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AN ANALYSIS OF MARGARET FULLER'S WOMEN IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY IN ITS HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL CONTEXT

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this dissertation is to analyze the situation of women in the nineteenth century in the United States of America by analyzing Margaret Fuller's *Woman in the Nineteenth Century*. Firstly, the readers will find a summary about the historical framework of that period. It highlights two important facts such as the American Revolution and the American Civil War, and the consequences they brought to the society. Afterwards, they will find an analysis of feminism in the XIX century that emphasizes the situation of women and the goals they achieved. Subsequently, there is an introduction about Fuller's life and work as well as an analysis of the previously-mentioned work that highlights the main ideas that the author had about different aspects of the society that concerned the woman in different fields as work, economy or home, amongst others.

Keywords: American Civil War, American Revolution, feminism, Margaret Fuller, nineteenth century, women, women's rights.

RESUMEN

El propósito de este trabajo es analizar la situación de la mujer del siglo XIX en América analizando la obra de Margaret Fuller, *La Mujer en el siglo XIX*. En primer lugar, los lectores encontrarán un resumen sobre la situación histórica de la época destacando dos hechos importantes como son la Revolución Americana y la Guerra Civil Americana, así como las consecuencias que supusieron para la sociedad. Seguidamente encontrará un análisis del feminismo en el siglo XIX que se centra en la situación de las mujeres y en los objetivos que alcanzaron. Posteriormente, encontrarán una introducción sobre la vida y la obra de Fuller así como un análisis de la obra previamente mencionada en la cual aparecen las ideas principales de la autora sobre diferentes aspectos de la sociedad ligados a la mujer en diferentes campos como el trabajo, la economía o el hogar entre otros.

Palabras clave: Guerra Civil Americana, Revolución Americana, feminismo, Margaret Fuller, siglo XIX, mujeres, derechos de las mujeres.

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1. INTRODUCTION

In this dissertation, I am going to analyze the situation of women in the nineteenth century as explained by the American author Margaret Fuller.

There are several reasons why I have chosen this topic. It is my view that, this topic is very relevant in our actual society because women have to continue to struggle to obtain equal rights as men. Although our predecessors fought to gain some privileges, nowadays, there is not a total equality between men and women.

This topic is going to be focused in the nineteenth century in America. I have chosen this period and society because in our undergraduate studies, we have learnt much about the situation of British women in the eighteenth century, but in the case of women in the following period in America, we have not learnt as much. We know a lot about women in the eighteenth century, and the situations they had to live through, together with the position they held in the society which meant they were very submissive. So, in order to know more about women in the nineteenth century and their advances, I am going to explore their struggle during this century highlighting the rights that nowadays we can enjoy, as for example, the right to vote.

I wish to highlight the values that all these women had alongside the courage they fought with in order to change their position in the society. It is important to continue struggling for new rights and to gain the equality between both sexes, male and female. It is important to remember all the things our predecessors changed, so for this reason, we need to continue to further advance woman's rights.

Women were nothing in society and they had no rights to anything so, if they got new purposes with a worst position than we have now, we can achieve more rights to have true equality. It is important to mention that without women there would be no men.

I have several objectives that I want to achieve with this essay. First, I would like to show how the society of this period was in order to understand the position of women. Another objective is to know more about feminism and the achievements that women achieved with their effort. Another important aim is to know more about nineteenth-

century women in America and lastly but most important, my aim is to show that if all these women were able to obtain all the changes they achieved, with less opportunities than we have now, then we continue to struggle to get more laws in favor of women and ultimately achieve equality between men and women.

This dissertation is going to be structured in different sections in order to explain the topic I am going to study more clearly.

In order to do so, I am going to provide a section in which the historical framework of the nineteenth century is explained. In this section, I am going to talk about how society emphasized mainly the period between the two relevant wars which are the American Revolution and the American Civil war. Furthermore, I hope to highlight different aspects of the religion people practiced and the slavery which was an important fact in the history of the United States of America. Besides, I intend to look at the economic situation of the society and other aspects of USA life during this period. I believe that it is important to start this essay with this explanation in order to improve the understanding of the society of the nineteenth century.

After the historical framework, this section will deal with feminism in the nineteenth century. Here, I will explain different aspects of that society relating to the position of women. Within this part, different themes will arise, such as the position of women in their home, in the society, in different fields such as education, politics and religion. These points will contain some information about the achievements that women of the nineteenth century achieved through their perseverance and consistency such as the right to vote. The changes they obtained will be only briefly explained as they were fully accepted in the twentieth century.

The following section of the essay will be considered the most important part because it will be related to the life of the American author I am going to analyze, Margaret Fuller and her work *Woman in the Nineteenth Century*. This part will be divided into different points. Firstly, I am going to explain some aspects of Margaret Fuller's life. That is, who she was, some important things she did during her life related to the feminism. Then, the second sub-chapter will deal with her work previously mentioned where I hope to explain the purpose she had when she wrote it. Finally, the last part of this sub-chapter

will be the part in which I am going to study her work explaining all the ideas she had and what she thought about the situation in which women were forced to live.

