100 women" which reflects the superiority of women in both university attendance and graduation, as Joseph Chamie says (Yale Global Online).

According to a religion like Islam, Muslim women are allowed to be educated by their parents, and by both female and male teachers. This is because the language between daughters and their parents is so easy to understand and explain, and this also is the case with their teachers. Many international books talk about Islam and its way of educating its followers, whether men or women because "[Muslim] women's moral and social development" benefits them first and then their society, as Azra Asghar Ali writes (Ali 18).

One such example of modern equality in education between Middle Eastern men and women is demonstrated in an interview I conducted with Zahra Algafli, a Saudi Arabian woman. I asked her what she sees as the main reason for her success in education despite her obligations to her four children. She responded, "As a Muslim

woman, my ambition was similar to many women in my age of graduation from my university, [to] stay at my house regardless of which type of degree I will earn. But after I married to my husband, Hashim, everything has changed because he did not only help me to finish my master's degree, but also [to get a] Ph.D." That Zahra's husband supported her in her educational goals and chose to help with their children and domestic responsibilities demonstrates how far Muslim gender roles have changed. Though this type of encouragement and support goes against what was expected and experienced in centuries prior to this one, this example shows that education for Muslim women can be done, it can be beneficial for all involved, and it will not destroy a family unit. Elizabeth Fernea says, "[In the seventh century of the Christian era,] education [in the early period of Islam] would be the new merit basis for leadership and power, outdistancing blood relationship and class... [allowing] education to mobilize manpower as well as womanpower for the important task of nation-building" (Fernea 188). As evidenced by Zahra's experience, modern Islam encourages all of its followers to pursue education because it considered it to be the main foundation of life. Not only does Islam advocate for education but it does so because of the significant role that educated women play within their society. A society, whether Islamic or otherwise, cannot survive without educating its men and women. Likewise, many modern Hindu men also see that women need education to fulfill their purpose. P. C. Hota writes, "[Hindu women have to be educated because] ladies in some parts of India do not know how to use modern contraceptives and how to bring up healthy children" (Hota 10). Educating a boy in a society means educating one person, whereas educating a girl means educating a whole nation because a girl can be a mother, wife, daughter, or widow who not only gives her

knowledge to her family through the education of her children, but is also in conversation with both her husband and society as a whole. Thus, educating a girl means transferring knowledge, culture, and civilization through her upbringing, behavior, and attitude to all those around her, particularly her children.

The Islamic culture views education as a valuable benefit for Muslim women from early childhood to well into their married lives. Education begins at home with parents who play an important role in their children's lives. Islam encourages its female followers to be educated, and although it dictates strict rules that include the separation of Muslim women and men in schools, women are allowed to freely engage in the public sphere without fear of retribution. Through this mandatory separation in their classrooms, women are protected from men which allows them to focus on their education. Overall, education plays a remarkable role in making women "more selective in their partner choice" (Hota 134). In other words, the opportunity for educated Muslim women to marry in the 21st century is greater than that for uneducated women. Muslim Men in the 21st century prefer educated women not only to benefit themselves, but also to develop their children's future lives.

II-Muslim Women's Roles in Marital Lives during the 21st Century:

Marital life in the Islamic culture is intended to be shared equally between both spouses. Valentine M. Moghadam writes, "Marriage is a contract between a man and a woman who are equal in rights and duties, and is based on mutual understanding and respect" (Moghadam 96). It is evident that marital relationships do not consist only of the relationship between a man and a woman as individuals, but rather as a relationship

between two families. Moghadam adds, “Marriage, however, remains largely an agreement between two families rather than two individuals with equal rights and obligations” (Moghadam 128). In the past, “Arranged [Islamic] marriage usually occur[ed] by the parents, but with modernization in the 21st century males and females have the free choice to choose their marriage partner” (Moghadam 128). This is a prime example of the changing idea of marriage in the second half of the 20th century as Muslim men and women began to choose partners themselves rather than the traditional arranged marriages of old. It is obvious by Muslim men’s choice in partners that they have a respect for their women and consider them equal partners in their lives by allowing them to exercise their full legal rights.

