TÍTULO: El punto de vista de las mujeres en "A Room of One´s Own and Three Guineas": Percepciones de estudiantes de pregrado en modo de lectura digital.

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RESUMEN: El estudio actual tuvo como objetivo abordar cómo se reflejaba el estado de las mujeres inglesas a principios del siglo 20 a través de los lentes de una mujer y las posibles razones y soluciones para esto desde el punto de vista de una mujer. En este caso, seis mujeres graduadas y ocho estudiantes graduados con nueve nacionalidades diferentes leyeron los textos en modo de lectura digital y evaluaron el punto de vista de las mujeres en los chats grupales de Messenger. Los datos textuales recopilados a través de chats grupales fueron respaldados por los datos obtenidos de dos exámenes para llevar a casa. El análisis temático de los datos reveló los temas como educación distorsionada, sociedad patriarcal y barreras sociales.

PALABRAS CLAVES: lectores electrónicos, temas de mujeres, feminismo, literatura inglesa, tradición literaria femenina.

TITLE: Women's point of view in "A Room of One's Own and Three Guineas": Perceptions of undergraduate students on a digital reading mode.

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ABSTRACT: The current study aimed to address how the status of English women in the early 20th century was reflected through a woman's lenses and the possible reasons and solutions for this from a woman's point of view. In this case study, six female and eight male graduate students with nine different nationalities read the texts on a digital reading mode and evaluated women's point of view on Messenger group chats. The textual data collected via group chats were supported by the data elicited from two take home exams. Thematic analysis of the data revealed the themes as distorted education, patriarchal society and social barriers.

KEY WORDS: E-readers, women issues, feminism, English literature, female literary tradition.

INTRODUCTION.

Ours is a digital age and the widespread use of the Internet has changed not only our lives but also our habits. The digital interaction has become one of the indispensable human habits as well as a defining human characteristic.

This digital era has influenced teachers and learners, too as far as education is concerned. Teachers have incorporated technology into their courses to increase teaching effectiveness and to foster students' learning (Üstün and Dimililer, 2017).

Technology has transformed the learning experience of students. The traditional teaching and learning modes do not appeal to students any more. For this reason, the traditional reading behaviors of learners are also subject to change (Atamturk, 2018; Ghazanfarpour et al, 2013). Warschauer (2015) argues that in our computer age the number of e-book readers is gradually

increasing and hence, there is a high demand for e-texts. Liu (2005) writes of an emerging screen-based reading behavior due to an increasing amount of time spent reading electronic documents. E-books are good sources for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students since they can be read aloud providing an opportunity for EFL learners to practise intonation and pronunciation (Atamturk, 2018).

A number of researches on digital reading focuses on students' attitudes towards digital reading modes (Vernon, 2006; Duran, 2013; Gregory, 2006; Mash, 2003; Rogers and Roncevic, 2002) others delve into preferences for e-books or printed materials (Woody, e al. 2010; Foasberg, 2014; Levine-Clark, 2006; Mizrachi, 2015; Hukill, e al 2017; Buzzetto-More, e al. 2007). On the other hand, Young (2000), Keller (2012) and Mercieca (2004) have investigated the use of e-books. In terms of reading comprehension, research findings on digital reading indicates that there was not a significant difference between print readers and e-readers (Taylor, 2011). This finding is endorsed by those of Green et al. (2010), Margolin et al. (2013), Norman and Furnes (2016) and Porion (2016). However, some research results indicate considerable improvement with regard to EFL learning (Chen, et al. 2013).

Chou (2016) calls for more empirical studies which bring in new perspectives into digital reading indicating that e-book reading research has been concerned with either attitudes of learners or use of e-books. In addition, most research on digital reading has been quantitative studies (Chou, 2016). In this respect, this qualitative study is designed to fill a gap in the relevant literature by determining fourteen graduate EFL students' preferences for e-books or print books first and then evaluating their perceptions of women's point of view in Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* and *Three Guineas* on a digital reading mode during a six-week period.

DEVELOPMENT.

Literature review.