In order to write this essay, I have read different books, webpages and articles. The main books I have used to do this research paper are: *Battle Cry of Freedom* by James McPherson (2003), *Empire of Liberty* by Gordon S. Wood (2011), *The American Revolution* by Colin Bonwick (2005), *Women in the Nineteenth Century* (1998) by Margaret Fuller (1810-1850), and the introduction to Fuller's *El Gran Proceso Judicial: El Hombre Frente a los Hombres, La Mujer Frente a Las Mujeres* written by Patricia Ard (1996). The first three books have been useful because they provide us detailed information about the American Civil War and the American Revolution, the society of those periods. The first book of Margaret Fuller is very important because this essay is focused on that book, and it provides the readers information about the situation of women in the nineteenth century as its title says. Finally, the last book, especially the introduction, is useful to know more about Fuller's life.

2. HISTORICAL FRAMEWORK

Before I start to develop this essay, I think it is important to know more about the American society of the nineteenth century. Regarding this historical section, it is important to establish the life of Margaret Fuller between two outstanding wars since this research paper is going to be focused on the period in which she lived.

One of them is the American Revolution which took place from 1775 to 1783 and the second one is the American Civil War from 1861 to 1865. She was born in 1810 so the first war is previous to her birth and the second war is subsequent to her death in 1850. With these wars, we can know how people lived at the end of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth century and subsequently how things changed.

The American Revolution meant the birth of a new nation. According to Colin Bonwick, this war "is superficially well known but inadequately understood."¹ This war conformed to the thirteen American Colonies which became independent from Great Britain and created a new nation, the United States of America. George Washington was appointed major of the American army who fought British soldiers amongst others. On July 4, 1776 the Declaration of the Independence was written by Thomas Jefferson. During this year, Britain was defeated and a year after, America obtained the victory in Saratoga. In 1783, England and the United States signed the peace in the Treaty of Paris where England accepted the independence of the United States and recognized its rights over its territories².

The construction of a state was a difficult task because everybody had to agree in order to establish a state model. Problems appeared because the society was divided. On the one hand, the colonies of the South were dominated by landowners who lived in mansions worked by black slaves. On the other hand, the colonies of the North were controlled by the bourgeois and farming owners. The Southern ideas were more conservative while the ideas of the Northern were more radical based on the Illustration.

¹ Bonwick, Colin. *The American Revolution*. (Houndmills: Palgrave McMillan, 2005), 1

² Connolly, Sergio. *Revolucion Americana. Economia, Guerra, Emigraciones Y Paz*. 2016. Web.

In 1787, some representatives decided to draft a Constitution and to reach an agreement. This Constitution was based on the principles of equality and freedom. In spite of the declaration of the rights or the proclamation of equality and freedom, not all the inhabitants of the new American states were benefited. For example, the black slaves and the American indigenous were not considered citizen. In the case of women, they were not recognized as citizens and they remained uninvolved in that process. Furthermore, the slavery was legal and society had to wait to the American Civil War to abolish it.

This situation provoked many problems which the new regime faced. This decade of the 1780s was known as a 'Critical Period' as Bonwick states in his book. Some of the consequences this war provoked was related to economy. With the end of the war, there came an economic depression and the Congress was constantly dealing with many financial problems. Besides, the society was involved in the exchange of products with foreign countries, but now with the independence, the relations with some countries were strained and the economy was decreasing.

Although in this period, women were not recognized as citizens and they had no rights, they were involved in this revolutionary war. They worked as nurses, cooks, maids or even as soldiers and spies. While men were in the war, women had to assume the economy of their homes and they had to work in order to support their families. Other women worked as nurses in the army camps. However, the most common roles for women in this war were maids, laundry workers, cooks or sewing for the army. It was something strange to see women in battle fields. It is important to say that although women were not allowed in the army, there were some women who enlisted dressing themselves as men such as the figure of Deborah Sampson³ who after the war published her memories about her experiences in the war⁴.

³ Deborah Sampson Gannet (1760 - 1827). A women with a record of military combat experience in the American Revolution.

⁴ Brooks, Rebecca. *The Roles Of Women In The Revolutionary War*. History of Massachusetts. 2013. Web.

After this Revolutionary War, there arose the American Civil War whose main objective was to fight for the union of the country. Basically between the North, and the Independence of the confederate states that was the South.

There were several causes of this war but one of the most important was slavery. In the North, the population was fighting in order to abolish it while in the South, they were against the abolition. For this, there was a conflict between Northern and Southern territories to decide the future of the slavery. The citizens of the South were in favor of slavery because they had a mainly agrarian economy which was carried out by slaves. The situation of the slaves changed when Abraham Lincoln won the elections since one of his main objectives was to abolish the slavery. Two years after the beginning of the war, he presented the Emancipation Proclamation⁵ (1863) announcing that all the slaves would be liberated.

This proclamation was an important fact in the war because it changed the meaning of the battle into a battle for human freedom. In 1850, Abraham Lincoln had said that it was "an unqualified evil to the negro, the white man, and the State." Besides, he declared that "he had no purpose, directly or indirectly to interfere with slavery in the States where it exists." It is said that the emancipation was seen as a military necessity which became increasingly persuasive.⁶

In the case of the economy, despite the Southern states being demolished as a consequence of the Civil war, there was a quick economic recuperation and this society became recognized as a place of global wealth and power in a very short period of time. There were many changes in the society, for example, people started to move from the farms to the cities and the farmers started to specialize in the production of crops for the market instead of home consumption.

Besides, there was a transformation which had an impact on a group of political women. Due to this, there were many changes as for example, the role of women changed from producers to consumers although there were still slave women working in the fields,

⁵ Basler et al, Roy P. *Abraham Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation*. 2016. Web.