Islam, as one of the Holy religions, gives Muslim women rights such as dowry, owning property, asking for divorce, and having the right to dissolve their marriage if they are neglected or ignored by their husbands. Tiffany D. Reed writes, “Islam [gives] women the right to divorce, property rights, and the right to earn money [because Muslim] women and men are put on the same level in terms of religion” (Reed 9-10). Islam respects married Muslim women when it gives them the rights of dowry and property, the ability to file for divorce, and the legal right of child custody. Islam allows Muslim women to get divorced if they cannot find pleasure with their husbands or if they reach a crisis in their marriage. The reason Islam allows for divorce is that Muslim women who cannot find any security in marriage can escape their position rather than stay in a potentially abusive or dangerous situation. During the pre-Islamic era, Arabic women suffered much from being ignored, being forced into marriage as children, and subsequent unjust treatment as Arabic men often killed their daughters and buried them

alive in the sand, an act known as female infanticide. This was designed to ease the shame that having female children brought upon Arabic men. Another accepted way “was killing their newborn daughters by poisoning ‘the nipples of the[ir] mothers’ breasts” (Ali 6). The only way that they justified their unbelievable actions was to refer to their fear of shame that their daughters could bring to their families or their fear that their daughters could become slaves to other men after marriage. These Arabic men were deaf to their wives’ pleas which perfectly illustrates where Arabic women fell in the social strata of the time. Ali writes, “A girl [was] considered an unwanted child for her parents. But her parents would have to answer to God on the Day of Judgment for any unjust [treatment]” (Ali 20). This is a powerful example of how Islam altered the course of women’s lives by ending the tragedy of female infanticide and establishing respect for women, whether as mothers, daughters, wives, or widows. Today, Islam respects women (including girl babies) and gives its women the same equal rights as men.

Though child marriage was popular in previous centuries, the 21st century has seen a dramatic decrease in this cultural phenomena. Indeed, while Islam encourages its followers to marry off their daughters and assure good lives for them, it does not specify a particular age for a girl to marry. Young girls marrying “between the ages of twelve and fifteen years” comes from male traditional beliefs and not from Islamic rules (Ali 126). Still, the practice has not been completely overthrown as seen with the Yamani women in the Middle East. Tom Finn writes:

Women have few rights in Yamani society. There is no legal minimum age for marriage, so a quarter of all girls are married before they turn fifteen--some as young as eight or nine--and grow up to bear on average

six children. Women inherit half of what men do...there are no penalties for domestic violence in Yemen...[Even] the wealthy and the fortunate [women] still need their brothers' or fathers' permission to travel, to enroll in school, or to marry. (Finn 92-93)

Finn's statement indicates that not all women are treated equally. As a famous Yamani proverb says, "A girl leaves the house only twice, to her husband and to her grave" (Finn 93).

It is important to note that Islam is aware of the importance of the relationship between a mother and her child because the health of that relationship, both in a physical and moral sense, has a direct effect on children's minds, their future lives, and their place in society. It would be a huge mistake for Muslim people to ignore the age of their daughters in marriage because they would expose their daughters to many health risks. In general, the small distance in the age between men and women in the Islamic marriage reduces the number of problems between them and gives women the confidence to confirm their roles in a house and society.

Similarly, Hindu women have also suffered from the indignities and heinous nature of the long history of child marriage, widow burning, and female infanticide. Each of these types of abuses against Hindu women were still considered common practices in 1856. In fact, Hindu men in the 19th century believed that the perfect age for girls to get married "was no more than ten years old" (Ali 6-7). It was also a common cultural practice that a woman "be burned with her [dead] husband to avoid the greater humiliation of becoming a miserable widow" (Ali 230). Once Islam came into play as a

viable religion, the positions of Muslim, Arabic, and Hindu women were greatly improved, particularly as the 21st century dawned.

