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The Gendered Room and the Lock on the Door: Women Writers and the Patriarchy in Virginia Woolf's A Room of One's Own

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Abstract

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This thesis analyzes the life of Virginia Woolf and her foundational feminist text, *A Room of One's Own* (*AROO*) to understand women's need for control in their journey to become Authors through Woolf's requirements of "500 a year and a room with a lock on the door." It discusses the significance of becoming a capital *A* Author and how authorship impacted women's lives in the eighteenth, nineteenth, and even twentieth centuries. Through a summary of Woolf's historicizing of women writers' struggles this thesis investigates the impact these struggles had on how women wrote—often resulting in anger and anonymous authorship. Through an examination of Woolf's historicizing, the implications of Woolf's requirement of both the Room and the Lock and how it relates to gender, control, and autonomy becomes clear. This evolved to a discussion of the solutions Woolf envisioned in *A Room of One's Own* and how women's struggles, while improved, still impact women writers today in their efforts to become an Author—as seen by the struggle of women to work uninterrupted during the pandemic as well as the negative reputation of romance literature perceived by contemporary readers.

Keywords and phrases: Virginia Woolf, "a room of one's own," Author, gender, the Lock, the Room, women writers, honors thesis.

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Introduction

Virginia Woolf's text on women and fiction, *A Room of One's Own (AROO)*, highlights the challenges women must face in their efforts to become authors and calls attention to the implication of gender within the literary canon. She uses these significant issues to demand a change, stating that women need "five hundred a year and a room with a lock on the door," so that they may write fiction (Woolf 103). Woolf's essay has become a foundational piece of the literary canon, inspiring a wide variety of other works that expound upon her most popular points: gender disparity within academia, the issues of authorship women writers experienced, and the requirements needed for women to write fiction. While present-day literary scholars have been aware of the challenges women faced in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Woolf's metaphor of the room and the lock requires further exploration. Specifically, the abrupt inclusion of Woolf's requirement of the lock on the door and the ever-present imagery of confinement that precedes it not only in Woolf's literature but also in works written by women writers throughout history needs to be addressed. From Woolf's requirements of the room and the lock, I concluded that while Woolf famously called for women writers to have "a room of their own," my analysis of Woolf's history, *A Room of One's Own*, and other contemporary works demonstrates the necessity of women to have control over their own work, environment, and authorial identity, symbolized for Woolf by a lock on the door of the room.

This thesis will address the questions: What were the challenges women faced in their attempts to become Authors in the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth centuries? How did Virginia Woolf's own life impact the way she viewed the struggles of women writers and the conception of *AROO*? Historically, through the lens of Woolf's text, what happened when women endeavored to write? What does it mean to be an Author? What is the significance of the

evolution of the use of the lock in Woolf's *AROO*, and what are the implications for other works written by women? What are the modern-day implications of Woolf's solutions to the struggles of female Authorship?

In order to answer these questions, I will analyze the life of Virginia Woolf and the writing and content of her most prolific work, *AROO*; define what it means to be a Capital *A* Author and the patriarchal etymology of *author*; investigate how the idea of Authorship often led to anxiety on women writers; examine the process of historicizing that Woolf employs in her efforts to explain the struggles and solutions of Authorship; identify the implicit partnership between men and women in creative works and the imbalance of Authorial power that occurs as a result of the patriarchal control men are born with; reiterate the solutions Woolf argues for; and investigate how the Room and the Lock represent more than the physical room and lock that Woolf is requesting. By doing this, I will be able to come to a conclusion on the modern-day implications of Woolf's argument in *AROO*.

Biography

Virginia Woolf was a legendary author of foundational feminist and intellectual literature in the twentieth century. Woolf was a twentieth-century modernist author well-known for her non-linear narratives and stream-of-consciousness writing style. Born in 1882 to Leslie and Julia Stephen, Adeline "Virginia" Woolf was the seventh of eight children, four of whom were boys and four of whom were girls. Woolf would become very close with a select few of her siblings who would become key players in her exploration of intellectualism.

Woolf was surrounded by intellectualism from an early age; her mother and father knew many contemporary intellectuals and were close friends with writers such as George Meredith,

Thomas Hardy, and Henry James, as well as many others who likely frequented the home (Gubar ix). However, Woolf was limited in her active pursuit of education, her only education being access to her father's private library and a few Greek and Latin lessons at King's College. While "'allowing a girl of fifteen the free run of a large and quite unexpurgated library' [was]–an unusual opportunity…and evidence of the high regard Sir Leslie had for his daughter's intellectual talents," Woolf held some bitterness for the homeschooling she received in comparison to her brothers' and step-brothers' private and university educations (Gubar xi).

The inequality of education among siblings was reflected throughout Woolf's childhood in her parents' perspectives on education coupled with the societal expectations of gender; Woolf's parents differed drastically in their opinions of women's education. Her father believed women should be as educated as men—a progressive view of education for the time. Nevertheless, he gave his daughters a limited education by homeschooling while sending his sons to receive a formal education. Meanwhile, Woolf's mother believed that women were best suited for household services, a mindset that continued after her death through Woolf's sister, Vanessa Bell, who took up the domestic duties in her place.

However, Woolf's access to intellectual pursuits soon expanded after her father's death. After Sir Leslie's death, Woolf and three of her siblings–Vanessa, Thoby, and Adrian–moved to a house in Bloomsbury, London. This became the location of the famous "Bloomsbury Group," a diverse collection of individuals including Vanessa Bell, Clive Bell, Leonard Woolf, John Maynard Keynes, Roger Fry, E.M. Forster, Lytton Strachey, Sir Desmond MacCarthy, and Duncan Grant. Together, these members allowed Woolf to gain frequent access to an ever-growing intellectual community; they encouraged Woolf to expand her perspective on life and increase her intellectual and academic achievements.

One year after her father's death, Woolf's freedom had increased, and she began to become quite notable within the literary community, providing her not only intellectual independence but also a sense of financial independence from her father's leftover funds. As an academic outlet, and with her newfound financial freedom, Woolf was able to pursue a wide range of passions including access to education for others–which she was denied in her own childhood. Though she did not particularly enjoy it, Woolf began teaching weekly adult education classes at Morley College for free. Additionally, later in life, Woolf and her husband Leonard Woolf would establish the Hogarth Press, a means for Woolf to advocate for young radical authors by having the means to publish them herself. But before Woolf would be able to have the complete stability to open a printing press, yet another family tragedy would occur. In 1909, the most important thing in Woolf's career occurred: her aunt died.

Woolf's aunt, Caroline Emelia Stephen, or "Aunt Mary," was an unmarried, published writer herself and a source of peaceful respite for Woolf during times of mental stress. Caroline Stephen also lacked a formal education and yet was a successful published author who encouraged Woolf's own writing. When she died, her aunt left Woolf a legacy of £2,500 as a stipend to her savings from her father's estate. This inheritance gave Woolf previously unknown financial security and social independence from the unwanted expectations of domesticity.