⁶ McPherson, James M. *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era*. (New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 55.

mainly collecting cotton. Women took on new roles than before and found careers as seamstresses, shoe blinders, or milliners while other continued working as servants or laundresses.

By the middle of the century, one quarter of all employees were women. However, only a twenty five percent of white women worked outside of their home before they got married decreasing to five percent after marriage. This decrease was due to a patriarchal domination of wives because when they had a husband, they were expected to dedicate their lives to their children, husbands and their domestic labors.

Regarding religion, it played a very important role in the nineteenth century and the United States were a society characterized for being a Calvinist country. Calvin's main idea believed that God was the origin of everything, Nevertheless, this was not the only religion and they assimilated ideas of different religions. Furthermore, some religious movements appeared as a focus point as was the case of the Second Great Awakening. In this movement, we can find some important figures as Charles Finney, who created a new way of believing in religion and who was a main defender of abolitionism. He tried to fight against the bad industrial conditions of the middle classes and against the slavery.

The Second Great Awakening remarked mainly the social situation, the liberty of slaves, and the bettering of women in the church and in the society. James McPherson suggests an interesting question about the slavery: "if all men were created equal and endowed by the creator with certain inalienable rights including liberty and the pursuit of happiness, what could justify the enslavement of several millions of these men (and women)?"⁷ During the Revolution, nearly 65 percent of members of the churches in New England were women, and then, after the revolution, this percentage of women increased progressively.

In this period, things started to improve and the United States became a country much more developed. Besides, the economic development was the consequence of the

⁷ McPherson, James M. *Battle Cry of Freedom :The Civil War Era*. (New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 7.

growth of the middle classes, the expansion of a superior education and an increase in mass consumption.

This new society created a new prototype of the middle classes who could enjoy a lot of privileges that they could not enjoy before. The population that lived in the cities had a different and freer mentality than the people who lived in the mountains. The latter had a mentality bound to the ideals of the religion and were more conservative than the former. This could be one of the reasons why people started to move from the rural places to the cities.

Although these advances and achievements in the society of the nineteenth century were good, we do not know to any extent how life for woman changed. In order to know more about the situation for women, it is important to read the following section which explains with more details their position, their situation in society, and other important aspects relating to feminism, and the changes they achieved thanks to their effort fighting against all the barriers they had.

3. FEMINISM IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

Before starting this section, it is important to say that women do not recognize that all the opportunities we have nowadays are due to the courageous fight of the feminist women and their achievements in the previous centuries. Feminism is mostly known as a movement from the mid nineteenth century to the end of the First World War, but we can also find some antecedent in previous periods as for example, with the French Revolution when it was accepted that equality and the same rights for everybody existed.

In the United States of America, the rights of women had a long and constant history. With the American Revolution, women started to fight for the independence of their country together with men and this led to them being allowed to intervene in politics and social issues. Women started to talk in public defending their rights and the rights of the slaves.

With the progression and promotion of women, not only was their situation enhanced, but also their education, their health, family life, their economic power and so on. These advantages show that inasmuch as women prosper, their family, community and their nation also prospered.

Indeed it is widely accepted that the birth of women's rights movement was related to the movement of abolition and it was supported by many American women. At the first half of the nineteenth century, women were not allowed to have the same liberties as men had legally, in the church or to hold public offices. Women could not vote nor go to university or simply work. Besides, if they were married, they could not divorce their husband nor to have custody of their children.⁸

Before the nineteenth century, American women received less formal education and information than men and for this reason, there was a higher percentage of illiteracy in women than in men. In 1850, this situation changed and they started to go to elementary schools and many women achieved literacy in the same proportions than men. James McPherson argues that Oberlin College admitted women and men soon after its founding in the year 1833. It is important to say that this college was known as the

⁸ Morse, Jane. *Los Derechos De La Mujer En Estados Unidos*. IIP Digital. 2016. Web.

pioneer of "the joint education of the sexes."⁹ One of the main objectives of this school was the elevation of the female characters. Due to the changing situation in education, some women writers appeared and wrote books and articles about homemaking, cooking, and child-rearing among other related subjects. Besides, we can find American men writers such as Nathaniel Hawthorne who was a feminist influenced by Margaret Fuller, who wrote some novels related to the topic of feminism as *The Scarlet Letter* (1850).¹⁰ Now, as women could write, speak, teach and so on, they started to ask themselves why they could not be paid equally to men for carrying out the same job.

In the case of the family's structure, men had the power over their wives and women had to be submissive. In this century, things started to change and the conscience of people also started to change. Gordon S. Wood has pointed out that "marriage ought never to be considered as a contract between a superior and an inferior, but a reciprocal union of interests, an implied partnership of interests."¹¹ The laws changed and women had more power to decide by themselves, they gained autonomy and legal recognition of their rights to divorce. Women could now make contracts, negotiate, or do business without the presence of their husbands because they were becoming more independent and stronger women.

Although most Americans understood the word 'rights' as the rights of men, there were people who started to understand it as the rights for both sexes.

In England, we can find an important manifesto written by the feminist Mary Wollstonecraft about the rights of women, but before she wrote her book, there was another woman who wrote a similar feminist essay in 1790, a century before. This woman was Judith Sargent Murray and she had to write under the pseudonym of Constantia in order not to be discriminated due to her being a woman. The essay she

⁹ Kirwin, Pamela, Alexandra Weil, and Roland M. Baumann. *Beyond Coeducation: Oberlin College And Women's History*. 2016. Web.