Islam creates a strong connection between Muslim men and women, which allows them to demonstrate their love by way of marriage, sex, and reproduction. Through Islamic law, Muslim men and women possess equal rights and obligations toward each other. To provide a personal example, I interviewed an Afghan woman, Hamida, aged 29. On 15 February, 2016, she expressed, “Based on a lot of hard situations, poverty, and the choice of husband by [the] female’s family in my country, I find myself so lucky to associate with a man very close to my age and my mind in contrast to many Afghan women who dream to marry handsome and kind men,... but the worst problem when they get married to old men [is] they have never seen them before. My husband is a doctor and he always encourages me to read and be educated like him. In my opinion, his encouragement convinced me so much to complete my study and then earn my bachelor degree.” This example supports the idea of equality between Muslim men and women in the 21st century. Many Afghan women have tried to exercise their legal rights of equal treatment with men. Twenty-two-year-old Najiba, an Afghan woman, “had been abandoned [by her husband]...for another woman... [when] she could not give him a child.” The AWC (The Afghan Women’s Council) gave her a job. This example indicates how global women’s rights are often protected by women’s associations in the 21st century. This further demonstrates how Muslim women in the 21st century support each other without the necessity of a male presence (Moghadam 254).

According to Islamic marriage law, women can choose their partners, the age of marriage, and whether they would like to divorce, and because of this, the status of

Muslim women has changed widely from what it was before. Sara Mels writes, “In the past, it was common that parents chose a partner for their children...Today, a majority of their youngsters are allowed to choose their marriage partner” (Mels 40). In the 21st century, the age gap between Muslim wives and husbands has become narrower, which has the effect of giving Muslim women greater power within their families and societies. This smaller difference in age gap allows for better understanding between couples than in previous generations because each person has a better generational and cultural understanding of their partner.

Islam gives divorced Muslim women in the Middle East the right to maintain custody until their children reach a specific age. This is much more progressive than previous western laws; for families in England in the 19th century, custody automatically and without fail always went to the men. The rights of 19th century western women were largely ignored and unconsidered until the 20th century in contrast to Muslim women who gained these rights first. Moghadam writes, “[Islam gave the Muslim] mother [the right to] custody of the children even if she remarried,” which reflects Islam’s consideration of children’s psychology and mothers’ mental anguish (Moghadam 97). It shows that the Islam religion respects divorced women and gives them the right of child custody so “the children of divorced parents could stay with the mother until the age of six for boys and ten for girls” (Moghadam 163). Concerning this topic, I conducted an interview with Fatimah Ahmed, a Muslim divorced women, who has one child. In my interview on 23 December, 2015, she said, “Never mind that the divorce issue is not easy to swallow, especially if you have a child and you have to take care of him, but divorce I think gave me much energy to overcome a lot of social situations, especially to confront my ex-

husband to show him that I can do whatever I want so that I became one of the successful women in [the] designer field.” This example shows how Middle Eastern women have overcome the patriarchal system and its ideology. Fernea likewise supports this idea when he says, “Middle Eastern women and men have an advantage over the United States, for they have never pretended that patriarchal ideology did not exist. We, on the other hand, have been telling ourselves for generations that the patriarchy is nearly gone” (Fernea 192-193). This example suggests Middle Eastern and Western people have different views of the history of the patriarchal system; while many westerns became more complacent after achieving legal equality, Muslim women in the Middle East have kept fighting to claim their legal rights.

Technically, Muslim men are allowed to marry up to four wives, but they have to treat them equally without any differentiation. This kind of marriage, known as polygamous marriage, is only open to men. Muslim women are allowed only one husband. Islam allows its male followers the possibility to have more than one wife, but this must be done according to Islamic rules. At the same time, Islam reassures Muslim women that it would protect their rights without adding or reducing their obligations and freedom. As the Quran says, "But treat them [women] equally... and if you cannot, then one [wife] is better" (“The Women,” 4th surah of the Qur’an with 176 ayat. [129]). Islamic marriage protects women’s rights by ordering men to pay their dowry in jewelry or property, which confirms a woman’s rights to enter into marital life with full access to her legal rights of respect and appreciation. Moghadam writes, “the Muslim women’s legal and religious rights to inherit, own, and dispose of property” are because Islam considers women’s rights as Islamic religious rights (Moghadam 121). While Islam does

give men the right to practice polygamy, it does also secure rights of dowry and respect for women, giving an Islamic union a sense of meaningful balance between a man and a woman.