It was as a result of her aunt's encouragement that Woolf published her very first article at the end of 1904 in the *Guardian*. Despite the significance of this publication for the future of Woolf's literary career, this was not the first instance of Woolf picking up a pen. It is thought that Woolf began consistently writing after the death of her mother and of many other close family members; she began a diary she would keep sporadically until her death. This diary acted less like a diary and more like a place for Woolf to describe daily occurrences, reviews of her

personal readings, and impressions and interactions with people—the skill of human observation, as Woolf herself acknowledges, transfers well into training women into becoming good novelists (Gubar x). Yet a consequence of this emotional turmoil, often seen in her diary, was an ever-present struggle with depression and mania; this culminated in a sense of imposter syndrome as both a woman and a writer throughout her life.

Despite her tumultuous mental health, Woolf would go on to write a variety of essays, reviews, and novels that often discussed the importance of womanhood, intersectionality, independence, gender, creativity versus intellect, and community. In her lifetime, Woolf would publish more than five hundred essays and reviews (Gubar xv). A significant period in her literary career was the publication of anonymous reviews and essays for the *Times Literary Supplement (TLS)*. Despite her later campaigning for women's rights to be visible and open within the public sphere[1], in the beginning of her career, Woolf accepted the limitations of the expectations placed on women authors in the nineteenth century such as anonymity, the struggles to establish an authorial identity in a patriarchal literary field, and the lack of private space. This acceptance changed with the publishing of *Night and Day* in 1919 which depicted both men and women freely talking within the public sphere (Fernald 159). Woolf began to grow frustrated with publishing anonymously and began to wish for women to be more easily accepted into the public sphere. In short, Woolf wished for women to gain access to the public sphere and be able to make a living as a "respected mainstream cultural authority without giving up her feminism or her independence of mind" (Fernald 159).

[1] Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* discusses the opportunity of women to leave what she refers to as the domestic or private sphere—the duties of the household—and enter into the public sphere where traditionally only men resided to gain access to equal opportunity education. Woolf uses her terms when discussing women's struggles to gain access to education in order to become writers.

This line of thinking follows Woolf throughout her writing after 1919; as she gained prestige writing for the *TLS*, she used her literary voice to establish respect and reputation, even anonymously. This was a considerable opportunity for a female author whose main themes of literature were the challenges women faced trying to express themselves in a male-dominated culture (Fernald 161). Woolf's feminist perspective on women in the public sphere and their inclusion in the literary canon and her frustration with their absence acted as a large inspiration for the writing of her revolutionary feminist literary work, *AROO*.

A Room of One's Own

AROO was a culmination of many years' worth of literary experience. The foundational feminist text started as a lecture series given to the women's colleges of Cambridge University, which then sparked the writing of the article "Women and Fiction," later expanded to the book *Women & Fiction* until finally being revised, completed, and renamed *AROO. AROO* is said to have been formed during a brief period of illness in which she was confined to a bed; "Woolf began making up *Women & Fiction* in her head as she lay in bed" (Rosenbaum xxii). However, interestingly, "[t]here are no indications in the manuscript or her diary that she referred to the Cambridge lectures while composing the book that was based on them" (Rosenbaum xxiii). The uncertainty of the complete origins of her most prolific work provides a representation of its evolutionary significance to feminist literature and the issue of women's literary history—as will be argued in this paper.

Woolf's essay, *AROO*, highlights the challenges women faced in their efforts to become authors and calls attention to the implication of gender within the literary canon. She uses these significant issues to demand a change: that women should earn "five hundred a year and [need] a

room with a lock on the door" so that they may write fiction (Woolf 103). Woolf's essay became a foundational piece of the literary canon, inspiring a wide variety of other works that expound upon her most popular points: gender disparity of opportunity to participate in intellectual pursuits, the issues of authorship women writers experienced, and the requirements needed for women to write fiction. However, certain aspects of Woolf's essay have not been properly examined. While present-day scholars made note of the challenges women faced, there is still more to take away from a close examination of Woolf's metaphor of the room with a lock on the door and the impact of gender on women, writing, and the room. From Woolf's own argument, I concluded that while Woolf famously called for women writers to have "a room of their own," my analysis of Woolf's history, *A Room of One's Own*, and other contemporary works demonstrates the necessity of women to have control over their own work, environment, and authorial identity, symbolized for Woolf by a lock on the door of the room.

Author

Before tackling the complexities of Virginia Woolf's *AROO* and the work's impact on the feminist literary canon, I will define what it truly means to be an Author and gain authorship. It is important to note the capital *A* of Author as a unique term to be used in this paper to describe women writers who have managed to overcome the hurdles of their time and enter into the public sphere as accomplished writers, recognized either by their contemporaries or by modern critique, without a focus on their femininity—it is gender neutral. Woolf herself does not provide an implicit definition of an Author but describes a successful woman writer as one who composes beyond the limits of her sex, one who does not adopt the male structure but who creates her own way of writing against the literary canon and becomes what Woolf defines as the "androgynous

mind" (*AROO* 97-103). She believes pure literary genius can only be found in an "androgynous mind."

The foundational voices in late-twentieth-century feminist literary criticism, Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, do however provide the etymology of *author*, giving readers an understanding of just how critical it is that I use a specific term when referring to successful female writers of the eighteenth- and nineteenth-centuries. They define *author* as "a person who originates or gives existence to something, a begetter, beginner, father, or ancestor, a person who sets forth written statements" highlighting that "*there is the imagery of succession, of paternity, or hierarchy*" in the standard use of the word author (Gilbert and Gubar 4). I wish to abandon this etymology and use the term *Author* (capitalized) to emphasize that this is not a writer with established paternal or fatherly succession, but a neutral writer prized by their merit alone, not by their sex.

Anxiety of Authorship

The effort involved in becoming an Author has been known to create apprehension in women. This apprehension has been identified by Gilbert and Gubar as an "'Anxiety of authorship'—a radical fear that she cannot create, that because she can never become a 'precursor' the act of writing will isolate or destroy her" (49). Since most of the literary canon has been established by men for men—as a result of the patriarchal foundations of the literary canon—women often struggle to gain the courage to even attempt Authorship (Gilbert and Gubar 74).

An example of the anxiety of authorship as a result of the societal expectations of women in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries can be seen in this quote from Mary Jean Corbett:

"[She] expresses her desire not to be thought exceptional—and thus unwomanly—mainly in terms of her distaste for the stereotypical literary woman…forfeiting her femininity in her quest for publicity, comes to represent the extraordinary and unnatural woman rather than the conventional and unexceptional one" (18). Not only were women fearful of becoming Authors as a result of the patriarchal precedent of the literary canon, but if they were to attempt it, they were judged by both men and women. This judgment can be seen in a multitude of ways but is succinctly summarized by Gilbert and Gubar when describing the specific struggles of the anxiety of Authorship women faced: "If becoming an *author* meant mistaking one's 'sex and way,' if it meant becoming 'unsexed' or perversely sexed female, then it meant becoming a monster or freak" (34). Women were deemed "unwomanly," "other," and "unnatural" just for attempting to exit the domestic sphere and enter into the public eye.

