



**UNIVERSIDAD DE JAÉN**

Facultad de Humanidades y Ciencias de la Educación

Trabajo Fin de Grado

# **The Representation of Gender Roles and its Correlation with Fascism in Virginia Woolf's "The Mark on the Wall" and *Three Guineas***

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**Junio, 2019**

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## Resumen

Para Virginia Woolf existe una relación más que evidente entre la opresión del sistema patriarcal y opresión fascista. Aunque en sus obras va a tratar de ponerlo de manifiesto por distintos medios y en contextos diferentes, Woolf atribuye especial importancia a estos motivos en “The Mark on the Wall” y en *Three Guineas*. Para comenzar nuestro análisis, primeramente nos centraremos en los puntos esenciales a tratar en la introducción. Seguidamente, explicaremos brevemente el contexto en las que ambas obras fueron escritas. Después, proseguiremos a analizar la estructura de las obras e incidiremos en la relevancia particular que ésta tiene en relación con el fascismo y los roles de género. Más tarde, compararemos varios temas considerados piezas centrales para el entendimiento de las narraciones. Luego, nos consagraremos a estudiar los personajes y su comportamiento. Entonces, pasaremos al análisis de las técnicas literarias utilizadas y, finalmente, llegaremos a una conclusión.

**Palabras clave:** fascismo, opresión, feminismo, masculinidad, guerra.

## Abstract

For Virginia Woolf there is an evident relationship between the patriarchal oppression and fascist oppression. Although in her works she is going to reflect these notions through different means and in different contexts, Woolf gives these motifs particular prominence in “The Mark on the Wall” and in *Three Guineas*. Firstly, to begin with our analysis, we are going to focus on the treatment of main points in the introduction. Secondly, we will explain briefly the context of both works. Thirdly, we will continue analysing the structure and we will pay especial attention to its relationship with fascism and gender roles. After that, we will compare several fundamental topics to the understanding of her writings. Later, we will be devoted to the study of characters and their behaviour. Then, we will analyse literary techniques and, finally, we will end up with a conclusion.

**Key works:** fascism, oppression, feminism, masculinity, war.

## 1. Introduction

Resistance is a suitable word to describe women's role in any civilization of any culture since the beginning of human history. The timelessness and the universality of this issue have motivated the emergence of a branch of literature that comprises the commitment to the female struggle for their emancipation from masculine autocracy, especially from the 19<sup>th</sup> century onwards. Virginia Woolf is one of those feminist icons who represent modern women's voice and whose analytical and rational perspective awakes the common reader's conscious so as to question the prevailing system (Goldman, 25: 2006). Woolf does not only offer us a disturbing message behind her prose but she also infringes any formal convention as a sign of protest against any form of authority. This insurgent attitude facing any established arrangement has made her one of the most controversial authors of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, but also one of the leading figures of modernism, war literature and radical feminism (38).

It is interesting to see the progress accomplished from one of her very first "sketches" (Hussey, 14: 2005), when Woolf revealed some of her most experimental trends towards a more experienced and political biased way of writing. That is what we intrinsically find when comparing "The Mark on the Wall" and *Three Guineas*. Both works are crucial to understand the core of Woolf's aesthetics and its development at two different stages. We are going to see that though we may not be dealing with the same literary genre, they present many similitudes. Woolf includes almost the same variety of topics, which are related to political and gender problems, locating women at the very bottom of the social pyramid, offering us a picture of naked creatures growing in an unsafe world. By analysing the very essence of militarism, religion or public institutions, Woolf invites us to observe how the female experience is completely determined by servitude, motherhood and sexuality, obviating or making banal any minimum contribution to the community. In "The Mark on the Wall", this conflict is going to be especially denounced from an inner perspective, as if the reader were inside the narrator's mind, not being able to show the world of her concerns, reflecting in that way a lack of public recognition. However, it is in *Three Guineas* where Woolf,

motivated by the coming of the fascist threat, leaves behind any literary convention to charge directly against the authorities. By providing real evidence, Woolf shows us the impracticability of women intervening in any decision related to war, addressing openly to the pillars of patriarchal society in an exhaustive analysis of the private and public spheres (Staveley, 295: 2009).

Therefore, we are going to approach the major points of convergence from both works concerning Woolf's depiction of different forms of tyrannical power affecting a nation and those affecting women in particular, as well as examining the existing analogies between them (Caughie, 116: 1991). Moreover, we will study the diverse mechanisms that Woolf uses to portray the violence of the system and how the characters react to it, just as the disposition of the narrative line as to as another possible means to express her nonconformist attitude.

## 2. Author and Context

Adeline Virginia Stephen was born in London in 1882 at the end of the Victorian England period. Daughter of Leslie and Julia Prinsep Stephen, she was raised up in an affluent well-off family where she was encouraged from a very early age to self-education and free-thinking at home since women at the time had not the possibility of access to university. Her life was soon marked by depression and sufferings caused by the fact that she was sexually assaulted by her half-brothers and by the early decease of some of her siblings (Goldman, 5: 2006). She managed to study German, Greek and Latin at the Ladies' Department of King's College in London where she got to know some radical feminists and educationists that helped her to establish the foundations of her critical thinking. Virginia Woolf was also determined by the Suffragist movement and she began to come in contact with active feminism (Goldman, 12), especially when she joined the People Suffrage Federation (PSF) in 1910 (Black, 36: 2004).

Woolf published her first novel, *The Voyage Out*, in 1915 and she began to get her way in the literary milieu (Goldman, 15), which later would be the setting for her most famous novel, *Mrs Dalloway* (1925) (41). She was a distinguished member of the Bloomsbury Group, an intellectual society made up by some of the most outstanding English thinkers of the 20th century (Fernald, 2: 2006). There she met Leonard Woolf

whom she later married and with whom she founded their own publishing house in 1917, Hogarth Press, where she published some of her most important and controversial works (Goldman, 15). It became a recognized publishing company since there they printed some of the most acknowledged modernist works from authors such as T. S. Eliot and Sigmund Freud. One of her first writings published in Hogarth Press was “The Mark on the Wall” in a collection of short stories called *Monday or Tuesday* (1921) where she showed her most experimental and avant-garde literary side (17). The modernist influence at this stage is indisputable and it is particularly characterized by the absence of traditional literary structures and the appearance of new ones such as the juxtaposition of images as a way of reflecting mental processes of association. The narrator’s inner psychological experience is going to acquire especial importance since it is going to help the writer to tighten the relationship with the reader. Nevertheless, this new way of narrating is going to also reflect character’s problems of communication with the external modern world (Rando, 47: 2011).

With the outbreak of World War II and the Spanish Civil War, Woolf decided to incorporate in a more consistent and rational way in her writings her concerns about the futility of warfare and about the nature of masculine aggressiveness linked to the notions of gender roles (Fernald, 3). She also started to gather some data from different countries in order to create a more solid and clear position. Besides, the recent death of her nephew Julian Bell while driving an ambulance in the Spanish Civil War made her appreciate the urgency with which she should treat the issue (Hussey, 16: 2005). This is going to be basically the background to elaborate the scheme of *Three Guineas* (1938) where Woolf provides suitable and feasible alternatives that go from the renovation of educative values in public schools to the removal of pernicious conducts at home with the aim of attaining equality. Her works became “overtly political” (Goldman, 22) as she participated in antifascist activism and as the fascist rise reached European powers. Nevertheless, Woolf was also critical with these kinds of associations since she realized that they did not envisage the female question. Woolf regarded both disputes as equally alarming and she decided to consider both burdens as central points in her writings, presenting women as aliens from society (Goldman, 23). This political turmoil took its final consequences when in 1941 the German bombing took place in London and Woolf decided to commit suicide as a result of the sound of nearby explosions (Black et al., 588: 2006).

