

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION AND SUMMARIZATION

"Literature adds to reality, it does not simply describe it. It enriches the necessary competencies that daily life requires and provides; and in this respect, it irrigates the deserts that our lives have already become" - C. S. Lewis

The aforementioned words by C.S.Lewis aptly exemplify the role of literature in bringing out various aspects of human life. In this study which demanded to study the perception of various English literature writers about education, the portrayal of education during different ages and periods, the utopian ideas of education, the depiction of education system in the fictional world and to what extent it accumulates with the real practice of education, the changes that were observed in the education of women, the atrocities faced and the struggle brought out by women to get themselves educated in the early 19th century are taken into consideration.

Talking about the utopian idea of education as found in English literature, we can conclude that Thomas More is one of the distinguished utopian writers who attached great importance to education. To Öztürk (2006:161) More considers education in Utopia to serve a dual purpose. He does not only assume that education encourages and protects the moral character of people and society but also believes that education is an objective in itself for material fulfillment. More views education as a vital method to produce behavioral changes in man. In Utopia, education is seen as a way to eliminate an action against the state and the socialization to be gained through education becomes an effective element for the continuation of the state. This shows that he sees education not only as a means to eliminate ignorance but also to improve congenital weaknesses and to suggest moral values.

Additionally, More believes that education is a continuous process lasting a lifetime. He advocated universal and compulsory education in the sixteenth century, an aim we still have yet to realize today. He thinks education itself has a practical value and is the right of all citizens. For education to be truly effective it must be taught in the student's native language, adequate leisure time must be given for the pursuit of higher education and games should be incorporated in the learning process. More claims that since education is the key

to a moral and virtues society a system of reward and punishment helps maintain a crime free society.

Today, in the 21st century, when society is engaged in a search for new educational ambitions and strategies we would profit if we turn to some of our utopian writers in order to benefit from their thinking upon this subject. Philosophers and scholars throughout history have discussed the need for new purposes and new technological and social improvements, but very few of these critics have stated specifically what form these new improvements should take. In Thomas More's *Utopia*, More does not simply critique society and education but he takes it a step further and outlines for his readers not only the pitfalls that need improvement but he gives us the required steps to achieve the improvements and the standards upon which to measure its success. Taking all this into consideration, the aims and principles of education underlined by Thomas More in his powerful work "Utopia" will undoubtedly inspire current and future education philosophy.

Moreover, while analyzing the fictional world of education and the real world of education, the prominent writer who was studied and taken into consideration was Thomas Hardy.

Thomas Hardy illustrates the complexities that surrounded the debate on educational reform leading up to 1870. Hardy accomplishes this by presenting the contrast between a practical and uneducated lower-class, and an idealistic and educated middle-class. Although, Clym Yeobright's intention to raise the intellectual level of the heath people to a serene comprehensiveness is sorely out of place for a people whose profession requires only rigorous physical effort, Hardy does not dismiss the ideal of an educated population, nor does he deny the need for it in an age of advancing technology (III, ch. 1). The heath people represent that class of citizens for whom education is still uncommon, but not so useless as to be completely ignored. In contrast, Clym is a man who cannot imagine a fulfilled life without education. He does not represent a leisure class, but rather, Clym is a product of an education similar to Hardy's, and which a middle-class boy could expect prior to educational reform. Clym's education is described: At the death of his father a neighboring gentleman had kindly undertaken to give the boy a start (III, ch. 1) Thus, Clym was a product of a system of philanthropy. Clym comes home with the intent of returning the good will he had received, but on a massive scale, and therefore makes the argument for a modernized system of standardized education. Hardy makes no last stand in favor or against reform; he allows the heath people's sensibility to accompany Clym's drive to uplift the lives of his fellow citizens.

Furthermore, an insight into women education is powerfully visible through the works of Virginia Woolf. Robin Hayes provides a brief take on the modern state of formal education in her piece *Virginia Woolf's Treatise On Education: 'Three Guineas'* wherein she argues that Woolf's ideas about educational reform have never been fully realized. She states that while education has been reformed many times since Woolf's era, "Woolf would describe present day American formal education as 'ajar', neither completely open nor completely closed to women . . . Schools provide numerous types of obstacles for females . . . [they do] not bar women from attending, but... also [do] not embrace their presence" (83-4). Hayes recognizes the many changes in the world of formal education but believes that these changes are not enough because they do not address the larger systemic problem that Woolf describes: the educational establishment was started by and remains controlled by patriarchy. Due to this larger issue, "schools reflect society's values. Racism, sexism, classism and other forms of oppression are expressed in schools because they are present in the society at large" (84). Hayes does believe, though, that there is hope for the educational system and that all they need to do, they can find in *Three Guineas*. She says, "Nearly every page speaks to the way in which education contributes to oppression and how that can be corrected" (84). Hayes feels that though schools do reinforce and strengthen gender roles as explained by Woolf but schools also have the power to change gender roles (113). Ultimately, Hayes believes that there is hope for