Historicizing in *AROO*

Throughout the writing of *AROO* Woolf offers a reflection on women writers' historical struggles to illustrate her present-day issues. Through her narrative frame, Woolf tackles the many problems women have faced: the poverty of women throughout history, what would happen if a woman had attempted to become an Author during Shakespeare's time, the lack of formal education women have faced, and the absence of control over one's own space. She, additionally, offers a variety of examples of specific women authors and explains what exactly they needed in order to become successful Authors. Woolf introduces the impact of the domestic sphere on the works of well-known writers like Charlotte Perkins Gilman. She emphasizes the anger evident in the works of authors such as the Duchess Margaret of Cavendish and Lady Winchelsea, and how it often limited the Authorial talent of authors like Charlotte Brontë,

distracting from the core genius of their works. Woolf also expands upon the Authorial identity of women writers such as Mary Shelley, George Eliot (Mary Ann Evans), and the Brontë sisters. She highlights their connection to the label of anonymous Author and the inclination of women writers to seek safety behind the veil of a male pseudonym.

Woolf does all this while utilizing consistent imagery of the lock as a way to illustrate how women are locked in and the situations and individuals they might have benefited from locking out if they had the power to do so. She presents the preceding examples in order to emphasize the need of women writers to succeed in overcoming the restrictions and limitations of their situations and argue the importance of avoiding the pitfalls of anonymity and anger in order to become Authors. Woolf continuously offers the solution of money and a physical space to retreat to throughout her historicizing if women were to be able to successfully write fiction.

The Fictitious Narrator

Woolf begins *AROO* by creating a fictional narrator who is giving a lecture on the topic of Women and Fiction, describing her thought process, and how she got to the conclusion that women require £500 a year and a room with a lock on the door. While Woolf makes a point to state that the name of the narrator is unimportant—"Call me Mary Beton, Mary Seton, Mary Carmichael or any other name you please—it is not a matter of importance"—the act of fictionalizing herself at the beginning of her work has dual reasoning (*AROO* 5). In one of her letters, Woolf describes the decision to fictionalize herself stating: "I forced myself to keep my own figure fictitious; legendary. If I had said, Look here am I uneducated, because my brothers used all the family funds which is the fact–Well theyd have said; she has an axe to grind; and no one would have taken me seriously" (qtd. in Gubar xxxviii). Woolf understood that her own disadvantages and position, if blatantly stated so early on, would have hindered her argument.

Additionally, while she is fictionalizing, the character herself and the events that occur within the narrative draw from Woolf's personal experiences: being refused access to libraries, her Cambridge lectures, etc.

The use of her own experiences as the narrative framework of *AROO* introduces the constraints of womanhood women writers faced that even Woolf herself endured and provides a sense of credibility as Woolf has extensive knowledge on the subject of women writers' struggles. Her experiences are further expounded upon as Woolf continues her narrative and depicts the narrator having a fictional discussion with herself. One of the first concepts Woolf discusses is what she refers to as "the reprehensible poverty of [her] sex" (*AROO* 21). The narrator sits down with the fictitious Mary Seton after a mediocre dinner and discusses what could have been if "her mother and her mother's mother before her had learnt the great art of making money" (*AROO* 21). While the narrator ruminates that this would have been detrimental to the family dynamic and that Mary Seton would most likely not be alive had this occurred, she stops in her tracks and remembers that historically this would have been impossible.

As she realizes this impossibility, she concludes that to hypothesize about this possibility was futile as women were denied all legal rights to the money they could have earned until very recently during Woolf's own time with the *Married Women's Property Act of 1882*. She supposes that any woman who did make money would conclude that it was pointless to attempt to do so if they could not even keep it for themselves and they are better off leaving the finances to their husband (*AROO* 23). The narrator, through a winding sequence of thought, discovers the upsetting truth that the place women are in is a result of factors outside of their control. She is both angry at the history of the fact and resentful of the women who came before her that appear to have done nothing to combat this issue.

“Judith Shakespeare”

Very shortly after, the narrator imagines what would have happened if a woman had attempted to make a living by writing during this period. Through the narrative of the fictitious sister of Shakespeare, Woolf discusses all the challenges that “Judith Shakespeare” would have faced if she had been born just as gifted as her brother and endeavored to become just as successful. While Shakespeare went off to become renowned, Judith stayed home; she was not formally educated, she was discouraged from any intellectual pursuits and reminded of her role in the household. When Judith runs away from home to become a playwright she encounters many traumatic hurdles, gets pregnant, and commits suicide due to her failure to succeed as an author. Her extensive narrative of the tragedy of Judith Shakespeare, while dramatic, is historically not too far off. Women historically have had to follow a strict set of expectations and every deviation from the norm would be punished either by family or by society.

Woolf continues by explaining that, had Judith Shakespeare, or any woman, been successful in achieving their goal of writing, the writing would have been contorted. She argues that a woman’s life was not suited for writing: “all the conditions of her life, all her own instincts, were hostile to the state of mind which is needed to set free whatever is in the brain” (*AROO* 50). Woolf argues that until women are given the control they need over material items such as their own space, money, and food, their intellectual work will suffer. Women cannot thrive on a mediocre dinner. Until they gain access to these material conditions, women will lack true intellectual freedom. The first step is, as Woolf argues, a room of their own.

Restrictions of the Domestic Sphere

As stated previously, women were often fearful of becoming Authors as a result of the societal expectations that came with being a woman in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

The largest expectation was the obligation of women to stay within their private, domestic sphere. Being within the domestic sphere was an incredibly large part of women's sense of self: "Nineteenth-century middle-class women derived their primary social and cultural self-definition from their identification with the private realm" (Corbett 17). Women's whole lives were defined by what they could do to be good mothers, daughters, and wives. There were even conduct books that taught young girls the proper ways to act and the values they should uphold; "women [were] reared for, and conditioned to, lives of privacy, reticence, [and] domesticity" (Gilbert and Gubar 47, 52). The very essence of womanhood in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was defined by the patriarchal control of women.

Just as Woolf describes in *AROO* that the world was not suited for women to write because it generated anger that would fester and ruin women's writing, Charlotte Perkins Gilman's poem "In Duty Bound" identifies just how taxing the domestic life was for women:

> In duty bound, a life hemmed in,
>
> Whichever way the spirit turns to look;
>
> No chance of breaking out, except by sin,
>
> Not even room to shirk--
>
> Simply to live, and work.
>
> An obligation preimposed, unsought,
>
> Yet binding with the force of natural law;
>
> The pressure of antagonistic thought;
>
> Aching within, each hour,
>
> A sense of wasting power.
>
> A house with roof so darkly low

The heavy rafters shut the sunlight out;

One cannot stand erect without a blow;

Until the soul inside

Cries for a grave–more wide.