### 3. Structure

As far as the structure of both works is concerned, it is obvious that either in “The Mark on the Wall” or in *Three Guineas* Woolf rejects a predictable and easy to follow structure for attracting the common reader since she is committed to innovation, even in the disposition and the arrangement considerations. The purpose of arraying every impression and every answer in that unconventional way is not other than distancing herself from fascism. As Walkowitz points when interpreting Adorno’s notions in “The Essay as Form” (Adorno, 4: 1991), “the homogenization of writing – at the level of narrative structure, diction, and syntax – helps to produce the homogenization of culture which Adorno associates with fascism. He aims to reject familiar habits of thought by refusing their styles of expression” (Walkowitz, 84: 2006). So, even the very structure of both works is designed to fulfil a social purpose by renouncing the traditional linear narratives which try to provide some sort of realism to the plot so as to spur the consciousness of the readers (90).

*Three Guineas* is an epistolary essay where the narrator provides an answer to a man who asks her for some advice on how to prevent war (Middleton, 407: 1982). This constitutes the topic of the first letter and the point of departure for the development of the next letters, in which she, relying on ironical undertones, is going to deliver her view on the subject. Connecting with one of the issues sets war off, the second letter is going to be concerned with education and finally, in relation with the previous one, the third letter is going to be consecrated to professions. While she is debating each of these topics, she is going to study as well the nature of sex segregation, violence and power (Ruiz Callejón, 30: 2014).

The structure of *Three Guineas* reproduces that of the embedded narration since she uses the three letter motif to gradually move from one response to another emerging question, connecting all her ideas and bringing them into cohesion (Rampello, 202: 2009). This kind of juxtaposition concepts appears in a more evident way in “The Mark on the Wall”, where the very structure of the short story stands for a motif in itself in what we call the “stream of consciousness,” a modernist figure of speech that will be further developed in the techniques’ section. At the same time, with this figure Woolf reproduces “a spiral progression” (Prudente, 3: 2015) in which she takes back and forth

the subject of the mark in such a way that the narration becomes cyclical and that, curiously, resembles a snail shell, which is what the mark is supposed to be. See: “I first looked up and saw the mark on the wall [...] But as for the mark [...] And yet the mark on the wall [...] I must jump up and see for myself what that mark on the wall really is [...] Ah! The mark on the wall!” (TMW, 33-7: 2017).

Woolf emulates the mental association process in which a stimulus triggers the recreation of several consecutive mental scenes. Besides, the stream of consciousness sometimes seems to be interrupted by a hidden fixation that she is trying to avoid and that comes out at the end of the story. In contrast with *Three Guineas*, we do not even see an actual narrative development since what we have is a philosophical meditation about the essence of the mark, “in which thoughts are assembled and re-combined in a non-sequential modality” (Prudente, 4). Her hypotheses grow out the conventional cause-effect progression so as to obtain more freedom to express her inner reflections since they do not fit on any traditional mould (4).

Unlike “The Mark on the Wall” where the interferences are due to sudden hits of reality, in *Three Guineas* they account for “hidden involutions of narrative” (Berman, 41: 2011), that is, when she starts speaking about very abstract and general concepts so that she has either to move further to contemplate other subjects or to add a footnote or to provide relevant instances if she wants to be understood. That is why there are moments in which she does not develop completely an idea. See: “If we are asked to lecture we can refuse to bolster up the vain and vicious system of lecturing by refusing to lecture” (TG, 23: 1938). Because of the ambiguity of the sentence she has to clarify by means of a footnote, in which she refers to turn down the current educational foundations that so much depend on tradition and old-fashioned methods:

The words ‘vain and vicious’ require qualification. No one would maintain that all lecturers and all lectures are ‘vain and vicious’; many subjects can only be taught with diagrams and personal demonstration. The words in the text refer only to the sons and daughters of educated men who lecture their brothers and sisters upon English literature; and for the reasons that it is an obsolete practice dating from the Middle Ages when books were scarce” [...] “But for the sons and daughters of that class after the age of eighteen to continue to sip English

literature through a straw, is a habit that seems to deserve the terms vain and vicious (TG, 32).

Nevertheless, it is undeniable the fact that “gaps, interruptions and moments of narrative incoherence” in both works “carry more conspicuously political weight” (Berman, 41). While in “The Mark on the Wall” these moments of disruption are usually associated with the pressure of power structures upon the individual and with male impatience, which is especially reflected in the male character intrusion, in *Three Guineas* they entail, on the one hand, the unfeasibility of an agreement between the man’s proposal of joining his association to fight fascism and her resolution and, on the other hand, the absurdity of attaining an immovable standpoint. That means that by dismembering textual cohesion and homogeneity, Woolf questions the traditional documentary style that is expected for an enterprise like hers and also she discards that uniform aspect that defines fascist ethics (41).

Although both works have thematic resemblance in the sense that they deal with topics related to war, fascism, the gendering of spaces or the otherness, we clearly see an evolution in the disposition of ideas and the transition from one field to another. It is noticeable that in “The Mark on the Wall” she opts for a more modernist style since she expresses her disregard towards the prevailing system by means of repealing any fixed meaning or fixed narrative structure. However, in *Three Guineas*, though she is going to follow a modernist arrangement at discourse level, we observe a more consistent progression of her views, connecting all her points and separating them in three stages.

## 4. Topics

### 4.1. The Treatment of Private and Public Spheres

The hard working conditions and the salary gap made impossible for 20<sup>th</sup> century women to reach the required economic stability. Perhaps wealth is not a problem for high classes but both low and high class women still depended on masculine figures to survive.

Woolf represents the work system's decadence through the image of the Whitaker's Almanac, which is a British annual magazine that deals with a variety of topics such as economy, business, society, etc., published since 1868. In both works it represents a male biased structure which excludes women from prominent positions. This structure "sets the standard" (TMW, 35: 2017) and it is also responsible for women's domesticity, poverty and dependence to "the private house, with its nullity, its immorality, its hypocrisy, its servility" (TG, 24: 1938). In "The Mark on the Wall" the Whitaker's Almanac, moreover, stands for the masculine hierarchical order in society in which everybody follows somebody: "[...] for who will ever be able to lift a finger against Whitaker's Table of Precedency? The Archbishop of Canterbury is followed by the Lord High Chancellor; the Lord High Chancellor is followed by the Archbishop of York" (TMW, 36).

Here, Woolf lists some ecclesiastical positions, a field that shows a clear masculine predominance and, as she ironically points at the beginning of the quotation, she criticises the conformist attitude of those who do not question the oppressive system (Walkowitz, 88: 2006). This is what she later calls "impersonal and impartial authorities" (TG, 38) or a "rule for everything" (TMW, 35). According to Lojo Rodríguez, these rules control our way of thinking, our behaviour and our knowledge and they become a burden for women (58: 2002).

