

The Revolution of Feminism: Through the

Medieval to Modern Era

A Digital Humanities Project



Throughout history, women were generally confined to the traditional roles within the family and were often subordinate to men. The reinforcement of gender roles caused women to be treated and viewed as nothing more than a housewife or mother. This limited their freedom and raised issues regarding their independence and identity. Despite all the social limitations some women began to challenge gender norms bringing rise to feminist ideologies. Virginia Woolf's "*The Journal of Mistress Joan Martyn*" was a great resource in letting us see the perspective of a woman forced to be dependent on men and constrained by society's expectations of women throughout English history.

Using *The Journal of Mistress Joan Martyn* as our main guide, we were able to build a digital room with a main theme focused on the evolution of feminism beginning from medieval to modern day times. The thesis for this room is "The virtual room based on the "*Journal of Mistress Joan Martyn*" illuminates the progress of the revolution of feminism by visualizing the failures in medieval society acknowledging women's desire for freedom and comparing them to the equality and freedom achieved by women in the modern era."

The starting point for our viewers would be at the top of the tower showing the limited freedom that women had and their desires to not be stuck in a world dominated by men. At the bottom of the tower, it portrays the history of how women were viewed. Reider's article on historical misogyny describes some scholars' views on medieval society as "as fundamentally misogynist and were using the term misogyny to describe not only a hatred of women but also a

broad range of anti-feminine attitudes and practices” (Reider 1). The assets in the first floor show the expectations women had to fulfill in medieval society, such as being a mother and a wife; with very little room to make their own choices. Once the viewers step outside of the tower, there are a variety of images, presentations, and videos to show what women have fought for and accomplished up to this day. Modernism, defined by Pearson, “is associated with attempts to render human subjectivity... to represent consciousness... emotion... and the individual's relation to society...”. (Pearson 14) We used the idea of Modernism as a bridge that connects the past and the present, as it brings forth the feminist thought processes that motivated women to break away from traditional mindsets and change their place in society. This area symbolizes the changes made by feminism and how it thrives in society today.

This digital project not only focuses on the societal oppression put onto women in the medieval era, but also how it has been consistent in order for these feminist ideas to resonate and lead to change. We highlighted the challenges women had to face in order to gain equal gender rights. The challenges portrayed in our project raises the thought that women share the desire to be viewed as equal individuals without being forced to be dependent on men by society. This idea has provided controversial debates especially toward men's view on feminism in the modern day world. In a journal article, Nancy Hirschmann, provides a critical examination of freedom through a feminist perspective suggesting that freedom is not the same for everybody; rather it is defined in many ways based on historical, cultural, and social factors (Hirschmann 46). Through this notion we were able to see and show the freedom that women in medieval times sought to search and fight for. Nevertheless, our project serves as an anchor to help women continue to advocate for their freedom and liberate themselves from the chains of society's expectations

regarding women. By contextualizing and analyzing these sources we can trace the roots of feminism to the core problems that still hinder women to this day.

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