In the 19th century, sexual freedom was the legal right for western men only, but within the Islamic religion this policy is different. Islam allows its followers to amuse themselves and achieve their sexual desires as they like. Likewise, Islam makes the sexual relationship between men and women based on equality and respect so that it becomes the husband's duty and obligation to fulfil the sexual needs of their wives. This is considered one of the married woman's basic rights. This is in stark contrast to the 19th century, when western men ignored women's sexual rights and reserved sexual freedom for themselves. For example, 19th century men in England, especially those in army camps (soldiers) and naval ports (sailors), would visit prostitutes, but it was the suspected women who were legally forced to undergo internal examinations for disease while this exam was not extended to men. Muslim women's rights are much more progressive sexually. On the other hand, Islam focuses on women's sexual rights through their marriages, which shows the importance of a woman's pleasure and how her sexual happiness affects not only relationships with her husbands, but also with her family. Overall, Islam has been more rapidly progressive than traditional western culture since Muslim women can file for divorce and get their full rights for unfair sexual relationships with their husbands. Muslim women also have the right to ask to divorce if they are exposed to marital rape. This is in contrast to western society, where even the idea of "marital rape" had no meaning until recently.

III-Muslim Women's Lives in the Progressive Era (21st Century):

In this century, we are no longer talking about the difference between public and private spheres of Muslim men and women except in education. Shifting focus to the 21st century, it is evident that this is the century when the rights of Muslim women in the Middle East gain the most ground. Fernea states, "Women's activism and participation in the public sphere, [has] combined with the economic need for new kinds of skilled labor. For the second great change in Middle Eastern society has been the shift from country to city, from agriculture to industrial production" (Fernea 189). It is the 21st century that has seen the most expansion of gender roles, of education, and the preservation of female lives and health. Muslim women in the Middle East during the 21st century make up half of the Muslim population; it is important to them to represent different fields within their society. Through their varied occupations, Muslim women have confirmed the major roles with which they can augment their societies both economically and technically. Elizabeth Fernea writes, "Women constitute at least half of the population of the Middle East today. They are no longer passive accepters of the status, of the ideology that men are in charge of women. They are participating and struggling at every level for jobs" (Fernea 186). Fernea's statement demonstrates the advances made by women in the Middle East and how they have entered every possible arena in which they were once forbidden. Muslim women holding numerous different jobs and political positions in the 21st century supports their equal status in society; they hold important professional positions such as doctors, lawyers, business women and political leaders. Muslim women can participate in the political issues whether through their monetary support as Prophet Muhammad's first wife Khadija did, their advice, or their political participation. Today

there is no reason to prevent Muslim women doctors from treating their male patients. In other words, the 21st century goes against the general stereotype that was common in 19th century in England that women's brains and bodies were smaller than men's, or that they were mentally or physically inferior. These common stereotypes essentially handicapped women and negatively affected their rights in education, marriage, and life in general.

A-How Islam Gives Muslim Women Rights Equal to those of Men:

Muslim women play a significant role in Islamic society in various facets, including religious leadership, political positions, and civic leadership roles. These roles did not only just appear in the 21st century, but can be traced to the early seventh century of the Islamic community. An example that illustrates the early leadership by women can be found in the house of the Prophet Muhammad. His wives, daughters, and granddaughters such as Khadija, Aisha, Fatimah, and Zaynab all played significant roles in society and are still considered notable role models for Muslim women in the Islamic world. Islam emphasizes the role of women who help their society by engaging in public, economic, and educational activities. With this newfound power, they are able to revise many traditions and limitations previously tied to their society because they demonstrate how Muslim women through their public participation improve their society. They are doing exactly what Virginia Woolf urged women to do in *A Room of One's Own* when she says, "give her a room of her own and five hundred a year, let her speak her mind...and she will write a better book.... She will be a poet" (Woolf 94). The 21st century is widely believed to be the century that has given women many of their rights both in the Middle East and in the world at large. Though these rights began to become

into acceptance in the 20th century, they developed and became clearer in the 21st century. This is in contrast to the 19th century which often prohibited western women even from appearing in the public sphere. Today, gender discrimination in the Muslim world is minimized due to the fact that Islam grants women rights equal to those of men. This change in attitude and belief becomes clear when we see Islamic mandates that instruct men to educate their daughters in the same form as their sons and to allow those daughters to choose whomever they desire as a future husband.