The 20th century is a crucial turning point in literary criticism since Virginia Woolf has changed the established norms between the sexes. Hence, it is a period when women writers have taken it upon themselves to respond to the concerns that are not just personal but also political and that affect the society at large. Gender equality, the prevention of war, lack of government support for education of women and women not being allowed to do professional work are the issues that female writers of the time engage themselves with. In her *A Room of One's Own,* Woolf looks at the way women have been reflected in history; the way they were treated by the male world, thought about and in effect oppressed as well. Woolf argues that money and a room of one's own are not merely mundane things that people use in their very lives but have an enormous impact on the way women can think and create. It is impossible to overlook this piece of criticism because Woolf's ideas have a tremendous influence on the twentieth century theory and criticism inspiring a number of contemporary feminist writers. Feminism is a series of political, cultural and social movements rejecting male supremacy and advocating gender equality (AlGweirien, 2017). Woolf's novels as well as her non-fiction on women and writing establish a model for the contemporary literary criticism (Jones, 2015).

As argued by Alexander (2000), Woolf's wish for a room is a metaphor for "an individual Utopia, a momentary withdrawal from human relationships, an intense self-centredness rare for women". Women are so preoccupied with their children and husbands that they do not have time to spend for themselves. Woolf's wish for a room symbolizes the "rejection of forced domestic life" (Alexander, 2000). Domestic life has always been associated with women strengthening the argument that women should consider themselves blessed if they get married and have a house to live in.

Three Guineas was written just before World War II and argues for the prevention of war from the perspective of women. In particular, Woolf explicates paramount discourse of her time, such as war, education and the exclusion of women from professional work. It seems that lack of education is the most significant factor of women's oppression since educating women would alter all the prevalent values and preoccupations created by the discourse of masculinity. Educated women would no longer have to be forced into spending their lives just cooking food and looking after children but would be working in public, earning money and improving their professional and creative abilities.

The war attracts Woolf's attention because war means men fighting other men as well as it means the perpetuation of masculinity in actuality with women serving as the background to the performance as victims rather than anything else. She contemplates that women's roles are so fixed that they cannot not even attempt to break the boundaries because everything is predetermined by men. In *Three Guineas,* she argues how war is predominantly a phenomenon associated with men and adds rather controversially that if there were more women in positions of power, there would be no war. *Three Guineas* opens with a question: "How in your opinion are we to prevent war?" (Woolf, 1992, p. 153). Through these very words, Woolf is successfully and fundamentally shifting the power relations and the established hierarchies between men and women. In other words, it is men who inflicted this brutal malady of inhumanness on earth, as Sontag (2003) claims, "the killing machine has a gender, and it is male". Women, on the other hand, choose to be less aggressive and more peaceful than men tend to be.

War means a need for power expressed in blatantly aggressive ways in the world of men and women having to sit at home and looking after domestic duties. It became an occupation for men to fight and women to wait; men to aspire, women to pacify themselves. "War is a profession…a source of happiness and excitement; and…an outlet for manly qualities, without which men would

deteriorate" (Ratcliffe, 1993, p. 406). Moreover, the war and the military system is a method for keeping women detached from reality, workforce and governmental politics as "war and militarism foster and legitimize the prevailing system of patriarchal power, and they model and legitimate violence as an acceptable technique for achieving social objectives" (Dorsch, e al. 1991, p. 141). In this respect, *Three Guineas* incorporates women's oppression directly within the inherent Fascist regime of patriarchy and hence invents a political text on the prevention of war since "Woolf maintains that Fascism is the outgrowth of the patriarchal oppression of women" (Middleton, 1982, p. 406).That is why Marxist feminists argue that the "original and basic class division is between sexes" (Langan and Day, 1992, p. 13) and not between the working class and upper class males because "Marxist categories, like capital itself, are sex-blind.". In fact, one can further contend that capitalism is another way of oppressing women because "within capitalist systems, women are used as a cheap pool of reserve labour that deflates overall wages and establishes a sex-segregated workforce with differential pay scales.