Whitaker's Table of Precedency does not just stand for this professional exclusion but also the perpetuation of traditional values. In the case of "The Mark on the Wall", it is associated with the previous owners' portraits. These portraits show economic status and they were quite common in Victorian society. This symbolizes the inheritance of Victorian values which Woolf describes as a "fraud" (TMW, 33), in the sense that their existence is superfluous and old fashioned, as it is patriarchy (Lojo Rodríguez, 57).

Furthermore, our writer's government in *Three Guineas* has recently approved an Act that gives women permission to have access to the professional world, since she satirically claims that until that moment marriage or the "the art of choosing the human being with whom to live life successfully" (TG, 5) has been the only work available for women.

The educated man's daughter has now at her disposal an influence which is different from any influence that she has possessed before [...] It is not the influence which the great lady, the Siren, possesses; She need no longer use her charm to procure money from her father or brother [...] she can express her own opinions (*TG*, 11).

Woolf argues in Chapter One that this is a very superfluous change in order to empower women since the reform must be made in a deep level; society must go to the root of the problem: education. Education is the foundation stone and the reason why fascism is reaching such popularity in Europe (Staveley, 296: 2009). However, in "The Mark on the Wall" she suggests a much more general and abstract vision of education. She decides to rearrange the structures from its most basic principles by rejecting the "efficiency of meaning in favour of sensation, poetry and art" (Walkowitz, 88). It is not just including women inside the field of education or changing what we teach, but we also must change language itself. Woolf is not as explicit and pedagogical as she is in *Three Guineas* but, however, she deals somehow with modern educational methods that challenge readers' perspective of literature and education. Woolf wants to create critical thinkers and they must be the foundation of a new social model based on equality (Cuddy-Keane, 9: 2003). She develops this philosophical attitude through non-straightforward assertions which translate into a revolutionary attitude against syntax, against the establishment, against war-culture, in order to create a new space where women can express themselves (Walkowitz, 82). A great example for this is the following passage, where she promotes inner critical reflections instead of fixed conventional ideas:

And the novelists in future will realize more and more the importance of these reflections, for of course there is not one reflection but an almost infinite number; those are the depths they will explore, those the phantoms they will pursue, leaving the description of reality more and more out of their stories, taking a knowledge of it for granted, [...] (*TMW*, 35).

Woolf always relies upon deconstruction as a transition path towards the public space. In "The Mark on the Wall" she uses the image of the "looking glass" (*TMW*, 34) in order to illustrate this situation and she remarks that we should "smash" it for freedom. Besides, this is a recurrent topic since it reflects Woolf's tension "between the

individual's public personae and his or her "private'self" (Howard, 44: 2007) and also it serves as an image to represent the "glass ceiling" or the economic system in which women are unable to reach the same amount of income as men due to their devotion to the private domain. Similarly, in *Three Guineas* she uses the veil as a metaphor for the private space: "[...] your world as it appears to us who see it from the threshold of the private house; through the shadow of the veil that St. Paul still lays upon our eyes" (TG, 12). Now, the veil possesses a cultural and religious role since it is used to illustrate the spatial segregation of gender in both Christian and Islamic cultures through St. Paul's admonition in 1938 in England (Pawlowski, 723: 2007). This implies that female relegation to the private sphere occurs cross-culturally. Woolf identifies looking "through the shadow of the veil" with "the acceptance of male dominance and working within her social conventions" (725). These rules are adopted traditionally as a way of distancing women from sin and they are associated with chastity. So, we may say that Woolf treats both the veil and the looking glass in the same direction, since she identifies these motifs as the line that separates what is accessible from what is not.

In *Three Guineas* Woolf also speaks about the vision of "the bridge which lies between the old world and the new" (TG, 10). As we may observe, while the looking glass can be perceived as something motionless and passive, the bridge denote a much more dynamic and active entity. On the one hand, it is due to the fact that in "The Mark on the Wall" we are confronting narrator's reflections where she is a mere spectator of war and women's oppression. That is to say, she watches everything from a private space and she finds comfort in her thinking (Walkowitz, 88). On the other hand, in *Three Guineas* the image of the bridge provides us with a direct path and a clear solution as if there were possibilities of imagining a future in which women could really occupy the public sphere. Sometimes, she identifies the bridge with the bridge of the river Thames which represents tradition since the river passes through some of the most emblematic places in London such as the Houses of Parliament, at the times unattainable institutions for women.

We may also find politics among all those areas where there exists a clear masculine dominance and that so desperately needed a reform. In *Three Guineas* she relates it, in general terms, to war and, being more specific, to the military situation of her time with totalitarianism. This is just the result of men's eagerness to compete, which translates into a constant pursuit of what is codified as masculine. In that way,

women are prevented from any access to influent positions and then the field of politics becomes the representation of masculine power that enables them to make significant changes in a nation's history (Gättens, 21, 2001). Nevertheless, Woolf argues that the only way to get into politics for a lady is through marriage, in other words, being a wife of a man of influence. Woolf lists some examples: "The famous Duchess of Devonshire, Lady Palmerston, Lady Melbourne, Madame de Lieven, Lady Holland, Lady Ashburton — to skip from one famous name to another — were all undoubtedly possessed of great political influence" (TG, 9). However, in "The Mark on the Wall" we do not have such level of concreteness but still we have images and sequences of thought related to militarism, highly critical with the politics of her time. As Wing-chi Ki asserts, Woolf denounces that women's voice is insignificant in making any decision about war (426: 2010), while men are devoted to celebrate patriotism and to compete between themselves, representing military figures. Besides, Woolf manages to place women inside the sphere of domesticity as their natural and legitimate duty, ironizing about their passive role in politics:

Retired Colonels for the most part, I daresay, leading parties of aged labourers to the top here, examining clods of earth and stone, and getting into correspondence with the neighbouring clergy, which, being opened at breakfast time, gives them a feeling of importance, and the comparison of arrow-heads necessitates cross-country journeys to the county towns [...] their elderly wives, who wish to make plum jam or to clean out the study, and have every reason for keeping that great question of the camp or the tomb in perpetual suspension, [...]

(TMW, 35-6).

These are powerful images that reflect how war and political repression can be applied to the private, "bringing the home and the family into the political arena and indicting the patriarchy in a war-making system" (Foster, 20: 2013). In *Three Guineas*, Woolf develops this issue in a more explicit and structured way, providing instances of situations in order to support the central argument related to how can women stop war if their entrance in politics, which is the most direct path in making decisions about war, is denied. "What real influence can we bring to bear upon law or business, religion or politics—we to whom many doors are still locked, or at best ajar, we who have neither capital nor force behind us? It seems as if our influence must stop short at the surface" (TG, 14).

This is one of the reasons why she considers professional and educational development a key issue to ensure women's independence. We may see that the letter's addressee is indeed asking her how they can avoid war and we may perceive a certain degree of irony on the part of the author in formulating that question, assuming that women have responsibility for not preventing their wars. Their inability to act in this matter derives from their relegation to the domestic sphere. According to Gätgens, "family is an institution of vital importance for the reproduction of the conditions of the public world" (22), that is to say, we can extrapolate women's status at home to their situation in society, and from this we may infer that there exists a gendering of both spaces. Woolf in *Three Guineas* clarifies that this gendering of spaces favours war the outbreak of war and, particularly, of fascism (22). This issue will be further developed in the "Patriarchy and War" section.