Gilman's poem illustrates the exhaustion that resulted from the high expectations and thankless work women did in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Her poem, rife with imagery of confinement and feelings of being without autonomy, proves that even prolific female writers such as Charlotte Perkins Gilman struggled with a need for control over themselves and their environment in order to successfully become an Author.

Anger in Women Writers

As a result of the lack of suitable conditions for intellectual freedom, works written by women have been distorted by their dissatisfaction and anger towards their situation. Woolf explains that "Had [she] survived [her situation], whatever she had written would have been twisted and deformed, issuing from a strained and morbid imagination" (*AROO* 49). In *AROO,* Woolf introduces a variety of women authors whose works have been overshadowed by their anger towards the challenges they faced. This anger "[spread] like a stain throughout the style and structure of much literature by women before the twentieth century" (Gilbert and Gubar 51). Through the setting of her narrator browsing her bookshelf, Woolf provides examples of many female writers in history who, despite their privileged backgrounds, still faced a variety of obstacles and challenges in their efforts to become Authors.

One such writer, Lady Winchelsea, wrote in the eighteenth century, was both a noble and childless, but as Woolf states, "one has only to open her poetry to find her bursting out in indignation against the position of women" (*AROO* 57). Woolf provides examples of the many

works Lady Winchelsea wrote that had promise but were twisted by her anger. While Lady Winchelsea, privileged and childless, had access to money and the privacy of her own room, she was still a product of the patriarchal society that feared her literary accomplishments.

The next author Woolf's narrator explores is the Duchess Margaret of Newcastle. The Duchess was similarly married and childless and Woolf states she was also "disfigured and deformed by the same causes" (*AROO* 60-61). In fact, women like the Duchess, often referred to as "Mad Madge," "became a bogey to frighten clever girls with" (Gilbert and Gubar 63). This idea of the monstrous woman writer added further fear to the anxiety of Authorship women faced and diminished the quality of work women produced. Both Lady Winchelsea and the Duchess held a passion and potential for authorship, and yet their circumstances made their works lesser than the men of their time.

An example of a woman Woolf examines who is now a well-known author is Charlotte Brontë and her best-known novel *Jane Eyre*. Woolf spends a good portion of this section of *AROO* critiquing one specific scene in Brontë's novel—Jane Eyre on the roof. While searching for a moment of privacy within Thornfield Hall, Jane climbs to the roof and laments the suffering of women taught to be calm and content with their lot in life stating: "it is thoughtless to condemn them, or laugh at them, if they seek to do more or learn more than custom has pronounced necessary for their sex" (Bronte 167). However, her change from addressing her current situation to that of women in general and her abrupt statement that she hears another character approaching is "an awkward break" (*AROO* 68). Woolf examines the digression of Brontë's main character to object to the state of women, claiming, "she [wrote] of herself where she should write of her characters" (*AROO* 69). Even Brontë, whom Woolf argues had more literary genius than Jane Austen, was led astray by odd jerks of indignation and rage that

hindered her ability to write well (*AROO* 69). This addition of Charlotte Brontë set in comparison to lesser-known women shows that even those women whose Authorship is often praised by modern critics were held back by their material conditions and society's resistance to their intellectual freedom.

Anonymity

Woolf follows this claim of twisted writing with the argument that the women who survived this disfigurement would have written anonymously, much like Woolf herself in the early stages of her career. She states that had women survived the struggles of their circumstances their works would have been ruined by their anger and, "undoubtedly…[their] work would have gone unsigned. That refuge [they] would have sought certainly" (*AROO* 49-50). Women writers would have taken refuge in the little control they had over their writing, a modicum of power they had to hold onto their works and stay safe from the repercussions of writing freely. As Corbett states in "Feminine Authorship and Spiritual Authority in Victorian Women Writers' Autobiographies," "for the woman writer to enter the public world, even through the impersonal medium of print, is to incur the risk of social or moral death…the loss of the feminine self…. For some women writers, opening that window onto the private is so fraught with danger that only…a masculine pseudonym, can provide them with the curtain necessary to shield them from public view" (Corbett 18). Women who survived would choose to veil themselves behind the protection of a man's name rather than their own in order to overcome the anxiety of Authorship that came with being a woman writer.

This "refuge" that Woolf claims women would seek is not just a hypothetical conclusion created from a review of women's history–or the lack of it. Woolf saw that many women would choose to write anonymously rather than not at all, but that the consequences of this action went

beyond the loss of Authorship for women and impacted the history of women. This line of thinking can be seen in a section from *Women & Fiction*: "often nothing tangible remains of a woman's day…Her life has an anonymous character" (199). She asserts that while women are often incredibly productive—completing and producing throughout their days, even setting aside the creative output of Authorship—they rarely receive credit for what they do produce and so it fades into obscurity. Woolf concludes that the lack of history of women results in an "anonymous character" which can be reflected in the use of pseudonyms or even the lack of claiming authorship at all throughout history. When faced with the challenges and restrictions of womanhood, these women chose to discard the title of Author altogether.

And yet, all this is a hypothesis by Woolf; during her time there was little to no information on the state of women. Social history—which includes women's history—did not emerge until the early twentieth century, around the time Woolf was writing *AROO*. When Woolf attempts to research the history of women, she finds a deficit in the history books: "she is all but absent from history" (*AROO* 43). She concludes that while women are ever-present secondary characters in the shadows of men, and are often written about, very little is known about their history before the eighteenth century. While there was a boom in women-written literature in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the exact cause of why women did not write before that is—according to Woolf—unknown. Women have left only a minuscule trace of themselves in history. Woolf goes on to explain that it is useless to ask why women did not write when there is no knowledge of how they were educated, if they had rooms to themselves, if they had children, or what their daily routines were (*AROO* 45). It is only definitively known that they had no money.

Many women authors saw the treatment of those who attempted to breach the confines of the private sphere and enter into the public and decided to choose a safer route at the expense of their authorship and ability to claim the title of Author. The decision to write anonymously was often a result of societal pressure. The spiritual concept of chastity—a characteristic that emphasized a woman's perceived purity through what society deemed correct conduct, restraint, and integrity—often held significant weight and would scare women off from entering into the public sphere and publishing their works (Fernald 170, Price 266, Goldberg 17). The suggestion of entering into the public sphere, the idea of female publicity, was actively shamed and discouraged not just by men but by other women too (Corbett 18).