¹⁰ Mitchell, Thomas R. *Hawthorne's Fuller Mystery*. (Amherst: University of Massachusetts, 1999).

¹¹ Wood, Gordon S. *Empire of Liberty :A History of the Early Republic, 1789 -1815*. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 496.

published was *On the Equality of the Sexes* in which she said that she was against the idea that women were not equal with men intellectually or in all the areas of knowledge.

Now, in the nineteenth century, it was still somewhat strange to hear people talk about the rights of women but the society was ready for future changes. People started to talk about the equality and the rights of women as something acceptable. However, these rights could not affect the function of women as mothers nor their position in a traditional family. The argument for women and their roles in the home became confusing for them because they were related to the household chores and the education of their children. In this issue, society was divided; on the one hand, there were people who thought that the rights of women were actual duties such as the responsibility of taking care of their children and their husbands. On the other hand, other people thought that the equality of the rights of women and men only could have a spiritual and social sense. All these barriers were created by chauvinist societies which imposed the rules above women.

Fortunately, there were people who fought against those barriers and Gordon S. Wood states that men were not superior than women since we could find more intelligent women than some men in the nineteenth century. Besides, he also states that women were in a better position than men to solve the problems between the different political parties. In fact, it was thought that women were more capable than men socially and they had particular virtues to create affective relationships and more morality in the country.¹²

In Gordon's book, we also find an example of a feminist whose name is Priscilla Mason. She thought that women not only were equal with men in the political issues on public acts, but also they were superior than men because many of them had succeeded in spite of men's efforts to stop their success in the society.

Due to all these efforts and achievements, in 1848 in a Methodist chapel, the first convention about the women's rights took place in Seneca Falls, a New York village. There, women and men debated about the civil and legal situation of women. One day after, the meeting concluded with a declaration that became the first document in favor

¹² Wood, Gordon S. *Empire of Liberty :A History of the Early Republic, 1789 -1815*. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press. 2011), 495-507.

of feminism in the United States of America. The Declaration of Seneca Falls was a document based on the Declaration of Independence of the United States where they denounced the restrictions on what women were subjected to.

The leader of this meeting was Elizabeth Cady Stanton. She was always sensitive towards the social injustices that women had to endure in that period. When she arrived to Seneca Falls from Boston, she met Lucretia Mott in an abolitionist convention where women only could listen but not offer their opinion. Both ladies were compassionate towards abolitionism and also women's rights. Lucretia supported the ideas of Elizabeth immediately. The meeting lasted two days and there were many people, including men, who debated the main problems that women had in these years. Definitely, women were subordinated to their fathers and husbands and that situation needed to stop. Although, there were many men, everyone was accepted to the meeting.

The Seneca Falls or the Declaration of Sentiments, as they used to called it, concluded with the signatures of 68 women and 32 men. This declaration established that women had to be equal to men and therefore avail of the same rights. It became an important feminism and American suffragist text. A representative example of this declaration can be seen in the following quotation:

We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men and women are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness; that to secure these rights governments are instituted, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed. Whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of those who suffer from it to refuse allegiance to it, and to insist upon the institution of a new government, laying its foundation on such principles, and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their safety and happiness¹³.

With all these updated declarations and regulations, women got their rights and a century later, in 1920 with the amendment of the constitution of the United States, women finally got the right to vote. The economy also was important in order to change the situation of women in the American society and to promote movements that were aimed to obtain more rights for them.

¹³ Stanton and Anthony. *Declaration Of Sentiments And Resolutions, Seneca Falls: Papers Online*. 2016. Web.

In order to protect women's rights and to ensure that women were respected, some activists created the National Organization for Women (NOW) in 1966. NOW is the greatest feminist organization in the United States and its main objective was to create anti-discrimination laws. Then, in 1970, new laws related to women were proposed and approved. Some of these laws were more liberal in the reproductive option (1973); protection of the minimum salary to housewives (1974); prohibition of the discrimination in the work against pregnant women (1978); provision of federal funds to the care of children (1990) protection against violence (1994), and so on. These laws were recognized a century later so, we are not going to talk more about them because this essay is mainly focused in the women of the nineteenth century¹⁴.

I have summarized American women's struggle to change society and their bid for equality in the economic and politic spheres of the nation, but this struggle does not finish here. In fact, women had to continue struggling to obtain more equal rights. Another thing they wanted to achieve was to combine the home and family duties with their professional work. Many women had children and they had to choose between their career or their children because they were not given the option to combine both. Unfortunately, this problem still can be seen in our society today, even after many years of the struggle for women's rights.

Within the topic of feminism in America, it is important to mention some important feminist authors such as Kate Chopin or Charlotte Perkins Gilman. They were authors who reflected in their works the situation of women very clearly. In the first case, Kate Chopin wrote an important work called *The Awakening* which had a great plot. Although this work had good literary qualities, it suffered censorship and rejection from the critics of that period because it had a plot in favor of the sexual feminine emancipation. On the other hand, Charlotte Perkins Gilman wrote another work which had a relevant argument. Her work was *The Yellow Wallpaper* and it was a story told in a first person about a woman who was suffering from a mental illness, something that

¹⁴ See more information in Breckinridge, Sophonisba P. *Women in the Twentieth Century: A Study of Their Political, Social and Economic Activities*. (New York: Arno Press, 1972).

was very common during that period¹⁵. The protagonist is a depressed and a secluded woman and she had been dispossessed of her main hobby which was her writing whereby she expressed her feeling and disappointments.