Nevertheless, in *Three Guineas* she proposes not to join any anti-fascist group but to create a brand new one: "[...] it could be called the Outsiders' Society. [...] It would consist of educated men's daughters working in their own class—how indeed can they work in any other?—and by their own methods for liberty, equality and peace" (TG, 82).

The new society will be created by women and for women and they will elaborate their own political programs, free from gender roles and other patriarchal impositions, pillars "of family and fatherland" (Gätgens, 22). Precisely, associations like these were the ones that generated the suffragist movement. By contrast in "The Mark on the Wall", though she does not provide a clear solution in order to solve the problem she maintains a hopeful attitude towards the future. She asks for empathy as in "men perhaps, should you be a woman" (TMW, 34) and she announces that this repressive system is going to come to an end at some point, where both men and women could share the same spaces: "Even so, life isn't done with; there are a million patient, watchful lives still for a tree, all over the world, in bedrooms, in ships, on the pavement, lining rooms, where men and women sit after tea, smoking cigarettes" (TMW, 37).

#### 4.2. Patriarchy and Militarism

If there is one thing that characterizes Woolf's most controversial ideas is the close relationship she establishes between manhood, nation and war. Either in *Three Guineas* or in "The Mark on the Wall" she gets to the root of the problem accusing the patriarchal system of perpetuating a toxic polarization of masculinity and femininity, which in the end brings not only a legitimate lure to violence and subjugation on the part of men, but also the very notion that this is the ultimate expression of patriotism. While men are brought up in the belief that there is a need to prove their control over a subject or a situation, women are valued for its passiveness and their submission and this is how fascism takes over population and vindicate its conflicts (Elósegui, Glez Cortés & Gaudó, 91: 2002).

In order to challenge the traditional glorification of militarism, in *Three Guineas* Woolf states "as a woman I want no country. As a woman my country is the whole world" (TG, 84). In this statement she manages to "link gender and citizenship". It is "not only a refusal of nationalism-as-patriotism, but also a gesture toward a new global citizenship, which is differently constituted to welcome women and is imagined in opposition to mainline nationalism" (Klindienst, 91: 1989).

One of the most emblematic examples of feminine antifascism that Woolf shows in *Three Guineas* is Antigone's resistance to Creon. "Consider Creon's claim to absolute rule over his subjects. That is a far more instructive analysis of tyranny than any our politicians can offer us [...]. Consider Antigone's distinction between the laws and the Law" (TG, 59). She makes use of classical mythology because of its universal and its foundational implications, showing that the "discipline of Greek can be open to all" and providing a different approach from the patriarchal and classist traditional Greek culture that is so present even in today's society (Fernald, 18-9: 2006). Woolf also connects the figure of Creon with the "dictator" (129) as a way to blend fascism, patriarchy and tradition all together. In "The Mark on the Wall", she is able to introduce a classical myth as well but in this case in order to condemn the recourse of the military prowess as the main nation's constitution since the dawn of humanity (Wing-chi Ki, 431: 2010): "the dust which, so they say, buried Troy three times over, only fragments of pots utterly refusing annihilation, as one can believe" (5). She also emphasizes history's capacity for generating wreckage and using those vestiges as symbols for "fragments of pots" that resist the downfall, creating a "tension between progress and regression" (Wing-chi Ki: 431). So, by challenging not only the English

hypocritical nationalism but also the very essence of the European civilization, that is, classical philosophy, we recognize that on the one hand, this is a problem that affects women universally and, on the other hand, it shows how deep-rooted patriarchy is.

We find something similar in “The Mark on the Wall”. Although the militaristic issue is apparently marginal to the story (Goldman, 90: 2006), since her intention is to “dramatize” the substantial effort for dismissing warfare from her mind (Fernald, 69) she succeeds in contemplating a persistent danger that is going to jeopardize her self-determination. The freedom in the short story is associated with the associative mental process itself, that is, her unlimited imaginative capacity and unpredictability. This state of mind is somehow intimidated by some “forms of authority” which correlate with male impositions that in the story are represented by “generalities” (Marcus, 119: 2011).

And the novelists in future will realize more and more the importance of these reflections, [...] but these generalizations are very worthless. The military sound of the word is enough. It recalls leading articles, cabinet ministers—a whole class of things indeed which as a child one thought the thing itself, the standard thing, the real thing, from which one could not depart save at the risk of nameless damnation (*TMW*, 35).

The analogy of “generalizations” is regarded with a dual meaning. On the one hand, we have the militaristic reference to the rank of “general” which reminds us not only of war but also of a social position that is quite appraised inside the standards of virility. On the other hand, “generalizations” also evoke archetypes and fixed ideas, which implicate gender roles and hierarchies, something that she is precisely avoiding in the text.

Nevertheless, in “The Mark on the Wall” as we know, sometimes Woolf relies on visual imagery to express complex ideas. On the very first paragraph, she is sitting in a room while staring at the mark and she has a vision: “[...] my eye lodged for a moment upon the burning coals, and that old fancy of the crimson flag flapping from the castle tower came into my mind, and I thought of the cavalcade of red knights riding up the side of the black rock” (*TMW*, 33).

In this part she makes use of free association and jumps from one image to another. The “crimson flag flapping from the castle tower” (33) clearly suggests the

arrangement of the “collective nation-building process” (Wing-chi Ki, 429). The flag is a political symbol commonly used in the fascist aesthetics which started to be especially considered in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It is one of the “instruments of mass politics” (Mosse, 247: 1996), that is, it serves to assemble all the citizens under the same identity. It tends to extol a nation’s traditions, culture, religion and it has militaristic overtones since the flag also promotes discipline, order and it is strongly connected with another ideal that fascism stands out: the model of “aggressive masculinity” (250). The castle is another war-like figure that denotes sovereignty, authority, civilization and also nobility, which, indeed can be interpreted as a smart twist alluding to royalty’s connection with war. When she says “cavalcade of red knights riding up the side of the black rock” (*TMW*, 33) she is admittedly relating the enhancement of imperialism with tribal medieval principles. She immediately abandons this “patriotic fantasy” (Wing-chi Ki, 429) in order to release herself from any imposed contemplation or fixed meaning.

Through her works, Woolf focuses as well on how men perceive women’s concerns. In “The Mark on the Wall” this aspect is perfectly displayed at the end of the story when the narrator is interrupted by the male character, especially when he says “I don’t see why we should have a snail on our wall” (*TMW*, 37). He manifests an unequivocal interest on war and that transcends her enterprise, overshadowing her reflections. This simple but meaningful assessment tells so much about how society disregards and ridicule women’s commitments to achieve recognition either in the public or in the private domain and men’s impossibility for having empathy. This conflict is also well depicted in *Three Guineas*, where she pays especial attention to this matter since the question posed by the man demands a suitable response which includes the devaluation of the female status when warfare and, particularly, fascism breaks through. “[...] as Herr Hitler puts it, the hero requiring recreation, or, as Signor Mussolini puts it, the wounded warrior requiring female dependants to bandage his wounds” (*TG*, 85). As in the final lines in “The Mark on the Wall,” the man or the “hero” becomes the centre of the universe while the woman remains as an ambitionless accessory. Apart from their everyday plight of being second-class citizens, in addition now women have to engage in a strife they did not generate and to turn into casualties, full-time caretakers and defenceless creatures.