Women often chose not to attempt publishing, would publish works with no name, or go even further and attempt to "ineffectively veil themselves by using the name of a man" (*AROO* 50). While there were some benefits of using a male pseudonym—a women writer could supersede the restrictions of her womanhood that her "foremothers" were constrained by—women who chose to do so forfeited their Authorship (Gilbert and Gubar 65). It was often common practice for women to publish their works using a pseudonym, utilizing "public masks to hide her private dreams" (Gilbert and Gubar 81). Many well-known classic Authors, when faced with the possibility of judgment would publish anonymously or use a male pseudonym. Even Mary Shelley, the now-famous author of *Frankenstein*, originally published her works anonymously and many of her works are still being canonized and removed from the category of anonymous authorship today (Crook). Authors like the Brontë sisters who kept their initials but used names such as Currer Bell (Charlotte Brontë), Ellis Bell (Emily Brontë), and Acton Bell (Anne Brontë) are now known by their given names, but many other female writers' names are lost to history as a result of anonymous publishing and the use of pseudonyms.

One such example is Mary Ann Evans, a well-known author today, and yet many only know her by her pen name, George Eliot. There have been so many women whose names have been lost to history as a result of pressure to succumb to societal expectations and yet even more women, when faced with the possibility of being judged would choose to not be authors at all. Essentially, the fear of judgment creates "No space […] for the female. She can either allow herself to be devoured or she can retreat into isolation" (Gilbert and Gubar 208). Their only options were to become the unnatural and monstrous woman or fade into the unknown.

Lost Authors

Women when faced with the consequences of writing or publishing publicly and surrounded by negativity toward women's intellectualism often did not seek out or endeavor to write at all or did not write work considered by their contemporaries as "literature." Not only would women often avoid intellectualism out of fear of social judgment but, as Woolf repeatedly states, women would not have been offered the opportunity to be educated enough to become good writers. This would often result in, as Woolf claims, multiple generations of lost writers, women who had no opportunity or means to write but like "Judith Shakespeare," they had an intellectual mind—one that often caused them trouble. Women whose very psyche went against the expectations and norms of society and were punished for daring to even appear different or whose genius was overshadowed by those given more opportunity than they were often failed to become Authors. In *AROO* Woolf claims, that when someone reads of a witch, a woman possessed, a wise woman, or a famous man who had a mother, then "we are on the track of a lost novelist," a woman who could have gone "crazed with the torture that her gift" gave her (*AROO* 48-49). Each of Woolf's examples identifies a woman overtaken by the restrictions of her culture, a culture that punishes women for daring to act outside of the status quo. Woolf herself,

who published anonymously early on in her career, felt she was outside her culture's expectations—her same-sex attractions and relationship, and not having children—which contributed to the mental illness she suffered from. Eventually, she committed suicide as a result of it. The cultural restrictions of a patriarchal world punished even Virginia Woolf for her deviations from the traditional expectations of the domestic sphere. This challenge severely limited women's ability to write for a very long time. As Woolf so succinctly puts it: "It was a woman Edward Fitzgerald, I think, suggested who made the ballads and the folk-songs, crooning them to her children, beguiling her spinning with them, or the length of the winter's night" (*AROO* 49). And yet even the women who were not persecuted but were deprived of an education showed a possibility for Authorship.

Patriarchal "Partnership"

The struggle of women to write unfortunately goes beyond not being given educational opportunities, being isolated from the public, and the demanding social expectations of the domestic sphere. As Woolf has proven, if women were able to overcome all these hurdles and write, they may still be defeated by their anger toward their situation or by the social fear of being in the public eye. However, if a woman were to succeed in maintaining her Authorial genius and write something truly revolutionary, it is likely that too would be taken from her. Woolf uses another fictitious narrative to illustrate this concept.

She imagines a tribe of women in Central Asia who are discovered to write plays better than *King Lear* and hypothesizes that if this were to occur men would first be incredulous, then angry, and then they would either destroy the works or "write off the Anne or the Jane on the title page an emphatic George or John" (*Women and Fiction* 181). On the pedestal of the

patriarchy, men were unwilling to allow women to supersede them in the literary field and gain the opportunity to decrease men's power over them. As Gubar and Gilbert state while discussing the themes of male and female sexuality in the literary canon, "If male sexuality is integrally associated with the assertive presence of literary power, female sexuality is associated with the absence of such power" (8). Women's creative impulses were expected to be employed in other areas, such as childbirth.

Yet, much like Woolf, there were some Authors who succeeded in overcoming the patriarchal hold men like their fathers often had on them. One such Author, Mary Shelley, reflects the intellectual background of Virginia Woolf—having endured a similar educational upbringing and been surrounded by a similar intellectual community. Both of Shelley's parents were large figures within literary and intellectual communities, and after her mother died, Shelley's house was often visited by intellectual figures. Much like Woolf, Shelley was not provided a formal education but was still able to surround herself with a community that upheld intellectualism and married a man—Percy Shelley—who as a literary man himself was open and willing to allow his wife to engage in her literary aspirations as long as she did not attempt anything he deemed significant to literature, like poetry. Mary Shelley's most popular work, *Frankenstein*, perfectly illustrates this point—whether purposefully or coincidentally—by illustrating a man's ill-fated attempt to control the greatest creative power, and the chaos and destruction that followed.

While Woolf and Shelley are examples of women who succeeded in becoming Authors despite a lack of formal education and the social expectations of their times, it must be noted that these women were privileged. As stated previously, most women were constantly held back from the ability to gain any type of freedom—intellectual or financial—that would allow them to

become successful Authors and remove themselves from patriarchal control. As Woolf so succinctly argues, if women *were* to successfully create literary works, men would overtake them by either claiming them as their own or using their power to set up a society that harshly judged women's attempts to enter the public through creative means. Woolf provides many examples of women whose works have been stolen. She states that the Duchess Margaret Cavendish of Newcastle, while her writing was rife with anger, showed signs of a poet. Woolf makes the bold claim that "Milton is said [to have] owed a line to her" (*Women & Fiction* 95). Even a man as important within the contemporary literary canon as Milton is not innocent of co-opting an Author's works to benefit his own.

Not only are women often the direct producers of works that are then taken and portrayed as men's own, but even their presence, often taken for granted, was said to have aided in invigorating a man's creative energy. Woolf argued that women provided a perspective that men found to "increase creative power" just by being in the presence of a woman's separate world; she claimed, "the sight of her creating in a different medium would so fertilise his own creative his mind" that he would at once be "invigorated" (Woolf 85). Many men believed it was even a woman's domestic duty to do so. As Corbett claims women were not expected to produce works of literature themselves or become Authors but to "'[keep] alive for men certain ideas and ideals'…women's role in literary production then should be to protect and transmit culture, virtue and private values" (25). Yet, strangely enough, men who benefited from this creative harmony were often the first ones to claim women had no place in the literary field; they did not believe women should or even could produce creative works to the same level as their own, let alone better than. As philosopher and literature critic George Henry Lewes—the married man "George Eliot" had an affair with—stated, "a perfect woman is one who can write but

won't…domestic woman's influence as inspiring others to create perfect circles of their own…abstaining from the wider field of authorship" (Corbett 24). Even renowned literary critics upheld small-minded, patriarchal perspectives of the proper ways women should engage in literature. Corbett goes even further in her explanation of the patriarchal "partnership" men conceived with women stating that "Male artistry requires female subordination; the ideal woman is confined to the home" (25). This not only highlights the superiority of men in the patriarchal literary field over women's creativity but also reflects the specific expectations of women to be confined to the domestic sphere.