Yet, coming back to the problem Woolf raises in *Three Guineas*, before Woolf goes on to answer the question of preventing war, she goes on to study the reasons which lead to war in the first place. One of the most powerful reasons she finds to explain why men go to war is to "gratify their sex instinct" (Woolf, 1992, p. 313). Now, speaking psychoanalytically, what Woolf is suggesting here is that men need to satisfy their subconscious cravings to possess the object of their desire. She argues that men have been culturally indoctrinated to be violent and cruel and women to be passive and obedient. The psychological reasons why men need war are essential in solving the mystery between men and women. Why wars have been dominated by men is a question that finds answers in the oppression of women. Woolf argues that men pursue war to "gratify their sex instinct" (Woolf, 1992, p.313).

The entire history of war has excluded women from the scenario, because this scenario includes recognition, independence and heroism. Simultaneously however, Woolf advocates the opposite: although war is about destruction, it is also economic and political in many ways because it involves the exchange of money. One is weak, one is strong; one prevails, one surrenders. The winner wins financially as well as militarily. The emphasis Woolf makes here is that wherever there are the issues of money or financial need, women have been excluded because they are never deemed capable of fighting for their country: "[The] Navy [is] closed to our sex. We are not allowed to fight. Nor again are we allowed to be members of the Stock Exchange. Thus, we can use neither the pressure of force nor the pressure of money" (Woolf, 1992, p. 166).

In her anti-nationalist politics, not only does she disavow the brutality of war, but she also suggests a new understanding, which is to rebel against the dubious idea of brotherhood which by excluding women as equals is the very beginning of fascism.

As opposed to the male rhetoric, we see in Woolf a desire to establish the idea and the practice of sisterhood. By doing this, she thereby affirms the idea that the oppression of women is not national; but instead, international—and this is what she wants to change through women resisting patriarchy as sisters. Yet, *Three Guineas* and *A Room of One's Own* are specifically about the patriarchy that exists in England. However, she is immensely engaged in world politics, the representation of women in literature and how the cultural tendencies of men and women are based on the unequal relationship between men and women.

Woolf is not just a practical woman who sees things from a realistic perspective but is also a materialist and Marxist feminist because she analyzes the very foundations that affect and restrain women from entering into public discourse in terms of women's education status and their relation to men. Indeed, her arguments are also existentialist in many ways because she looks at the notions of truth, subjectivity and experience as the very source of women's needs to overcome their obvious

suppression. In particular, Woolf never argues about women's oppression from a naturalist or universal standpoint. Instead she argues that every woman's oppression is culture specific, political and depended on the societies they lived. It is not predestined for women to be oppressed by God, or biological inferiority. Rather, it is a continuous battle, a historical representation, an artistic and rhetorical function that makes women the way they are. Drawing on this, the current research study was designed to evaluate how women's point of view in Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* and *Three Guineas* was perceived by graduate English Language and Literature students. The results were discussed in relation to the cultural model which poses that the society in which the female authors work and function influences women's point of view and shapes their goals. The cultural model also deals with how the culture affects female writers' representations of males, females and stereotypes.

Methodology.

Research method.

In order to fulfill the research aim, which was to investigate the preferences for e-books or print books and evaluate the perceptions of women's point of view in Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* and *Three Guineas*, a qualitative case study method was adopted. The rationale behind adopting such a method was that case studies explore a phenomenon within its context (Baxter and Jack, 2008, 544) aiming at investigating a phenomenon through the lenses of the participants (Meyer, 2015). Qualitative methods of inquiry, on the other hand, provide deeper insights.

Participants' demographics.

All fourteen participants were graduate students enrolled in the course called 20th Century Prose offered by an MA programme in a university in North Cyprus. Six of them were female and eight of them were male. Participant age ranged from 23 to 30 years. Six were from Iraq, one was from Libya, one from Ukraine, one Iran, one Pakistan, one Palestine, one Jordan, one Nigeria and one

Egypt. Reading *A Room of One's Own* and *Three Guineas* was one of the course requirements. They were free to read the texts either on a digital mode or borrow them from the library or buy the print books. The participants took place in this study with pseudonyms.