Following the same line, in *Three Guineas* Woolf decides to go even further into controversy, illustrating the existing relationship between fascism and feminism on the

basis of all those critiques that she gathered from all those intellectuals that considered the female question as something so insignificant compared to the fascist threat (Lamas, 400). An accurate instance of this is the following: “Wells says, ‘There has been no perceptible woman’s movement to resist the practical obliteration of their freedom by Fascists or Nazis’” (TG, 37).

Their main argument in order to sustain this vision was that the preservation of civilization now turns into their priority. At the same time, as Wells states in the quote, they are obliterating the female hint from history, infantilising and accusing women of not taking care of the state affairs (Spongberg, 142: 2002), as she answers to him:

The daughters of educated men who were called, to their resentment, “feminists” were in fact the advance guard of your own movement. They were fighting the same enemy that you are fighting and for the same reasons. They were fighting the tyranny of the patriarchal state as you are fighting the tyranny of the Fascist state (TG, 80).

Similarly, in “The Mark on the Wall” Woolf she represents this struggle when she says: “I understand Nature’s game—her prompting to take action as a way of ending any thought that threatens to excite or to pain. Hence, I suppose, comes our slight contempt for men of action—men, we assume, who don’t think” (TMW, 36).

Here, she is also concerned about women being “overshadowed by the deeds of dubious men of action” (Sacido Romero & Lojo Rodríguez, 8: 2006) but, in contrast to *Three Guineas*, she speaks broadly of this gender subversion. That is definitely what Whitaker’s Table of Precedency is about: it includes in the canon distinguished leading figures that take part on one of the most ambitious and venerated enterprises that is the creation of frontiers, an activity that was unthinkable for a woman.

What Woolf proposes is to create an association from the margins to defend themselves from masculine oppression that, in the end, operates in the same way that fascism does (Lamas, 400: 2002). Men show disdain for women relying on certain conditions (in this case the condition of being a woman) and they exploit, enslave, manipulate and discriminate them with total impunity, since they are part of the privileged position, drawing from presumed natural and “biological role” (Gottlieb, 4: 2003).

Now, women's vulnerability intensifies in the context of fascism likewise when, under the pretext of setting the paragon of womanhood, the dictator decides to degrade women's conditions to motherhood, marriage and servility (Gottlieb, 181) implying a reduction in their already acquired rights.

[...] He is interfering now with your liberty; he is dictating how you shall live; he is making distinctions not merely between the sexes, but between the races. [...] Now you are being shut out, you are being shut up, because you are Jews, because you are democrats, because of race, because of religion (TG, 80).

Their situation becomes dramatic when, in addition, they have to cope with the stigma of race and religion and the "narrow epistemic violence of imperialism" (Morris, 257: 2010), a reality that has been repeated a series of times through history and that similarly has edified an entrenched rejection for the other. Although the racial aspect in fascism is not included in "The Mark on the Wall", either because it was highly topical at the time as it is in *Three Guineas*, or because she has a preference for the abstract, we could say that through the short story the aversion towards any kind of supremacy is maintained and it is expressed through her trivialization of war and the exhibition of multiple images of nature as a balanced and peaceful atmosphere where one can feel safe.

#### 4.3. Modernisation of the Educative System

For Woolf education is a key institution for the development of one's conscience and a warranty of tolerance and equality. It is undeniable the fact that many of Woolf's notions about education represent the basis of our educational system today, even though she may expose them in a more philosophical way, as she does in "The Mark on the Wall", or in a more unambiguous way, as it is the case in *Three Guineas*.

Education is definitely a fundamental subject in *Three Guineas* and it is substantially associated with war since citizens are educated in the belief that war is really a medium to assure a state stability. Woolf argues that the educational system at that time was just focused in "creating mindless, obedient, patriotic, war-loving citizens unable or unwilling to question those in authority" (Taylor, 61: 2014).

Here we are only concerned with the obvious fact, when it comes to considering this important question—how we are to help you prevent war—that education makes a difference [...] Now you the uneducated, you with an untrained mind, could not possibly deal with such questions satisfactorily (TG, 4).

Although this connection between war and education is not clearly appreciated in “The Mark on the Wall”, it is true that in both works she is highly critical with British institutions in relation with their promotion of violence and their male-centred view in the academic sphere (Taylor, 61). In “The Mark on the Wall”, on general terms, Woolf’s narrator represents “radical individuals who want to bypass conformity” (Wing-chi Ki, 427) considering she enjoys progressing out of main stream and society standards, celebrating the outsider’s view. Moreover, Woolf questions the current semiotic system of meanings and the relationship between the signifier and signified since “human experience is based on no solid ground, and that of the author and the reader communicating through the pages, since they are both unstable minds unable to create a complete experience” (Hercend, 89: 2015). This concept affects modern education in the sense that we should leave behind fixed beliefs and start thinking of a more dynamic approach to education in order to be constantly evolving and to move forward, just as languages do.

Nevertheless, in *Three Guineas* Woolf seems to stop enjoying abstractness and she directly attacks society, because it “breeds neither a particular respect for liberty nor a particular hatred of war” (TG, 21) and that makes us rely on notions such as violence and competition to succeed as a country, establishing at the same time the paragon of virility. Woolf suggests we should depend on “psychology, the common sense and the ability to read human motivation in analysing newspapers, photographs and memoirs” (Fernald, 44), in contrast with “The Mark on the Wall”, where she prefers taking shelter on her train of thought as a means for her passive resistance since “still, there’s no harm in putting a full stop to one’s disagreeable thoughts by looking at a mark on the wall” (TMW, 36).

Another visible feature that Woolf brings regarding education exclusively in *Three Guineas* is not only women’s renunciation of education but also their compulsory economic contribution to men’s one (Taylor, 62), a consolidated custom that represented a burden for women’s independence:

All this came out of Arthur's Education Fund. And to this your sisters, as Mary Kingsley indicates, made their contribution. Not only did their own education, save for such small sums as paid the German teacher, go into it; but many of those luxuries and trimmings which are, after all, an essential part of education—travel, society, solitude, a lodging apart from the family house—they were paid into it too (*TG*, 4).

That is why she invites women to “practise the profession of reading and writing in the interests of culture and intellectual liberty” (*TG*, 73). She encourages women to look for other sources in order to widen their view and to question the authority, an authority that does not give credit for their accomplishments (Fernald, 45). Woolf also promotes this kind of new educational approach in “The Mark on the Wall”, based on the multiple voices in order to enrich their knowledge about a certain topic rather than believing on one single outlook (Wing-chi Ki, 427), which in the history of humanity corresponds to the heterosexual Christian white male point of view. This may well be represented by the mark's lack of definition and instability in contrast with the absolute unequivocal angle, which is represented by the man's vision of the snail (Hercend, 88). But again, here we do not see a direct appeal or recommendation to improve their situation, we just get insinuations and we have to rely on the interpretation of the mark's symbolism.