Unfortunately, these changes in attitude have not yet reached every corner of the Muslim world. Recently (in 2016), a man in Saudi Arabia refused to allow his wife to deliver their baby by cesarean section. Because he refused medical intervention on behalf of his wife, she did not survive childbirth, but the baby still lives (Maternity and Children Hospital at Al Hasa). In a Global context, many militants and terrorists such as the Taliban often target Muslim women's education. For example, Taliban have blown up women's schools and have killed supporters of women's education. They "expelled" many girls from universities and schools because they believe education is for males only and "women's faces corrupt men" (Moghadam 241). In 1996, Taliban "had decreed that women would be forbidden to work outside their homes, except in hospitals and clinics, and then only to treat women and girls" so that they do not allow male health workers to treat females (Moghadam 241). Even in the 21st century, these are some places where women are still shunned from holding good positions of power or receiving equal education. This is apparent when some Pakistani families consider themselves having the authorization to restore their honor by killing their daughters. An example of "honour killing" that was common in Pakistan is Ms Parveen, 30, who "was beaten with bricks

and sticks in May outside Lahore's high court” when she defended her husband in a case “brought against him by her relatives.” They accused her husband, Muhammad Iqbal, of abducting her while Ms Parveen admitted that she had married of her “own free will.” This example reflects how an arranged marriage is the only norm in some Pakistani families, which led 869 women to be murdered in 2013 under the title of “honour killings” (BBC News). I think it is important to mention these examples which can help us to distinguish progressive thinkers in the 21st century from traditional and uneducated ones. It is clear the fight for equality in the Middle East is not over.

Furthermore, global women around the world have earned many of their rights, but some of them still have not gotten all of them in the 21st century. Despite progressive Saudi Arabia society, this appears in the segregation between Saudi men and women in the public political sphere. This segregation does not come from Islamic religion, but in fact it comes from Saudi social traditions. Even though Saudi women consist of more than 50% of the population, they are not permitted traditionally to vote, participate as political candidates, attend the elections, or even drive a car. While this changed somewhat in 2005 when women could give their limited vote and run in elections, they were under male control. Nevertheless, even if Saudi women have not earned their full rights, they have reached an apparent progressiveness in women’s political space in the 21st century in contrast to the 19th and 20th centuries. Women’s participation in negotiations and decision-making are necessary steps to bring development and modernization.

In addition, Afghanistan is considered “one of the few countries in the world with higher life expectancy for men than for women. For example, Afghanistan men have full

rights to “inherit a widow, gain a bride in marriage, gain a bride in compensation for a crime of which he or his relatives were the victim, or pay a bride price” because many Afghanistan families often arranged the marriage of “their younger daughters to older [rich] men” whom these girls have never seen or who are unkind (Moghadam 241). These examples show how Afghanistan Muslim women accept the unfair treatment of their men who play a crucial role in their lives and keep them away from progressiveness. Overall, global women have to push themselves forward and rethink many religious ideas because we are in the 21st century when men and women should be on the same level of respect and rights.

Moreover, it is clear that Muslim men and women’s responsibilities are still not equal in relation to the role of a woman as a wife and mother, and the role of man as a breadwinner and fighter. In fact, Middle Eastern women and men have many legal rights based on tenets of their religion, but due to many changes in the 21st century, these rights have increased and have become woven directly into the social fabric. For instance, many Muslim women have demanded a revolution to achieve a greater span of rights. This is apparent in the “Arab Spring” revolution in which Muslim women have demanded their rights in the Middle East, which not only has allowed them greater access to education but also has increased their personal values both in gender roles and in traditional social forces. Many Muslim women in the 21st century have developed their abilities in educational, economic, social, and domestic spheres which encouraged them to write about themselves, in their own words. These gains in freedom and equality have served to build a greater self-confidence within Muslim women, further proving that they can be successful and valuable as educated women, good wives, devoted mothers, and trusted

daughters if only given the chance to prove themselves. These women prove they can be at once feminist and traditional. Muslim women show they can still keep their natural jobs as God has created them in addition to occupying different professional vocations.