In this section, we have known the main facts of the feminism in the United States of America and in the following section, we are going to learn more about what it was like to live during this time. We will also analyze the Margaret Fuller's book *Woman in the Nineteenth Century*. I would like to finish this point providing a quote from Elizabeth Cady Stanton: "We cannot accept any code or creed that uniformly defrauds woman of all her natural rights."¹⁶

¹⁵ Tasca, Cecilia et al. *Women And Hysteria In The History Of Mental Health*. Clinical Practice and Epidemiology in Mental Health. 2012. Web

¹⁶ Stanton, Elizabeth Cady. *The Woman's Bible*. (New York: Arno Press, 1972).

4. MARGARET FULLER

4.1. LIFE

As Patricia Ard has explained in the introduction of the book *El Gran Proceso Judicial :El Hombre Frente a Los Hombres, La Mujer Frente a Las Mujeres*.¹⁷

Sarah Margaret Fuller, known as the first American journalist, was born on May 23 1810 in Cambridgeport, Massachusetts. She was the eldest daughter of Timothy Fuller and Margaret Crane. Her father decided that she had to be educated as a boy so Margaret received an education different to the one that women of this period received¹⁸. In 1817, she was sent to Port School and two years later to a women's school in Boston, where she realized that she was different to her classmates.

Her life was very difficult. When she was 25 years old, her father died and she had to deal with her family so she started to work in a school of Boston as a teacher. Furthermore, Margaret started to organize women's meetings where women could debate about different issues. During the course of these meetings, Margaret began to change the education of women of her time. This led to many women joining feminist movements.

After this, in 1839, she started to work in *The Dial*, a transcendentalist journal as an editor. There, she wrote articles related to women, their rights and the social situation they had. All these articles were collected and published in a book called *Woman in the Nineteenth Century*. This work was one of the first feminist works and it was an important reference to the movements related to the rights of women. Four years later, she started to work in *New York Tribune* as an editor again. In this journal, she had many opportunities and she was sent to Europe as a correspondent being the first woman to carry out this work. She traveled mainly around England and Italy. In London, she fell in love with Giovanni Angelo Ossoli and they had a son.

¹⁷ Fuller, Margaret. *El Gran Proceso Judicial :El Hombre Frente a Los Hombres, La Mujer Frente a Las Mujeres*. Eds. Patricia Ard, and Carolina Muñoz-Torrero Villegas. (León: 1996), 9-22.

¹⁸ Ferrer, Sandra. *Mujeres En La Historia: La Primera Periodista De América, Margaret Fuller*. 2014. Web.

Everything was good for them but the things changed in 1850 when they decided to come back to the United States. They traveled in a boat which sank and the only survivor was their son Angelino. After their tragic end, Arthur, a brother of Margaret decided to compile all her writings and published them in order for people to learn more about his sister¹⁹.

After she died, Margaret Fuller was not forgotten and she became a very important figure in the history of American journalism because she was one of the first women who worked as a journalist according to Patricia Ard. Moreover, her career was also relevant because she was the first American female correspondent in Europe. Furthermore, Margaret created feminist groups for discussion and she defended the rights of women. If she had survived, she would have probably continued working for the rights of women and gained even more equality for them.

She had such an impact on different male authors who subsequently wrote about her none less than Emerson who lamented about her death and penned the following words in his diary:

“...whom I always admire, most revere when I nearest see, and sometimes love, -- yet whom I freeze, and who freezes me to silence, when we seem to promise to come nearest.” (...) “Last night a walk to the river with Margaret, and saw the moon broken in the water, interrogating, interrogating.” (...) “On Friday, July 19, Margaret dies on rocks of Fire Island Beach within sight of and within sixty rods of the shore. To the last her country proves inhospitable to her; brave, eloquent, subtle, accomplished, devoted, constant soul!...”²⁰

On the other hand, in the translated edition of Javier Alcoriza y Antonio Lastra, it stated that Poe said of her "few women could have written in the country and that no woman had published in the country except Margaret Fuller"²¹

¹⁹ Fuller, Margaret. *La Mujer En El Siglo XIX*. Eds. Javier Alcoriza, and Antonio Lastra (Valencia: 2009), 10-11.

²⁰ Emerson, Ralph Waldo. "Margaret Fuller". *Digital Emerson, A Collective Archive*. 2016. Web.

²¹ Fuller, Margaret. *La Mujer En El Siglo XIX*. Eds. Javier Alcoriza, and Antonio Lastra (Valencia: 2009), 19.

We can conclude that Margaret was not only important to all the women but also to men who admired her work and all the things she achieved. She gained the recognition as an important figure in the American cultural history and she is known as the first major female intellectual of America²².

4.2. WORK

Fuller wrote *The Great Lawsuit: Man versus Men, Woman versus Women* after obtaining her work in *The Dial* journal, where her first essay was published. The main topic of the essay is the fight to obtain equality between both sexes, male and female. This work is a great example about the different thoughts that a woman can provide to a chauvinist institution as *The Dial*. Although Fuller changed the name of this work into *Woman in the Nineteenth Century*, she preferred the first title because with it, she anticipated the twentieth century, a moment when the place of women was even more expanded in an effective way thanks to the claims interposed by women.²³

Besides, Margaret also says that many people think that in the marriage the man is the head of the home and the woman is the heart or the man is the poet and the woman is the poem. The problem is that women are seen as inferior people and men are seen as superior. Women did not need poetry or power to be happy but an intellectual and religious freedom.