In conjunction with history, Woolf takes into account the subject of literature as another crucial pillar of education and as a source of referents, culture, art and historical heritage that tell so much about a nation's lifestyle and way of thinking. Woolf suggests, on the one hand, that literature, parallel to education models, must update its schemes, leave behind anachronisms and stereotypes and start to be more inclusive, especially with women. In “The Mark on the Wall” she uses the figure of Shakespeare in order to represent literature as another male-dominated circle where women do not find an “open door”:

Shakespeare.... Well, he will do as well as another. A man who sat himself solidly in an arm-chair, and looked into the fire, so— A shower of ideas fell perpetually from some very high Heaven down through his mind. He leant his forehead on his hand, and people, looking in through the open door,—for this

scene is supposed to take place on a summer's evening—But how dull this is, this historical fiction! It doesn't interest me at all (TMW, 34).

Surprisingly, she also includes Shakespeare in *Three Guineas* so as to illustrate tradition and canon and, what is more important, the envisioning of a new way of making literature, more diverse, inclusive and progressive.

So let us shut the New Testament; Shakespeare, Shelley, Tolstoy and the rest, and face the fact that stares us in the face at this moment of transition—the fact of the procession; the fact that we are trapesing along somewhere in the rear and must consider that fact before we can fix our eyes upon the vision on the horizon (TG, 52).

It seems that in “The Mark on the Wall” she expects in addition that modern literature differs from the “mimetic style”, “the linguistic essentialism” and the “transcendental vision” (Wing-chi Ki, 432) to focus on the individual and its consciousness since “even in the minds of modest mouse-coloured people, who believe genuinely that they dislike to hear their own praises” (TMW, 34). This is something that recent learning methods such as critical constructivism are looking for, achieving knowledge by means of research and critical thinking (Kincheloe, 2: 2008). In addition, she proposes an education model available to everybody, even for the “modest mouse-coloured people”.

We have seen that both on “The Mark on the Wall” and in *Three Guineas* Woolf shows her repudiation to the British educational system and its pedagogy. Either for its war promotion or for alienating women, it is clear that education must renovate its foundations. At the same time, she calls women to “raise numerous questions regarding the purpose and benefit of formal learning” (Taylor, 61), to develop an inner conscience and to deviate from the hegemonic essentialist judgement so as to start considering others.

#### 4.4. The Objective and the Subjective View

Sometimes we think of objectivity as something impartial, something that has not been affected by human emotions and something we should trust. However in

Woolf's narratives we get a rather different idea about the objective view since she trivialises it and dignifies the subjective one. Through *Three Guineas* and "The Mark on the Wall" Woolf is going to provide enough patterns that are repeated either inside the public or the private sphere in order to understand why she chooses to take refuge in the subjective and why this simple gesture becomes a manifestation of irreverence.

While in "The Mark on the Wall" we go deep into her inner mind through the narrator's subjective experience (Hai-ying, 387: 2008), in *Three Guineas*, though Woolf has preference for non-conventional notions through the use of evidences such as biographies and memoirs, that is, using the subjective to confront power, she makes use of objective components in some occasions in order to give a detailed picture and to support her ideas, such as photographs or data. But, either in "The Mark on the Wall" or in *Three Guineas*, Woolf targets directly against the same objective view, that is identified with the standard and its "structures of domination" (Carlston, 145: 1998).

As we may notice, Woolf includes several photographs in *Three Guineas* so as to better illustrate specific patriarchal ceremonies that not only represent the exaltation of authority, masculinity or violence but also a clear absence of women. Behind those ideas on which the main argument develops, the photographs aim to portray the objective view in a double sense. On the one hand, the camera itself snaps real life. On the other hand, the photographs she shows corresponds to pure masculine rituals and the masculine point of view coincides with the objective one (Solly, 62: 2018). It is usually associated with objectiveness because traditionally, as it has been previously mentioned, men have been the ones who have influenced every single domain at any point in human history and, as Woolf points out in "The Mark on the Wall", in the end, the masculine eye is the one that "sets the standard" (TMW, 35). Notwithstanding, women's point of view has not been fairly considered or, in some cases, what we get is a women's view through men's eyes which is no more than a stereotypical perception that discredits women and presents them as emotional and vulnerable creatures. In other words, the female atmosphere is the subjective element.

Woolf by no means is going to disparage the subjective because it has been a role where women have been traditionally placed, but rather she is going to own it and to transform it into a space where one can be safe from male oppression. We find the highest expression of the subjective in "The Mark on the Wall", where she evokes

images from a sensorial experience, as opposed to the writing of chronicles and traditional story-telling (Hercend, 93). Through this associative way of narrating, she tries to reflect how the mind works through the female experience, which is limited by the space she is allowed and which is synchronized with her senses (Wing-chi Ki, 428). In *Three Guineas*, she is also going to create a safe space, not in her consciousness, but in the Outsiders' Society where people who value subjectivity can share their views and be tolerated.

Apart from pictures, in *Three Guineas* we also have some other objective elements that are used to sustain some ideas such as statistics, numbers or real facts: "The income of Oxford University is £435,656 (1933–4), the income of Cambridge University is £212,000 (1930)" (TG, 15). Moreover, she also invites readers to look at biographies and memoirs in order to get a much more genuine view since, as we have previously mentioned, history's books are male biased and they simply does not include women's concerns. Then "the more lives we read, the more speeches we listen to, the more opinions we consult, the greater the confusion becomes and the less possible it seems [...] to make any suggestion that will help you to prevent war" (TG, 7). In this case she is again relying on personal experiences, that is, on each individual's subjectivity so as to construct a collective experience in order to reach "a moral judgement which we must all, whatever our differences, accept" (TG, 7). At the same time, as Taylor points, "the more information she gathers in her search, the more evasive the answer to the question becomes" (69). It is somehow paradoxical because, in the end, the message she wants to transmit is that there is not an absolutely objective point of view, even that of the authorities must be questioned. Instead we should depend on first person experiences to prove that the system is wrong (69).

Sometimes we could say that *Three Guineas*, as much as "The Mark on the Wall", counts on multiples views. On the one hand, every now and then the writer's voice coincides with the narrator's voice, especially, when she speaks about the "educated man's daughter" (TG, 7), so as to tell the reader how even in the upper class where she belongs women are still second class citizens. On the other hand, on some occasions the narrator's speech is identified with that of the man to who sends her the letter, anticipating what would be the response of a man who does not understand why women cannot stop war (Foster, 22). All of these multiples views correspond to the subjective eye, since she speaks either for herself or for what she thinks of the man and

all of them coexist in perfect harmony with data's and photographs' objectivism so as to provide an actual portrait of the situation, leaving aside the male view. In "The Mark on the Wall", we also conceive the male character as the clear embodiment of the objective thinking: "I don't see why we should have a snail on our wall" (*TMW*, 37). Basically, what he does is to reveal "the identification of that mark as a snail" and to indicate "the circumstantial reality" (Hai-ying, 387). He stands for reality since he interrupts the flourishing of her inner consciousness and her celebration of the subjective because it is something that has practically no value in society (387).

As we may notice, in "The Mark on the Wall", we do not find such an integration of the objective view as we do in *Three Guineas*. Instead, we get the impression that the narrator is trying to run away from it, accepting her otherness. Sometimes objectivity appears in her "automatic fancy" and she tries to ridicule it.

But as for that mark, I'm not sure about it; I don't believe it was made by a nail after all; it's too big, too round, for that. I might get up, but if I got up and looked at it, ten to one I shouldn't be able to say for certain; because once a thing's done, no one ever knows how it happened. Oh! dear me, the mystery of life; The inaccuracy of thought! The ignorance of humanity! To show how very little control of our possessions we have (*TMW*, 33).