It is apparent that Muslim women's roles have largely extended beyond the stereotype of women's fields such as teaching, nursing, or secretarial work. They have also successfully engaged in all types of roles in society to include politics, economics, healthcare, and design. This is in contrast to Muslim women's limitations in the workforce in the past because women in the 21st century are able to be doctors, politicians and lawyers. Overall, to understand Muslim women's positions in the 21st century, one must look back at different centuries and compare their accomplishments in the past to their achievements in this century. This contrast gives us the motivation to encourage each other toward a better future as these great women have done. Increasing the number of female workers also helps the Middle Eastern women control their decisions on their households, which empowers their character inside and outside the home and gives them more confidence.

B-Wearing a Veil in the Islamic Society:

Of course, while Islam gives its women permission to join the workforce, it imposes some conditions to make female workers abide by Islamic law. Moghadam writes, "All working women, however, are required to appear in hijab, which is at minimum a large scarf covering all the hair and neck, and a long-sleeved and loose-fitting smock or manteaux that covers the body's contours" (Moghadam 62). Wearing a veil does not mean staying at home for Muslim women in the Middle East, but it is considered a symbol of

Muslim women in Islam. In contrast to western perceptions, Islam through the order of hijab gives women more freedom not only in their opinions, but also in their movement because Muslim women's bodies are their own private concern and no outsider men have the right to share their rights except their husbands. Muslim women in the 21st century should work to be the best in everything and never consider their veils as obstacles in their lives. In my opinion, wearing a hijab does not determine a woman's level of knowledge or her education because it is reflective of her religion and, therefore, something of which she can be proud. This custom is considered an important tradition in the Islamic culture because it protects Muslim women "against the slings and arrows of imperialists and against 'the male gaze'" (Moghadam 160). Moghadam's statement demonstrates Islam's interest in protecting Muslim women physically from the gaze of outside men not because they are subordinate or inferior to men, but because they are seen as a treasure. Reed writes: "It is clear that the idea of a veil to cover private parts of the body is presented as a good idea, but once again it is not mandated. Also this religious verse is putting men and women on an equal playing field. It also instructs men to guard their private parts as well... not discriminating between men and women" (Reed 8). In addition to wearing a hijab, Islam requires its followers to be clean, neat, and modest so that Islam does not "instruct women to wear the veil, [but in fact] it simply instructs them to maintain a modest appearance in public places.... The word hijab is an Islamic word that means 'barrier or protection' It is the principal of modesty, for both women and men" (Reed 5-9). Indeed, many women in the 21st century wear the hijab and still manage to obtain high levels of education and the resultant degrees, which implies that it is not the hijab that restricts Muslim women's ambitions.

The differences in how the veil is viewed in the Middle East compared to the west is noted in Tiffany D. Reed's article. Reed writes, "Eastern women wearing the veil [know] exactly what this means socially, politically and religiously" and do not consider it an obstruction or problem in their way. "In the West, the idea of the veil has come to represent repression and violations of human rights, while in the East, it is not as much about the veil as people assume. It has become more a fight for rights and equality" (Reed 2). Through wearing veils, all Islamic women "can fall into one category" without any class discrimination or superiority, which allows Muslim women to benefit from the flavor of unity and power (Reed 3). In general, Islam gives its women freedom to wear a "beautifully colored and beaded scarf covering a woman's hair to a full burqa covering her entire body" so Middle Eastern women benefit from their veils, earn their advantages, and gain their liberation regardless of the different reasons they choose to wear their hijab (Reed 10). Overall, the idea of wearing a veil is starting to change in the Middle East because Muslim women are "becoming increasingly comfortable with showing their femininity [and] their power [because they believe that] they do not have to come from behind their veil to [make their voice heard]" (Reed 30). Many Muslim women understand that veils and hijabs are not obstacles in their ways so they are still successful in their education, marriage, and lives even if they wear their hijab.

C- Muslim Women Workers in the Middle East during the 21st Century:

The roles and positions of global women, especially in the Middle East, have changed and expanded in Middle Eastern society. These changes are in stark contrast to what was common in the 19th century. Global and Middle Eastern women have demanded equality in careers with men and have continued to demand equality until many have achieved it. Modern women in the 21st century, whether Muslim or global, have successfully competed with men in occupations previously dominated by a sense of male superiority including engineering, medicine, and architecture. Muslim women today occupy the top positions in the workplace by obtaining degrees from colleges and universities so their roles have expanded from previous generations to include more careers, independence, and decision-making. For example, Moghadam writes of prejudices as recent as World War II: “Initially during the early years of the war, the injured Islamic soldiers objected to being treated by female nurses.” The fact that this changed reveals how differently men perceive the abilities of Muslim women (Moghadam 206).