Data collection procedures.

The qualitative data were collected through group chats on messenger and take-home exams. Group chats on messenger were used as a kind of brainstorming and clarifying the parts difficult to understand in the texts. At first, it was the lecturer of the course who initiated the chat by asking their opinions on gender inequality based on the texts but later students also started the chat by asking clarifications on the difficult parts they had difficulty in understanding. In such cases, the lecturer or their peers commented. Two chat sessions were held for each text on Messenger. Each chat lasted about one and a half hours. Then, they were printed to be analysed thematically. The other textual data were collected from take home exams. One take home exam was given for each text. "How do you evaluate the women's point of view in the texts?", "How do you find the patriarchal social and political system of values in the Western world in those days?" and "Is gender equality achieved in our modern world?" were some of the questions posed during group chats and in the take home exams. The main reason for using take home exams was to support and detail the data elicited through group chats.

Data analysis.

The textual data from the group chats and take-home exams were coded line by line to determine the participants' evaluations of women's point of view in the two texts. Then, the codes were classified under certain categories. Later, the categories were re-examined to reveal the patterns and themes.

Findings and discussion.

The participants were told to write on their take home exams whether they read the print texts or on a digital mode including the reasons for their preferences. It was found that all participants preferred the digital reading mode. Ease of use (n=7), ubiquitous access (n=5), convenience (n=3) and accessibility (n=3) were among the reasons for the digital reading mode.

The aim of this research study was to investigate how the participants evaluated women's point of view in *Woolf's A Room of One's Own* and *Three Guineas.* The analysis of the textual data elicited via Messenger group chat and take-home exams revealed three themes namely distorted education, patriarchal society and economic and social barriers (see Table 1).

Table 1. Frequency distribution of the themes.

Themes	Number of participants	%
Distorted education	13	93
Patriarchal society	11	78
Economic and social barriers	6	43
Total	14	100

Virginia Woolf, herself a woman, reflects upon the British society in the early 20th century and brings in a women's perspective to issues affecting women. From a woman's perspective, there is a need for the empowerment of British women in order to have a sustainable society. As far as the women's perspective was concerned, it was found that distorted education was raised as the most important issue in gender inequality. A great majority of the participants believed from women's point of view the education system was in favour of boys and men neglecting girls and women. Hence, distorted education was the major problem in gender inequality. Natalie stated that "*All women must have a right to education. In those days' women were not allowed to go to school.*

They had to get married and look after their husbands and children. This was what the society expected from them". As argued by Ali "*Girls did not have the same opportunities in terms of education. As a woman Woolf was unhappy about this. For instance, when the narrator in A Room of One's Own went to the fictitious Oxbridge which was an all-male university, she saw that they were served good food. There was a stark contrast between the prosperity of Oxbridge and the poverty of Fernham which was an all-female college*". On the same topic Miriam pointed out "*Obviously, Oxbridge was a better university than Fernham but no matter how brilliant a female student was, she was not accepted to this school. It means that good schools were man only.*" Suzi commented "*Women's point of view is reflected through* Shakespeare's *imaginary sister called Judith. Woolf is very creative in creating a sister to Shakespeare so that the reader can understand the pervasive gender inequality in terms of access to education*". Nour extended this argument by posing "*Shakespeare was offered a number of educational opportunities but her sister would not have had the opportunities her brother had had*". Sophie told "*No matter how gifted she was, Judith would have stayed at home in the age of Shakespeare unlike her brother who received proper education. Due to the entrenched traditions, she would not have been allowed to go school*". Soltan commented "*Judith's father would have forced her to get married at a very young age. In one year she would have a baby. To make matters worse, she would not have spared time for reading a single book because of household chores because in the age of Shakespeare all women had domestic responsibilities unlike men*". Aram replied "*If she had refused to get married, she would have left for London to pursue a career as a playwright but being a woman, she would have been mocked to have such an aspiration*". Kitab stated "*In order to become a playwright one needed proper schooling which was denied to girls. For this reason, the narrator believed that the potential of women was wasted whilst doing dull and laborious domestic tasks*". Hanna commented "*House had always been a feminine entity and it has never been associated with men but proper*