Here in this passage, what she does is to show an ironic view on the objective viewer's struggle for acquiring a complete absolute truth and their respective ambition for having every subject under control.

Other times, as it happens in *Three Guineas*, we see the objective in comparison with the subjective as in this case:

Wood is a pleasant thing to think about. It comes from a tree. For years and years they grow, without paying any attention to us, in meadows, in forests, and by the side of rivers—all things one likes to think about. The cows swish their tails beneath them on hot afternoons; they paint rivers so green that when a moorhen dives one expects to see its feathers all green when it comes up again [...] I like to think of the tree itself (*TMW*, 37).

The tree itself represents here the objective while her reflections about trees' contribution to nature stand for the embellishment of subjectivity (Hai-ying: 386).

Parallel with that assumption, in *Three Guineas* we also find the image of a tree as a symbol akin to the previous concept. “Here we go round the mulberry tree, the mulberry tree, the mulberry tree. Give it all to me, give it all to me, all to me. Three hundred millions spent upon war” (*TG*, 46). She uses it to outline the impossibility of escaping from a vicious circle which is identified with achieving peace through war or considering empowering the inclusion of women in professions that promote war, just as “the end justifies the means” philosophy (Machiavelli, 284: 1976). So, the tree could be a metaphor for a rooted imposed objective view which every now and then comes up as a solution for generating equality or for guaranteeing stability (Yudkin, 123: 1983).

In the end, what Woolf proposes is to come out with a much more critical view as a way to free oneself from any kind of oppression. The subjective, then, becomes a suitable option to resist the objective masculine framework from the female characteristic marginal background.

## 5. Characters

Regarding the characters of “The Mark on the Wall” and *Three Guineas* we could claim that very little is known about them. In fact, sometimes we get the impression that what we have in the text is just a monologue of someone sharing their views. Though the level of interaction between them is minimal the message beyond this absence of communication is essential to understand both works.

First of all, we should start by analysing the figure of narrator since it is a central character in both works. Both use a “first person singular position” (Winterhalter, 237: 2003) but with a different purpose. While in *Three Guineas* Woolf uses this point of view in order to follow the conventions of traditional essays (Winterhalter, 237), in the “Mark on the Wall” it is used to give a better account of her subjective inner experience (Monk, 7: 2007).

Interestingly enough, both narrators follow the same pattern in such a way that we are given very little information about them. This feature accentuates substantially in “The Mark on the Wall” where even though she intends to reveal her inner world we do not have an acquaintance with her “sex, age, identity, occupation, appearance, experience, etc., nothing at all except her boundless and dizzy psychological activities”

(Monk, 7). Readers have to make an extra effort either to interpret the imagery and to relate it to a concrete reference or to analyse the tone and the syntax in order to discern her particular stance on a certain topic. That is why we may infer by phrases like this that she is a woman who denounces her subjection to masculine power: “Men perhaps, should you be a woman; the masculine point of view which governs our lives” (*TMW*, 35). However, though she does not go into detail, in *Three Guineas* the narrator is somehow more defined than that of “The Mark on the Wall”. Here, the narrator provides a context for developing her ideas on the Spanish Civil War and prelude to the Second World War (Winterhalter, 247), as well as personal considerations such as being one of “the daughters of educated men” (*TG*, 4) or a middle class woman subservient to men.

These female narrators represent resistance to the patriarchal system and they use the text as a tool to document their observations and their strife (Snaith, 17: 2003). In saying that, there are significant differences between the attitudes of the two narrators, especially in the way they behave when they are confronting social burdens or when they are the object of certain recriminations on the part of the authorities. The narrator in “The Mark on the Wall” relies much more on her inner thoughts and imagination to break free from any real phenomenon that takes place outside her mind, providing us not only a more static and passive manner of rising up against the establishment, but also a much more artistic and creative approach of expressing her unrest (Vorobyova, 7: 2005). However, the narrator in *Three Guineas* is much more radical and irreverent in discourse than the previous one. This position involves a shift in Woolf’s narrative from representative composition (Vorobyova, 2) to alternative ways of communicating, much more politically committed and with less restraint. In *Three Guineas*, the narrator shows an unequivocal attitude to anything that, either from the private or public domain, embodies female bondage (Snaith, 17).

Turning to the male characters, we may notice that they are both a source of mockery and a source of suffering. On the whole, we might say that they are a recurrent motive but their participation at a narrative level is irrelevant. Curiously, in “The Mark on the Wall” we have two examples of direct speech on the part of the narrator’s roommate who delivers a message addressed to the narrator: “I’m going out to buy a newspaper [...] Though it’s no good buying newspapers.... Nothing ever happens. Curse this war; God damn this war!... All the same, I don’t see why we should have a snail on

our wall” (*TMW*, 37). This phenomenon is not reiterated in *Three Guineas*, where we just have access to the barrister by means of reported speech: “But consider this letter from a professional man asking us to help him to prevent war” (*TG*, 51). In both works, masculine characters share the same point of view on the matter of war. They both agree that war is “the inhumanity, the beastliness, the horror” (*TG*, 60) but, at the same time, the solipsistic attitude with which they treat the subject makes us believe that they are just beholding a small part of the picture, because “to scribble a name on a sheet of paper is easy” (*TG*, 8). In other words, they miss all the craving for dominance and cultural justification behind it. This simplification of the conflict on the masculine part as well as the patriotic reasons is highly ironized in both works (Winterhalter, 243). To illustrate this we may consider the following example: “What flowers grew in the reign of Charles the First? I asked—(but, I don’t remember the answer)” (*TMW*, 34). Here, the narrator thinks about an insignificant fact that took place in the time of Charles the First, provoking a great contrast between what history acknowledges, excellent men by definition, and what history obliterates, women’s contribution. It is so ridiculous that even the narrator forgets the answer. Besides, flowers, every now and then, are symbols of peace, femininity and regeneration while the figure of King Charles the First stands for imperialism, control and militarism. So, she brings to light the absurdity of history overrating the masculine experience which just places value on “wealth,” “ceremony,” “advertisement,” and “competition” (*TG*, 21).

Another aspect that Woolf’s narrators’ criticize is the indifference of male character’s when addressing women. Even though the barrister in *Three Guineas* proves antifascist, he is not aware of “the position of women” (Snaith, 29). So, in the end, he acts like tyrants, incapable of communicating with their subordinates, locking themselves in a privileged group that has no interest at all in inferior social categories if there is no profit. A similar situation happens in “The Mark on the Wall” when the roommate trivializes the mark and the narrator’s “world of reverie” (Vorobyova, 2) when he says “I don’t see why we should have a snail on our wall” (*TMW*, 37), disrespecting any sign of the narrator’s intellectual progress. In saying that, we may estimate that the two characters of the short story are the perfect division “between thought and action” (Monk, 33).

To put it in a nutshell, in both works we can see that men are portrayed in a similar way. They are hypocritical and cynical creatures worried about banal concerns,

precluding women of participating in any intellectual activity and assuming and constraining their views on any subject. Men then are conceived from the perspective of their inferiors who provide the reader an accurate portrayal of reality from a gender overview. In contrast, women are portrayed as martyrs but also as revolutionary and resilient characters whose hardship derives not only from fascism but also from male characters' despotism.