Patriarchal Control

Yet, through *AROO*, Woolf constructs a narrative in which women are capable of becoming Authors. Woolf imagines that to resolve the aforementioned struggles of authorship women have faced, women must have intellectual, educational, and spatial freedom; they must have autonomy. Gilbert and Gubar provide insight into the importance of intellectual and educational freedom and its monumental impact on women's lives; they quote Virginia Woolf herself on the importance of intellectual and educational freedom in her life. Woolf admits that "had Sir Leslie Stephen lived into his nineties… 'His life would have entirely ended mine. What would have happened? No writing, no books: –inconceivable.'" (Gilbert and Gubar 192). While her father had provided her access to his library, as previously stated, his death was truly the catalyst for Woolf's intellectual and educational journey. As she so boldly claims, Woolf's ability to have intellectual and educational freedom was a direct result of her father's death; the patriarchal hold of society lessened without a direct familial conduit to control her.

Meanwhile, this freedom from a societal and literary patriarchy in Woolf's life is directly juxtaposed by Gilbert and Gubar's discussion of Charlotte Brontë. While describing the struggles

women underwent, they illustrate the restrictions authors such as Charlotte Brontë—today a very successful and canonized Author—faced from even their own fathers. As Woolf identifies in *AROO*, fathers were simultaneously benevolent caretakers who held their daughters on a pedestal and upholders of the maddening, controlling patriarchy that sent women like "Judith Shakespeare" to their graves. Charlotte Brontë herself stated, "When I'm teaching or sewing, I would rather be reading or writing...' I try to deny myself; [but] my father's approbation amply reward[s] me for the privation.'" (Gilbert and Gubar 64). While her father did not "sling her about the room and lock her up" as Judith Shakespeare's father might have done for daring to want to read and write, his praise for Brontë's restraint was another tool of control used by the patriarchy to keep Author's from fully forming in their time (*AROO* 42). Many women, like Charlotte Brontë, were not given encouragement by the male figures in their lives or the financial ability to follow their literary aspirations.

Woolf's Solutions: The Room and The Lock

Not only do women need money, specifically £500 a year according to Woolf in *AROO*, but they also need a room to themselves. This thesis evolves by the end of *AROO* to also include a lock on the door of the room. Woolf's main argument, that in order to write fiction women need £500 a year and a room with a lock on the door is a very bold claim for her time. Claiming that women deserve financial and physical independence was a revolutionary demand by Woolf.

The Room

Woolf's demand for a room itself was little more than a continuation of a thought process earlier in *AROO* when Woolf highlights the interrupted lives of women (*AROO* 56). Woolf argues—and uses quotes from other female authors—to demonstrate that women led incredibly

interrupted lives without more than an hour to themselves (*AROO* 56). They were caught in the web of the domestic sphere always asked to mend this sock, or tend the children, or mind the dinner (*AROO* 40). As many contemporary critics of Woolf have pointed out, women's need for privacy goes beyond the mental solitude women often seek. In order for women to have true privacy—true control over themselves, their environment, and their authorial status—they need a physical space to retreat to alongside their mental solitude. Historically, the only retreat women have had was to the common sitting room (or drawing room) where people entered and exited routinely. Woolf herself exclaimed, "[h]ow could one write at all in the common sitting rooms, with people going in & out?" (*Women & Fiction* 86). As Woolf highlights in *AROO*, Jane Austen spent most of her time in the drawing room while she composed her novels; Woolf argues that novels were the only literary composition suited for the interrupted lives of women because of their skill of observation of others. Even Woolf's writing of the manuscript of *AROO* "shows the interrupted lives women lead" (Rosenbaum xxiv); the manuscript was written across looseleaf pages, on the backs of other manuscripts as well as in her diary (Rosenbaum xxii-xxxiv). In her text, *AROO*, Woolf repeatedly argues for women "to have five hundred a year and a room with a lock on the door," repeatedly putting an emphasis on the importance of women to have a space of their own (103). The idea of the room, however, goes beyond the concept of a place for women to retreat so that they may write; the room represents the ability of women to separate themselves from the gendered space of the domestic and public spheres and create the opportunity for authorship that they have control over.

The room itself holds both physical and symbolic meaning—it contains a variety of definitions, each capable of application to Woolf's "room." In "The Walls that Emancipate: Disambiguation of the "Room" in *A Room of One's Own*" Sheheryar Sheikh defines a room as "a

physical [space] that enables privacy"—a concept women did not often have access to outside their mental solitude—as well as "[c]apacity to accommodate a person […] or allow a particular action," and the "[o]pportunity or scope [to do something]" (20). As Sheikh proves, the room not only enabled privacy but provided women with the opportunity and accommodation to do what they willed. If women were to receive, as Woolf requests, a room of their own then they would be provided the opportunity of spatial privacy beyond their mental solitude—for if privacy is to actually exist for women, they require a physical space to retreat to. Sheikh goes further in their definition of a room to illustrate exactly what Woolf means when she uses the term a room of their own, defining it "as a room or place to oneself, as a symbol of independence, privacy, autonomy, etc." (20). The room is not just a physical space but a symbol of women's ability to control their authorial identity through the use of a physical blockade from the patriarchal inhibitors of the literary field.

Additionally, Woolf's use of the term "room" rather than "study" in her requirements is a purposeful avoidance of the masculine term "study"—often thought of as a space for a man to retreat to within his home where the women of the house were often forbidden or discouraged from entering. The masculine "study" is perfectly portrayed by Austen in *Pride and Prejudice* with the protagonist's father continuously retreating to his library to avoid his harried and nerve-addled wife, a purposeful critique by Austen of his behavior and failure to fulfill his paternal obligations. As Gan illustrates in "Solitude and Community: Virginia Woolf, Spatial Privacy and *A Room of One's Own*," the "room" was an androgynous combination of the feminine drawing room—the only physical place upper-class women often had access to—and the masculine study. Woolf avoids the use of study to avoid possible upset from the patriarchal population by implying that women aimed to steal something that may have seemed sacred to them; much like

Wollstonecraft in *Vindication of the Right of Women*, Woolf concedes some of her opinions and tailors it to the target demographic, women. The "room" is instead an androgynous neutral demand from Woolf, a mirror of the androgynous Author.

The room becomes not only a symbol of independence and autonomy, providing women with the opportunity to become writers but it also creates the opportunity for women to create a safe place in which they have the space to take hold of their authorial identity and be comforted with the knowledge that it is safe within that room. As Woolf desired and portrayed in *Night and Day*, in 1919, the room creates a space, a community for women to have intellectual independence and freedom without fear of judgment. All this culminates in the concept of a room that allows women to create a safe space to distance themselves from the patriarchal control of both academic and domestic spheres—if they choose.