schooling was always for boys rather than girls. Ahmad told *"In Three Guineas Woolf poses that there is something wrong with the education of men. Men go to war to gratify their sex instincts. Woolf contends that women are against war. There is a contradiction because the educated males go for war but women who are the uneducated gender do not want war".* Hussein stated *"This means that there is something wrong with education because we expect educated people to make the world a better place to live in. Woolf is trying to say that if women were educated and involved in politics there is not going to be any war".* Bolt concluded *"We definitely need more educated women to bring in women's point of view in education and politics. Woolf wants equal rights for both sexes in terms of education. Educated women can bring in a more tolerant and lenient approach in contrast to male hawkish stance."*

Patriarchal society was the second theme emerged. Ahmad commented "*Patriarchs had strong opinions on gender roles in the society. They did not approve of women writing or getting employed".* Nour supported Ahmad by saying *"A male poet mocks Lady Winchelsea who is a female poet of high class in A Room of One's Own as if women cannot be a poet".* Natalie told *"They believed women had to take care of their families at home and leave money making to their husbands."* Suzi said *"The norms of the society was dictating women to restrict themselves between the walls of their houses".* Hussein argued *"The male dominated society deemed women second class. Males were regaled class and women served them. They made women underprivileged by hampering women."* Miriam responded *"The society excluded women and confined women to their houses. By doing this, patriarchs ensured their superiority over women."* Bolt told *"Job opportunities were scarce for women. Take Juliet, for example, let alone being an author, she would not have been an actress because in the age of Shakespeare all actresses were male."* Aram contended *"Men disproportionately made up the workforce and they were the only money owners. Even when women inherited money, they were required to give it to their husbands by law and law*

and legislations were made by patriarchs". Hanna told *"They were not allowed to own property either."* Ali believed *"Woolf brings in a women's point of view by highlighting the need for a change in the status quo and envisions a society free of prejudices against women".* Sophie stated *"In Three Guineas Woolf through Lady Lovelace brings in a women's point of view by saying the price of the splendid British Empire was paid by women."* As argued by Kitab *"Though women were pictured as servants of the patriarchy, bearing the burden, they were still inferior to men in the society."*

Economic and social barriers was the other theme the participants raised. Mohammed pointed out *"Females were excluded from certain spaces, such as the grass of the college yard and the library of Oxbridge. Only fellows and scholars were allowed to walk on the grass, only the gravel was for women. There were visible and invisible barriers for women diminishing women both physically and intellectually".* Natalie contended *"Prosperity was for men and poverty was for women due to discriminatory policies. Women if they were lucky enough to get employed, they received lower wages".* Nour told *"Women were domestic workers doing undervalued and unpaid work and they did not have any rights as workers at all."* Soltan commented *"The narrator in A Room of One's Own visits the British Library to see what academics have written about women and all the books she has found were written by men. In addition, the history did not record any information about the lives of women".* Aram added *"The bishop the narrator met in the British library believed that no women could be as talented as Shakespeare."* Sophie told *"All academicians employed in the universities were men. When we look at literary history, all playwrights, such as Shakespeare, Ben Johnson and Marlowe and all poets like Coleridge, Wordsworth and Shelley were all men."*

CONCLUSIONS.

According to Woolf, being a woman in the British society in the early 20th century is difficult. Women face social exclusion, occupational segregation, pervasive gender inequality and unjust

treatment of the patriarchal society. All books on women issues were written by men. Woolf's endeavour to bring in a women's point of view is valued greatly and she has offered new possibilities for women representations (Shiach, 2017; Baroughi & Zarei, 2013).

The Ranking of Effective Factors on Efficiency of Commercial Ads In Attracting Viewers In Tehran, Iran. It was found that by bringing in a women's point of view, Woolf holds distorted education system, patriarchal society and economic and social barriers responsible for women's disadvantaged position. She challenges status quo, offers solutions and envisions a world where all human beings regardless of their gender are equal.

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