## 6. Techniques

Concerning literary techniques, from "The Mark on the Wall" to *Three Guineas* we are not just observing a change of literary genre but also a change in Woolf style. As aforementioned, she somehow radicalizes her discourse, inclining her nuances and metaphors towards straightforward assessments and political incorrectness, always fighting against "the guardians of knowledge who treat books as treasured captives" (Fernald, 76). Moreover, we may appreciate an increasing interest in incorporating facts and data to sustain her (Lamas, 393). Another function of this data is to simplify the reasoning so that there would be no problems for a correct understanding of the female question. Sometimes in the data we do not just find percentages and statistics but also metaphors, scenes from classical mythology and the Bible or influent people's biographies, which shows a deep concern on the part of the author (401).

Both works move in the same direction in the sense that the narrators are focused on questioning one specific subject and in the process they come up with different topics that are either loosely or strongly connected with the main theme. In "The Mark on the Wall" the subject is materialized in the object of the mark itself and the questions deal with the nature of that mark. The mark is highly symbolical especially when we discover it is a snail. The snail is a constant element in Woolf's narrative and it stands for both shelter and vulnerability. Inside its shell there is a living individual who remains invisible to her community, just showing one part of the self, which corresponds to the surface. The individual represents the inner consciousness, in other words, those ideas that we keep to ourselves for different reasons (Marcus, 119) such as fear of censorship, controversy or even ideological prosecution to name some of the consequences of free thought in the fascist state. Besides, the fact that the self is a living being in the interior of a shell and that the carcass wrapping her is static

resembles the narrator's unrestrained state of mind in contrast with narrator's immobility in the room.

In the case of *Three Guineas* the subject of the main debate, war, is much more transcendental and, as it happens in "The Mark on the Wall", it triggers the discussion of some other lines. The thing is that here Woolf provides reasons and examples for her digressions whereas in "The Mark of the Wall" her mental drifting seems to be a matter of randomness and association. That is what we call "stream of consciousness" and it is the main technique that drives the short story. According to Dainton, stream of consciousness presents "a systematic, phenomenological inquiry into the most general features of conscious life: the nature of awareness, introspection, phenomenal space and time-consciousness" (1: 2000). Every episode cannot be interpreted as a series of separated events but as a unitary and continuous development of the psyche. That is caused by the basic correlation, which progresses in no time and no space, established between phenomena and consciousness, which produces memories stored in our mind. As we may see, this technique has an interdisciplinary nature considering that several fields of research are involved such as "philosophy, psychology and neuroscience" (1). In "The Mark on the Wall" the narrator seeks abstractness as a way of escaping from delimited and already existing objects that constitute reality (Whithworth, 107: 2007). That is why she continues ignoring the nature of the mark since she finds that any physical category falls flat to represent the actual stream of thoughts that are produced in her mind. In *Three Guineas*, as we have said before, we may find a similar technique to the stream of consciousness in the sense that Woolf develops her arguments connecting and juxtaposing one idea to another but it is the very only characteristic that it preserves from stream of consciousness.

Moving on to more specific literary techniques, we can discuss the use of imagery and similes to somehow represent how she and other women experience one particular scene or circumstance. Her purpose is to make the reader comprehend the reason why she adopts feminist antifascist politics and to make explicit her will to make a substantial social change. See the example of *Three Guineas*: "Consider next time you drive along a country road the attitude of a rabbit caught in the glare of a head-lamp—its glazed eyes, its rigid paws" (*TG*, 87). Here, she critiques fascist propaganda by highlighting the hypnotic character it has, distracting, manipulating citizens for serving the purpose of the high classes and driving the attention towards non-existent problems

such as immigration or women's self-indulgence. Similarly, in "The Mark on the Wall", though she does not address the fascist state directly, we may consider that Woolf reflects the kind of existentialist and pessimist attitude that victims adopt when they find out they are not really making the country to move forward by means of their toil (Osborne-Bartucca & Suduiko, 2019). They realize that they are actually enslaved and that is the moment when they become part of the resistance: "Why, if one wants to compare life to anything, one must liken it to being blown through the Tube at fifty miles an hour—landing at the other end without a single hairpin in one's hair! Shot out at the feet of God entirely naked!" (TMW, 33).

Another literary device that Woolf uses to develop her ideas in her works is irony. It is frequently used to emulate the foolishness with which certain assumptions are perceived or to present the crude reality with a touch of humour. It is going to be especially appreciated when men complain about war. A good instance to illustrate this notion can be found in *Three Guineas*, where the narrator shows how despite the fact that men have the voice and the possibility of having a more active role in democracy we have ended up in the fascist state (Sexton, 2018):

"[...] in spite of the vote and the wealth which that vote must have brought with it, you have not ended war; in spite of the vote and the power which that vote must have brought with it, you have not resisted the practical obliteration of your freedom by Fascists or Nazis" (TG, 37).

In "The Mark on the Wall," however, irony is much more focused in the narrator's way of telling the story. She claims that memory is not one of her strengths and that sometimes it is too imaginative to be really trusted. With statements like "it is an old fancy, an automatic fancy, made as a child perhaps" (TMW, 33), she tries to belittle her speech but it is ironical because it just adds more mystery and complexity to the short story since the images and the ideas she expresses have a very intricate meaning. That does not precisely involve a lack of knowledge, but she is just assuming that since she does not have a voice in society as a woman her concern is not going to attract anyone's attention (Marder, 1999).

## 7. Conclusion

In conclusion, we could say that from “The Mark on the Wall” to *Three Guineas* we have seen a clear transformation from the preliminary creative modernist seed to the subversive overwhelming consistency of a proficient writer. However, though we as readers may be tempted to think that there were not political implications in early works such as “The Mark on the Wall” we just have to decode some images beyond the surface to realize that Woolf actually took the initiative earlier than we thought (Wing-chi Ki, 440). Either by making references to belligerent images or to significant male figures from history, “The Mark on the Wall” presents an accurate portray of an outsider who is conscious of her own oppression and who can enjoy her “automatic fancy” (TMW, 33). It is then in *Three Guineas* where Woolf unleashes her political discontent to write the hardest critics to the system. Abandoning the intention of pleasing the reader, she makes visible the suffering of all women by relating it to living inside a dictatorial regime.

We have learned that even the sacred institutions that are supposed to warrant security and look after for our rights as citizens are precisely a cornerstone for war making and for transmitting traditional values. In “The Mark on the Wall,” though Woolf is not focused on providing real solutions, she challenges the system through a pioneering way of storytelling: the stream of consciousness and its fragmented images, so as to represent the instability and the new literary values of a new era (Hercend, 100). In order to solve these structural problems, in *Three Guineas* she promotes an educational reform to avoid future armed conflicts and to ensure tolerance and equality between both sexes. However, the inclusion of feminism and pacifism is not just a concern of the public system but it must also be regarded in the domestic domain (Pawlowski, 745) since “the public and the private worlds are inseparably connected [...] the tyrannies and servilities of the one are the tyrannies and servilities of the other. [...] A common interest unites us; it is one world, one life” (TG, 103). For Woolf there is still much work to do to get rid of the oppressive rules of the standard but, certainly, the first step to move forward is to recognise the gender gap, to empathise with the outsider and work together to build a consciousness in order not to give rise to fascism.

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