It can be said that the work of Fuller has been a precursor of "Seneca Falls Declaration of Sentiments" (1848) and John Stuart Mill's "The Subjection of Women" (1869). Margaret was not alone during this century, many women joined her in order to reform the institutions of America such as education, marriage and literature amongst others.

²² Fuller, Margaret. *Woman in the Nineteenth Century :An Authoritative Text, Backgrounds, Criticism*. Ed. Larry J. Reynolds (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1998), 9.

²³ Fuller, Margaret. *El Gran Proceso Judicial :El Hombre Frente a Los Hombres, La Mujer Frente a Las Mujeres*. Eds. Patricia Ard, and Carolina Muñoz-Torrero Villegas. (León: 1996), 11.

Woman in the Nineteenth Century is a book in which Fuller analyzes the male thoughts to understand the behavior of women, their costumes, their role in a patriarchal society, and other aspects.

Now, I am going to analyze the book of this author in order to see what she is really defending in her work. I will be focusing on men, slavery, law, women in society, the opposition between men and women, the role of women in society, marriage, education, religion, specimen women and last but not least, men and women.

4.2.1. Men

The main issue this essay starts with is that men are an elevated figure and they govern the idea of the divine love. However, Margaret states that new times are coming and women and men could have full equality and the same rights, so women believed on a change.

In this society, the man is presented as an ideal person and everything what he does or thinks is perfect. They can find that perfection by means of different methods; some people think that it is found through the intelligence; others think that it can be found through the life or the experience, and finally, there are people who think that to acquire it, it is unnecessary as to have intelligence or experience will never do away with the benefits of choosing the right path.

Nevertheless, Fuller claims that men cannot be perfect because they are acting in the society with anger and a bad behavior towards women. She mentions a fragment of Louis Claude de Saint Martin (1743-1803) about how men should not be:

The ministry of man implies, that he must be filled from the divine fountains which are being engendered through all eternity so that, at the mere name of this Master, he may be able to cast all his enemies into the abyss; that he may deliver all parts of nature from the barriers that imprison them; that he may purge the terrestrial atmosphere from the poisons that infect it; that he may preserve the bodies of men from the corrupt influences that surround, and the maladies that afflict them; still more, that he may keep their souls pure from the malignant insinuations which pollute, and the gloom images that obscure them; that we may restore its serenity to the word, which false words of men till with mourning and sadness; that he may satisfy the desires

of the angels, who await from him the development of the marvels of nature; that, in fine, his world may be filled with God, as eternity is.²⁴

In spite of this, it is important to highlight that there were also men who recognized that women had not any true opportunity in the society, but in this case, the percentage of these men was lower.

4.2.2. Slavery

Fuller shows us an important example related to the African slaves. They were people who suffered too much due to the slavery but they defended the rights of women, being themselves the only ones who elevated their voices in defense of women. From my point of view, I think that this example is very important because although the slaves were considered inferior to the rest of people, they were the only people who dared to defend women in spite of the consequences it could bring for them. This attitude can be considered as a very honest and brave decision. Here, it is important to mention a quotation from Mary Astell, an author of the eighteenth century: "If all Men are born free, how is it all Women are born slaves?"²⁵

Furthermore, there were men who acted against women saying that they were the head and women were the heart as I mentioned at the beginning of this section. What this means is that they had to be submissive women. However, thanks to the support of other people, some women started to realize that they were able to be and to have even more than what they had or were at that moment. Furthermore, they also realized that if they fought against the barriers of the society, they would get what they wanted and their condition would improve.

Fuller also mentions that there was a huge amount of women who were sold and blemished as slaves for men. In this issue, she claims that the wickedness of men is the punishment of women. The female sex suffers every bad action that men develop

²⁴ Myerson, Joel. *Margaret Fuller: Essays on American Life and Letters*. (New Haven: College and UP, 1978), 88-89.

²⁵ Astell, Mary. *Political Writings*. Ed. Patricia Springborg . (Cambridge: 1996), 18.

against them and they cannot do anything. They have to bear the weight of a chauvinist society and they cannot say a word because they had not permission to do so or were ignored. Margaret shows herself very disgusted with this because she wished that all women were equal to men and they could live happily without slavery or oppression.

To all American women, Margaret recommends that women have to impose their respect and they do not have to be objects of adulation. The person who loves them needs to do it honestly and openly not with symbols of compliment. Here, Margaret highlights an idea of John Quincy Adams²⁶ who thought that the duty of the man was to love and reverence the other sex but not adulate it.²⁷ The compliment has to not be understood as proof of perfection.

4.2.3. Law

Men had many laws in their favor, so they were protected in the society. However, women had not law in their favor, so they had to do everything requested by the man. Nevertheless, there was a society which established that all men had to realize that women were the weaker figure so they needed laws to protect them and to help bring about a better life. In spite of being a chauvinist thought, women could start to have laws in their favor and this would bring great change for them.

The male part of the society thought that women could not intervene in the issues of the government because they were not able. Fortunately, this situation changed in the second half of the nineteenth century, when women started to organize themselves in groups to complain about their situation and entered into the public sphere by doing different activities such as social reform campaigns.

Due to all the situations, women found themselves in close links between the feminist movements and the slavery societies took place.