modern education as long as it approaches education from an egalitarian standpoint that actively tries to include and embrace women and all other minority groups. She concludes, "The state of formal education . . . is not ideal, but improvement can only occur through persistent . . . changes in practice . . . Improving education is a worthwhile and necessary endeavor" (118). Through concentrated effort toward a more equal educational environment, true educational reform on a deep level is possible, as long as those who seek it are committed to it. A modern example of the application of Woolf's ideas is the story of Malala Yousafzai. Malala is the daughter of a teacher and school owner in the Swat region of Pakistan. Despite having grown up in a culture where women are not typically educated, Malala attended school since she was a young child and, because of open minded, educated parents was never made to feel restricted by her gender. After the September 11th attacks and the rise of the Taliban in her home country, restrictions on girls' education increased, and women were expected to stay indoors unless accompanied by a male relative at all times. Rather than have her freedoms restricted, Malala continued to attend school and began traveling the country with her father while giving speeches about the importance of education. She eventually began speaking about the topic to major news outlets like BBC. She also wrote a blog for BBC about the everyday threats girls face pursuing education like school bombings and

occasional attacks, but she wrote under the safety of a pen name (Yousafzai, 154). She recalls an incident in which she knew she had to do something about educational equality: I saw a young girl who was selling oranges. She was scratching marks on a piece of paper with a pencil to account for the oranges she had sold, as she could not read or write. I took a photo of her and vowed I would do everything in my power to help educate girls just like her. That's the war I was going to fight (217). After a few years of activism and her father's refusal to hide their identities because he believed it implied that they had something to hide rather than being the advocates for education that they were, Malala was tracked down by radical Taliban soldiers and shot in the head on the bus on her way home from school at the age of fifteen. She recovered from the attack, and after weeks in a coma, she and her family relocated to Birmingham, England, as they feared more attacks by the Taliban. Though known for her modernist fictional works like *To the Lighthouse* and *Mrs. Dalloway*, Virginia Woolf's highly insightful nonfiction works give stunning insight into her complex views on the education of women. Although Woolf stood for educational equality and believed men and women must start on the same footing to achieve the same quality of life, she did not believe that men's education is appropriate for women because it has been founded on the ideals of patriarchy. Woolf believed that education was an extension of the masculine perception of violence and that its sole purpose was to teach men how to participate in war. Though founded on the Greek principle of liberal education, the educational system had strayed from its romanticized beginnings and served only as a tool to indoctrinate young men and force them to fit into their prescribed role in patriarchal society. In turn, this type of education could never be appropriate for women because it was founded on an ideology that forced women into private roles such as the wife and the mother. Solely from these roles, a woman cannot flourish; she is not free. Woolf thought for women to lead fulfilling and self-actualizing lives outside of their prescribed gender roles, the educational system must be burned down and built over again in a more egalitarian way. Woolf believed this restructuring of education will not only benefit women but promote world peace. Contemporaries of Woolf, such as Simone de Beauvoir, corroborated these ideas. Modern critics have agreed education still needs to be reformed even to this day to combat the institutionalized sexism and, in turn, its inherent racism, classism, and general exclusion of all those who do not fit into the patriarchal role. Woolf believed women could not be self-actualized and fulfilled individuals unless they had access to this type of reformed, egalitarian education. Hope remains, though, for the future of education and for the women of the future in individuals like Malala Yousafzai who fight tirelessly for every person's right to an equal education that promotes peace and cooperation.

Critics have made observations about the state of education for women. Marta Szczepaniak notes in her article "Liberalism and Feminism in Education," that "education is one of the factors that gives women an opportunity to escape from the gender roles assigned to them, and it provides them with appropriate tools indispensable for living autonomously with freedom of choice" (268). This argument is similar to that of Woolf's views expressed throughout her fiction and non-fiction, but also stresses the modification of educational tradition in order to accommodate women: ". . . There is inequality for women in... education as it supports patriarchy... policy and practice in education must be stressed which diminish inequity and inequality... women should be encouraged to participate and establish their priorities in all educational groups" (268). Szczepaniak's assertion that the state of the educational establishment at present does not effectively accommodate the needs of young women seeking to be educated is reflected in Woolf's non-fiction. Though the current educational practice does not effectively accommodate women, when it does it will be the key to women's liberation and world peace. The lack of accommodation is highlighted as Woolf ponders the benefits of a male education for women though she knows that it is inadequate. Woolf believes "much of what took place in male education does not apply to women. Much of male education was designed to brand men as superior" (Hayes 21). Barry Turner notes similarly that "educationists talk favorably of the need to create equality of opportunity" and that historically "with reforms in higher education and training of teachers, standards of school instruction improved immensely" (8-9, 147). The types of reforms Turner calls for are delineated by Woolf years earlier in *Three Guineas* where she addresses the fundamental problem with the existing liberal education described by Szczepaniak. The answers to many questions raised by modern scholarship about educational equality can be found in or are approached by *Three Guineas* and *A Room of One's Own*.

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