The Lock

The idea of choice—of control—is represented by Woolf in the addition of the lock to her argument at the end of *AROO*. When Woolf first introduces her "prosaic conclusion" that women need £500 a year and a room of their own, the lock was not yet included in her thesis. In fact, it is not until page 103 of the 112-page book that Woolf includes the lock in her central claim. However, the imagery of the lock, and its symbolism of confinement—ever-present in women's lives and literature—is present throughout *AROO.* It evolves from the idea of women being locked in or locked out by the patriarchy to women being the ones who hold control over the lock. The lock on the door of the room represents "the power to think for oneself [when given] the power to contemplate" (*AROO* 105). Throughout *AROO* Woolf uses depicts women being locked in, locked out, or confined from intellectual property and freedom.

Within AROO, Woolf uses consistent imagery to illustrate women being both "locked out" of intellectualism and being 'locked in' to their private, domestic sphere assigned by society–a means of exclusion and control over women. The imagery of confinement within AROO begins with Woolf's setup of her narrative framework. She describes the narrator exploring the grounds of "Oxbridge," the fictionalized conflation of Oxford and Cambridge, and being denied entry to certain buildings, noting not only that "ladies were only admitted to the library if accompanied by a Fellow of the College or furnished with a letter of introduction," but also that "[she] had no wish to enter had [she] the right" (*AROO* 8). Woolf's comment that she did not even want to enter the library reflects the tradition of women being repeatedly excluded and rejected to the point of acceptance of their situation—of a grasp at control where they decide to act as if choosing to not want "to enter," to not want an education was just a way to feel as if they had autonomy in a strict patriarchal society. As she is leaving Woolf illustrates in her manuscript, "gate after gate seemed to close <lock> gently <but> to behind me…fitting many keys into vast locks & leaving securing <making> that vast huge treasure house safe" (*Women & Fiction* 18). Woolf's use of gates being closed, and keys turning in locks making the vast treasure house of the library "safe" from her represents the physical exclusion of women from the literary world. She even ruminates on the idea of being locked out stating "I thought how unpleasant it is to be locked out; and I thought how it is worse perhaps to be locked in; and, thinking of the safety and prosperity of one sex and the poverty and insecurity of the other and of the effect of tradition and the lack of tradition upon the mind of the writer" (*AROO* 24). She explains that being simultaneously locked in and locked out creates a significant boundary between one sex and another and emphasizes the restrictions women have faced in their efforts to become Authors.

Yet another instance of Woolf using imagery of confinement in *AROO* is in her narrative of "Judith Shakespeare" and her research on "Women" in which on multiple occasions she describes the unfortunate occurrence of fathers and husbands to "lock up" their women if they were to attempt to go against the domestic expectations of their sex (26-30, 46-48). Additionally, within her manuscript, there are numerous instances of Woolf using imagery of the lock and either omitting or rephrasing later in the revised *AROO*. For instance, when explaining the financial struggles of women she declares "iron bars ~~should lie between us~~…& ~~poverty~~"; and once again when elaborating on the domestic expectations of women she exclaims "to begin with always to be doing work one did not wish to do, that was ~~bad enough~~ & then ~~to then the~~ to do it ~~in chains~~, like a slave" (*Women & Fiction* 3, 58). The imagery of the lock is so ingrained within the women, within Woolf herself, that when closing out her argument within *AROO* she uses imagery of the lock to explain the ability of any woman to become an Author—had she £500 a year and a room with a lock on the door.

In her manuscript she claims that poets "are continuing presences; they are in us you and they are in me […], ~~in spite of the bishop who, is impr, in prison~~; she is locked up on all of us who are here tonight, & in many others" (*Women & Fiction* 172). While this unrestricted thought process of Woolf's produced the idea of the poet being locked inside, in a prison guarded by the bishop of the library from the beginning of *AROO*, her revised conclusion emphasizes the idea of women having the ability to be poets rather than poets being locked within them. The imagery of a lock evolved to represent women's control over themselves and their own lives rather than the patriarchal control the imagery represented previously throughout *AROO*. Yet another example of this is within Woolf's manuscript in which she provides a poetic historical retelling of Florence Nightingale receiving the torch to pave a path for women writers. She describes: "a

single shell crossed the seas…sought out a peaceful manor house…and crashed through the drawing room door…The key was but a mass of molten and disfigured metal. Out stepped a figure - a frail and solitary woman. In one hand she bore a roll of lint; in the other a lamp. Her name was Florence Nightingale. The reign of women's servitude was over. Doors were flung wide…Doors there still are <&doors that are locked>" (*Women & Fiction 183-84).*

Woolf is not the only Author to utilize imagery of confinement, of the lock. As Gilbert and Gubar argue, "anxieties about space […] dominate the literature of both nineteenth women and their twentieth-century descendants," with "imagery of enclosure [reflecting] the woman writer's own discomfort, her sense of powerlessness, her fear" (83-84). The imagery of confinement, enclosure, being locked in, locked out, etc. is prevalent throughout women's literature, only just beginning to be analyzed and emphasized by Woolf in *AROO*. There are many Authors whose works reflect this anxiety of space that Gilbert and Gubar identify.

One example is Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre,* from which Gilbert and Gubar take the title for their book, *The Madwoman in the Attic*. Bronte's *Jane Eyre* is rife with imagery of confinement. One of the first instances of confinement is when Jane Eyre is locked in the "red room" as a child after fighting back against her treatment, a representation of the confinement women are faced with when they attempt to go against the expected duties of their spheres. Yet another instance is the entrapment of Edward Rochester's first wife within the attic of Thornfield Hall. As Rochester claims, Bertha has been locked in the attic because of her struggles with mental health—a decision that very clearly did not improve her condition. Bronte illustrates multiple women throughout her novel who have been locked away or locked up for going against the expectations of their sex; the lock is used to control them just as the imagery of confinement represents the patriarchal control women faced in their efforts to become Authors.

A more metaphorical example of confinement, isolation, and independence is present in Kate Chopin's *The Awakening*. Chopin's novel aptly describes the limitations of women in the 1800s as a result of the expectations of the domestic sphere that ruled their livelihoods. Through Edna, the protagonist, Chopin presents the evolution of a woman finding independence and freedom despite the constraints of her sex. Within this evolution, Chopin provides spatial imagery of isolation or being locked in. During her journey of self-discovery, Edna locks herself inside a small painting studio within her home, inspired by the culturally unaccepted Mademoiselle Reisz who represents the woman who enters into the public eye despite public objections and faces the consequences of the decision. Despite Edna's attempts, however, she is unsuccessful in replicating the life of Mademoiselle Reisz. Instead, she succumbs to the fate of many female protagonists whose identity undergoes significant challenges within their stories. She commits suicide—much like "Judith Shakespeare."