²⁶ John Quincy Adams (1767-1848), sixth president of the United States and son of the second president of the United States, John Adams (1735-1826)

²⁷ Fuller, Margaret. *La Mujer En El Siglo XIX*. Eds. Javier Alcoriza, and Antonio Lastra (Valencia: 2009), 146.

4.2.4. Women in Society

Fuller, in the name of all the women, claims that their preference was that all the barriers imposed by the society were destroyed and that both sexes were equal in all the issues. She also says that the humanity would become more mature when the liberty of woman was recognized as a right and not as a concession. Furthermore, women had to render account to only one man, which is God, and not to the men of society.

What women needed was to grow as nature does, discern as intelligence does, live freely and without obstacles as the soul does. This way, they could properly display all the powers and talents they had.

An example of a woman that Margaret explains is Miranda²⁸. She was a woman who had respect and good fortune due to the good manners she received from her father who believed in the equality of sexes. Margaret thinks that she is a great example to show that the restrictions about the different sexes were superfluous. Margaret believed that all women needed to make an effort to destroy all the restrictions in their lives so that they might gain their rightful freedom. Besides, Miranda was fortunate because men did not support her but neither opposed to her. For that, she states that she was a fortunate woman, something that it was not common in that period. She says to every woman that if they are sure of they want, they need to fight for it and she would be successful in obtaining it.

In spite of the problems of the society, this was a good advice for women and it motivated many of them to start their fight in order to achieve their objective.

4.2.5. Opposition Between Men and Women

Another aspect Fuller explains is that in the society when a woman succeeds, she is considered as a male soul. However, women were people with female souls and with their own abilities and thus, they were able to gain success in everything they wanted to

²⁸ Miranda is the *alter ego* of Margaret Fuller and also she is the female character of Shakespeare *The Tempest*. Her name means 'admirable'.

achieve. As women were even better in society than some men, they started to revolt and apply for male positions and were successful.

It is therefore important to emphasize that men always found rest in women, in the weaker sex, and for me, this is a bit contradictory because if women were the weaker sex, it is strange that men were relaxed and comfortable with women. This did not make sense and men refused to accept that they needed women to them relax.

Furthermore, there were men who were too chauvinist and they thought that women were only able to cook, clean, do the household chores and take care of the children. An example of this kind of mentality was Richter²⁹ who thought that one of the things women had to do was to cook something delicious for their husbands.

A woman who was an example of a heroine in a society governed by men was Emily Plater³⁰. She dealt with different attacks from men and she was refused her requests many times and therefore not allowed what she wanted. In spite of all these negative things, she continued with her objective.

Nonetheless, there was a minority of men who supported her but the percentage was low because men usually were selfish and stuck with each other and supported each other saying she was a hindrance. In spite of this, she never gave up but continued her cause for woman's freedom. Furthermore, it is important to say that women as Emily produced *super-women* that were able to fight for their own objectives. At the beginning, they were not as well-received as Emily was, but through time, their presence and contribution became more popular and more accepted.

4.2.6. Role of Woman in Society

Another issue Fuller deals with is about women as mothers and wives. She says that men provoked woman and made things bad for them. Furthermore, she also said that men are born of a woman and during their infancy they venerated them. So, if men

²⁹ Gerhard Richter (1932-nowadays), German artist from Dresden.

³⁰ Emily Plater (1806-1831). She was a Lithuanian woman who tried to liberate her country from the Russian domination.

venerate women during their childhood, they should continue to respect women during their lifetime. The influence of mothers to their children was to promote security and respectfulness. She believed that children needed to be educated in order to treat their mothers with respect but this would be lost if the children saw their father being disrespectful to their mums.

What the children see is what they are going to do. Nevertheless, other people thought that women were presented as angels in these aspects and William Wordsworth tells the following quote referring to them as: "*true to the kindred points of Heaven and Home!*"³¹.

To finish with the conditions in which women had to live, Fuller states that women were not only a part of men, bones of their bones, but they were born in order for men not to be alone. Women possess their own immortal souls and can survive for themselves. If women were allowed to be totally free and develop into what they believe, they want to be, and make their own choices, they would not want to change places with men.

Fuller shows an example of two important women in the change of a new epoch. They are Elizabeth of England and Elizabeth of Castile. They birthed a new state and formed its progress. The first one showed that it was not bad for women to comply with their duties as woman and a wife and the latter showed that she could live and die alone living a life full of energy and having a courageous death.

Another aspect the author highlights is the role of women as mothers. They felt fear when they had a girl because they knew that firstly, that girl was going to be happy but then, once she marries, she would become a submissive woman and the mothers did not want this for their daughters. Margaret affirms that many times, she heard women saying that it was unfortunate to have a daughter in that society. For this reason, many women even wished that their daughters had died.

³¹ Shelly Percy, Bysshe. "To A Skylark". *Poetry Foundation*. 2016. Web.

4.2.7. Marriage

In the nineteenth century, many people thought that the union of two people was the only pure form of the marriage, but a great majority of societies and individuals differed if the link between two people had to be an union of souls, or an agreement of convenience and utility. Women who felt themselves inferior to men would ask their husbands to be good providers, and they would become great housewives in exchange. Here, Margaret Fuller argues that if women had the same rights as men and felt that they were an immortal and free being this would not have happened.

Mary Wollstonecraft³² is also mentioned because she showed the necessity for a new interpretation of the rights of women. Although she was a women who revolted against the male canons, she could find a husband who supported her. So, if she was able to find a good man, the rest of women could also. The example of this marriage is presented as a signal of a new epoch and seen as an intellectual decision by her.

