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YOUNG WOMEN IN VIRGINIA WOOLF'S NOVEL

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**Abstract:**

Female characters in novels by Virginia Woolf are studied in their relationships as wives, mothers, daughters and prospective brides. The novels selected are those where the writers are concerned with families dominated by Victorian ideals. The socio-economic, religious and ideological origins of the Victorian ideals are traced, esp. as they are related to the writers family background in the tradition of English intellectual life. The central theme of the four novels by Woolf is the mother daughter relationship which is analyzed in its components of love and resentment, often revealed in an interior monologue.

It is shown how the plot, dialogues and authorial intrusions are used to depict a liberation from the constraints of the Victorian ideal of family life. The mothers in the Victorian ideals of family life are shown to be repress tentative of various aspects of the Victorian ideal of Womanhood. The attitudes of men towards women vary from those typifying Victorian conceptions of male superiority to more modern ideals of equality and natural companionship.

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**Keywords:** *Victorianism, Victorian, women, female characters, Bloomsbury Group, women in history, history of women, women in literature, mother-daughter relationship.*

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**Introduction:**

One important theme in the novels of Virginia Woolf is the relationship between mother and daughter. The mothers were seen from the point of view of the daughters in their traditional roles as wives.

Another important theme in the novels is the future of the young women. Relationship outside the family become decisive, prosticulary these with young

men who are seen as prospective husbands. The young women are confronted with learned and intellectual men. Whose attitudes to them are a source of Vexation Marriage is not seen as an obvious career, but the young women invariably find that few alternatives are open to them.

In her essay. "Two women" Virginia Woolf commented on the scarcity of distinguished women recruited from the

middle class, as compared to the 'great reservoir' number of distinguished men drawn from that "great reservoir" She pointed to the conditions of women's lives that contributed to their persistent obscurity, marriage, child-bearing, lack of income, privacy and education. She put the blame on those stifling conditions and, above all, on what she called "the negative education" that determined "not what you may do that what you may not do." Women had to find solace, if where they could get it, in religion or daydreaming, if they did not choose to let themselves be absorbed in domestic details. Virginia from one generation of women to the next, through the attitudes of mothers to their daughters. They also show how men, young and old, influence the future of young women.

In the Voyage out Rachel Vinrace, Virginia Woolf's first young heroine had led on uneventful life under the supervision of two maiden aunts, her father's only ambition for her was to bring her up in the way he imagined "her mother would have wished", that is to be an old-fashioned quiet girl consequently her aunt Mrs. Ambrose, finds her strangely ignorant and innocent at the age of twenty — four "There was nothing to take hold of in girls nothing hard, permanent that Mrs. Ambrose prefers young satisfactory." It is inferred that Mrs. Ambrose prefers young

men who are supposed to have these qualities. Rachel's education had been very rudimentary, her only great interest being music.

The Voyage so south America and the stay at a villa there provide Rachel with opportunities to observe people. Young and middle-aged, and to get her life into perspective. At first she has -very little to say for herself. When her uncle. Mr. Ambrose and his learned friend Mr. Pepper talk together, they do not expect women to take part in the conversation with comments of their own. Mr. Pepper is particularly dour in his attitude to women even downright rude, "He had not married himself for the sufficient reason that he had never met a woman who commanded his respect." It is not above him to quote in Greek Simply in order to embarrass a woman whom he knows will not understand Mr. Ambrose, on his part seems to be unware of the cruelty of his remark to Rachel "What's the use of reading if you don't read Greek?" Virginia Woolf, who herself struggled to overcome the handicap of not having had a formal education in Greek was sensitive to this kind of remark.

Katharine Hilbery in Night and Day, Virginia Woolf's next novel, is the only daughter of parents who are securely ensconced in the literary Establishment of London. Her romantic mother does not

believe in College education for girls, and she has to pursue her studies in mathematics and astronomy secretly at night. Neither of her parents look upon her as anything but a paragon of practical virtues and common sense, and they do not understand her wish to get away from the chaos of feeling at home to the world of order created by facts and figures.

Katharine has tried to persuade herself that she loves Rodney and that he loves her. After a while she notices that he has begun to compare her with her cousin, Cassandra Otway, whom he finds more congenial. Cassandra makes the appropriate comments on Rodney's play; she listens to his with enthusiasm and vivacity. She also knows how to promote conversation and smooth over difference. Katharine realizes that William Rodney and Cassandra are better suited for each other; she finds the opportunity to break off her engagement and encourage them to fall in love as Cassandra discovers "You wanted us to fall in love." Katharine herself is surprised at her own audacity in

influencing "the life of another as she had influenced Cassandra's life."

Cassandra soon becomes engrossed in her love for William Rodney and interprets everything he says in a favorable light. Contrary to Katharine she knows how to put him at ease by controlling herself and assuming the feminine attitudes she knows that he likes.

### **Conclusion:**

The young women portrayed by Woolf are based on her own experience. The struggle and the view of society, especially the men, are reflected through her young women characters.

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