Charlotte Perkins Gilman is yet another Author whose work is permeated with imagery of confinement and enclosure. As mentioned previously, Gilman's "In Duty Bound," one of her earlier poems, illustrates the constrictions of the domestic sphere during her time utilizing imagery of enclosure throughout. She describes "a life hemmed in," with "no chance of breaking out," a life of "binding" (Gilman, lines 1, 3, 7). Gilman's use of lock imagery within one of her first works as a published author highlights the struggles Gilman experienced in her efforts to move from author to Author.

Unfortunately, it can be seen in her later work that the symbolism of confinement haunted Gilman throughout her literary career. Her most popular work, "The Yellow Wallpaper," embodies the imagery of the lock and encapsulates the "anxieties of space" and the "woman writer[s'] sense of powerlessness" Gilbert and Gubar discuss in *Madwoman in the Attic*.

Within Gilman's short story, the narrator, Jane, represents a direct mirror of the author herself, much like in *AROO*. The narrator has been prescribed the rest cure and confined to an attic room with barred windows and rings for chains upon the walls (648). Her husband and doctor take "all care from [her]," denoting the patriarchal control over women (648). The narrator is an author herself, prevented from writing during her treatment; the narrative presents her writing the story as it develops. The story chronicles her slow descent into madness as a result of her confinement. Much like "Judith Shakespeare" and the other women writers Woolf historicizes, the Narrator begins to lose her sanity and go mad as a result of the conditions of her situation. Prevented from having independence, restricted from utilizing her intellectual capabilities, and confined to a single room with no freedom, the Narrator begins to hallucinate images within the wallpaper of the room. She imagines the floral patterns to be bars and the rips in the paper to be the attempts of an unknown woman locked behind the bars to escape. The bars and the woman locked behind the wallpaper a metaphor for both the narrator's authorial identity and independence being restricted as well as Gilman herself.

Even Gilbert and Gubar used terms that brought about the image of confinement and control when discussing the struggles of nineteenth-century women writers in *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination*. They use a variety of analogies to compare the power system between men and women: master and slave, colonizer and colonized, superior and subordinate caste, unyielding and docile, dominant and submissive (Gilbert and Gubar). Each of these juxtapositions is indicative of a patriarchal system of control that invites images of captivity, of being locked in. Even the name itself, as previously stated, is an allusion to enclosure or confinement; a woman deemed mad locked away in the attic—an allusion to Brontë's *Jane Eyre*.

Much like Woolf's "lock on the door," imagery of the lock represents more than just the physical lock itself. Women's need to lock others out and lock themselves in rather than being locked out or locked in without control is represented by Woolf's lock on the door—it matters who keeps the key. The lock represents "the power to think for oneself" when given the financial "power to contemplate" (Woolf 89). the importance of the concept of space itself is apparent in the constant use of special imagery throughout *AROO* and the ways in which Woolf transitions from "the Lock"—a representation of confinement and control—being a means of control over women to a symbol of women gaining power over themselves and gaining the ability to lock others out. It is an evolution from being controlled to the ability to control; it is autonomy.

Conclusion

As has been stated, Woolf's solutions to the struggle of women writers in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries center around access to a room with a lock on the door that women can control. Specifically, as Woolf concludes: £500 a year and a room with a lock on the door, the £500 standing for the power to contemplate and the lock representing the power to think for oneself. This paper argued: that while Woolf famously called for women writers to have "a room of their own," my analysis of Woolf's history, *A Room of One's Own*, and other contemporary works demonstrates the necessity of women to have control over their own work, environment and authorial identity symbolized for Woolf by a lock on the door of the room. This thesis defined the Capital "A" Author and its impact on the anxiety of Authorship women faced, explored how Woolf looked at the history of women's struggles through her fictional narratives, identified the impact of these struggles on women's authorship often resulting in anger and anonymous writings, and highlighted the importance of "The Room" and "The Lock" to both Woolf's thesis and my own.

The implications of Woolf's *AROO* are relevant today because even though there has been major progress in the availability of formal education and financial independence that Woolf identifies as a solution to women's struggles to become Authors, many women still struggle to have a space to themselves, free from the expectations of the domestic sphere. This is incredibly evident in the struggles of working women during COVID, who were expected to fulfill their domestic responsibilities while simultaneously being in professional fields. As Boston University's Center for Work and Family highlights, "[c]ompared to fathers, mothers [were] 2x more likely to be responsible for homeschooling" and "3x more likely to take on the majority of housework and caregiving." This led to women "report[ing] consistent feelings of burnout and exhaustion, lower productivity, and a negative impact of working remotely on their career progression" (Center for Work and Family). Parallelling Woolf's thesis on the interrupted lives of women, Jennifer Senior states in "Camp Is Canceled. Three More Months of Family Time. Help," [women] need a stretch of continuous, unmolested time to do good work. Instead, [their] day is a torrent of interruptions, endlessly divided and subdivided, a Zeno's paradox of infinite tasks". This primary source account reflects the continuing struggles of women to have a room of their own free from the restrictions of the domestic sphere.

Additionally, while there is no longer a tradition of aggressive discouragement towards women becoming Author's today, the genres women often turn to and dominate in the literary field are severely looked down upon, specifically romance novels. The reputation of the romance genre is succinctly described by British popular scholar Joanne Hollows who states that "romantic fiction is [seen as] 'formulaic,' 'trivial' and 'escapist' […] each of these charges dating back to at least the middle of the nineteenth century, each of them part of a profoundly gendered anxiety over mass culture more generally" (qtd in Frantz and Selinger 2-3). Much like

the nineteenth-century perceptions of immoral women becoming popular writers and entering the public sphere Woolf emphasized in *AROO*, the perception of the immorality of women's literature has found a new target, romance novels. Maya Rodale, in *Dangerous Books for Girls: The Bad Reputation of Romance Novels*, when listing the variety of reasons women's romance novels are looked down upon or thought of as "dangerous books" states that it may be "because women become the author-ity"; she argues "that women read[ing] and writ[ing] these novels has [led] to the notion of romances being 'women's work' and has been devalued accordingly the same way as teachers, nurses and other 'typically female' dominated industries" (27-28). Rodale goes even further to highlight the reputation of romance novels and cites a survey she conducted to non-romance readers on their perceptions of romance literature. Here are just a few of the numerous negative comments she received: "fluff reading, not for very bright individuals"; "formulaic and generally mediocre writing"; "unrealistic. Lesser quality writing and vocabulary"; stuck in a rut"; "sorority girls or bored housewives" (32).

It is abundantly clear, that while women now have the ability to become Authors, and are able to gain financial and educational freedom, they are still fighting negative perceptions of their creative outputs. The struggle of women to work uninterrupted during the pandemic and the consistent negative connotations of romance novels emphasizes the need for further advancement and progress in the modern perception of women and fiction.

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