According to Middle Eastern women in the 21st century, the average Muslim family model and size has changed according to new circumstances and requirements. These changes have taken many Muslim women out of their homes to participate in the workplace. Furthermore, the traditional structure of family that sees women as homemakers and husbands as breadwinners has begun to change into a new dynamic which gives Muslim women a chance to play a significant role in their family lives. To achieve balance within this new Muslim family dynamic, men and women must work together as a team with mutual goals and ambitions.

It is notable that women in the 21st century, especially Muslim women in the Middle East, can and do successfully compete with men and solve many problems in both media and politics. Many Muslim women in this century have achieved their dreams and have pursued their goals, whether through careers, families, or occupations. In this century, it is now women who often make the final decisions, not their fathers, brothers, or husbands, as was common in the 19th century. In fact, the roles of Middle Eastern and global women in the 21st century have shown the value of women because they comprise half of human existence. Muslim women in this century have gained their individuality, confidence, and encouragement. My grandmother is one of the best examples that comes to my mind. She is from a very tiny village in Saudi Arabia where many traditional beliefs are common, but she raised us with many stories about resistant women who demanded their rights without fear or embarrassment. Although she had no formal education and very few friends, she has a faith in the power of God, who helps “the weak women,” as she always says. Because of her encouragement, I am now here in the United States to complete my studies. My grandmother provides an excellent example of a Middle Eastern woman who never let her gender define or limit her.

In fact, it serves no purpose to lay blame at the feet of men for how earlier cultures treated women. It is a new century and women determine their own paths without having to ask for men’s opinions or their permission. Even though women in the 21st century have occupied different kinds of jobs such as teachers, engineers, and doctors, they still show their strength as mothers by bearing, nurturing, and raising children. Today men always share their domestic responsibilities with women, just as they share more aspects of their public lives.

Finally, the 21st century has seen women across the globe join together in a collective voice to fight for their individual rights. Rather than dwelling on the challenges of the past, women around the world have put all historical injustices behind them and look forward to their future. Accordingly, they will empower themselves in pursuit of important positions within their society. Women still look back to Woolf and her essay *A Room of One's Own* where she discusses the importance of women “mak[ing] money by [their own] writing” which gives them freedom and power. Indeed, any kind of writing needs both sexes to write about it, for “Poetry ought to have a mother as well as a father” (Woolf 103). Today women realize how important it is to have an independent income and a private room (Woolf 65). Overall, the 21st century is considered the century of women because men and women have become alike in many aspects of their lives such as jobs, child custody, and equal payment in work. Dr. Al-Amoudi, a woman CEO and breast cancer doctor, says, “the day after tomorrow is definitely going to be different” when she discusses how this century is the right time to empower women, especially girls. Dr. Al-Amoudi found that educating girls with “the real values of Islam and not leaving control to those who dominate them under the name of Islam” empowers future female generations and brings many changes to their lives (Al-Arabiya News). Women in the 21st century can know their rights, understand their positions, and make their own decisions when they believe that men do not know better for them than they do themselves.

Conclusion

The 21st century, a woman's century, demands that we look to the past and across culture and nationality to understand women's positions today. Women's opportunities in the 21st century allow them to achieve great success that their mothers and grandmothers could not have imagined. With equal education between men and women, this century is opening many doors to women and abolishing the idea of disparities and differences, whether between men and women or between social categories such as upper, middle, and lower classes. Despite progressive changes, there are some women in the world, whether Muslim, western, or global, who are still not treated equally to men. However, with education and enlightenment, many traditional norms have been altered, and many women today appreciate education's role in empowering every level of their lives. In fact, education has even helped make traditional men's views toward women's education, work, and marital and bodily rights more progressive, aspects which have enabled women to be on an equal level to men. Overall, my research on women's history and lives provides undeniable evidence of women's continuing progress, both in their homes and in the public sphere.

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