The couple knew each other really well and they possessed confidence in each other and thus, they protected each other. They worked together with a common objective which was writing. It was the refuge of women and men and if they did it together, it was better.

Margaret also compares the ancient marriages and uses the example of Xenophon.³³ Here, she asks the society if there is any marriage like that one among them, and if there is, how many are there. The most outstanding fact is that love had changed very much from those times to the nineteenth century, but, why had things changed so drastically? She also compares the men of this period to the men of Xenophon's period. She says that the former knew how to provide and to accept an advice. Moreover, they were also politer and more respectful than the ones of present days.

All the advices from Fuller to women have been useful to encourage women to start fighting in order to change the situation, and nowadays, we can see that things have

³² Mary Wollstonecraft (1759-1797), English writer and one of the promoters of the feminist thought. She was Mary Shelley's mother and William Godwin's wife (1756-1836), a British writer and politician considered one of the most important precursors of the Anarchist thought and Utilitarianism.

³³ Xenophon (430BC-354BC), Greek philosopher, soldier and historian known by his writings about the culture and history of Greek.

changed and although there are cases in which women continue to be submissive, most of them can enjoy plenty of freedom in their marriage.

4.2.8. Education

Then, Fuller starts to talk about the topic of the education of women, more specifically about the triumphs of female authority. Women had started to achieve many improvements by themselves. Among these women, the author highlights three: Lady Mary Wortley Montagu³⁴, who could learn more than her brother; Mary Fairfax Somerville³⁵, who gained a lot of achievements in the field of physics; and finally De Staël³⁶, an important French writer.

To Margaret Fuller, the purpose now was to instruct women and to provide them an open field equal to that of men. They needed to be educated in the same way as men because they were equally able to obtain the same or indeed better results than men. Frequently, women were in the top of different institutions but they were not recognized because of their sex. They were very intelligent and could be also in charge of other tasks apart from the household chores as a housewife. They were able to combine the studies and the domestic works, but we do not know if men would be able too. It is important to recognize that women have an intelligence which has to be developed in order to create a cultivated person who could accompany men due to their intelligence and powers. Their dependence depended on themselves and if they finally became free women, they could do whatever they wanted.

Today, it is now normal to see women at the universities achieving their objectives. The number of women students is now higher than that of men. However, in the case of high rank works such as dean, the number of women is lower than men.

³⁴ Lady Mary Wortley Montagu (1689-1762), English writer and traveler, sister of Henry Fielding.

³⁵ Mary Fairfax Somerville (1780-1872), Scottish mathematician and translator of Laplace.

³⁶ Anne Louise Germaine Necker, (1766-1817), French writer and an individual liberties defense. Her nickname was Mme. De Staël.

Margaret also mentions a group of independent people, the spinsters. They are not with anyone, and for this reason, they do not remain linked to any relationship and they can dedicate to themselves exclusively. Besides, they can acquire a more intimate relationship with anyone without the distraction of other relationships. However, they were seen as bitter people and the society said that they grew old before the rest of women. It was commonly said that when they were forty years old, their physical appearance made them look even older. This was also a chauvinist thought because from my point of view, in that period, it was better to be single than married: when women get married, they had to be submissive whilst single women were able to make their own choices and live the way they wanted to.

4.2.9. Religion

The author also deals with religious issues. People said that churches were full of women and in contrast, there were very few men. In fact, they thought that women were easy victims of the priests and of self-deception. This would not happen if they were allowed to think for themselves and they could defend themselves from men's poor behavior towards them. In this chapter, Quakerism, a doctrine which supported the equality between men and women, is mentioned. It is an Anglo-American religious sect which is also known as 'Sons of Truth', 'Sons of Light' or even as a 'religious society of friends'. Their values opposed to sexism, racism, religious intolerance, warfare and the death penalty. Besides, one of its more remarkable ideas is that women should obtain an equal status to men³⁷.

4.2.10. Specimen Women

Margaret in her book mentions the life of some foreign women as Queen Victoria or Queen Elizabeth, who were educated to have a more domestic life. Then, she argues that the situation of women in the United States was different and in some aspects, they were situated in a better position than men. They had access to read a good book as well

³⁷ B.A., Robinson. *Beliefs & Practices Of The Religious Society Of Friends (Quakers)*. 2016. Web.

and had more free time to read it. In spite of the situation that they had in this period, there were other women who suffered worse lives than theirs. But this was not an excuse to continue fighting in order to get more improvements.

In this part, we can understand that the main purpose of women was to be free. Regarding this issue, we find thoughts of different people who were in favor of the progress of women, something positive for them because they were motivated to continue fighting for their objectives. Firstly, Angelina Grimké and Abby Kelly, American abolitionists, said that an excellent woman is the one who, despite when her husband dies, is able to be a father and a mother for their children without any problems. Then, we also have the figure of William Ellery Channing³⁸, who was a very respectful person. He was very interested in women's position, which was totally religious. He thought that every woman had a singular destiny that she had to follow. Percy Bysshe Shelley is also mentioned because he participated in the female development and he was one of the first precursors of the reformist impulse. Another example is the one of a writer of the *New York Pathfinder* who wrote two articles called 'Femininity'. He considered women as tenors of the soul and not of the society and that the thought of all the women was admirable. He wanted to express that women had an inspirational and inspired capacity.

4.2.11. Men and Women

The male and the female represent the two faces of the radical dualism. However, there is not a man completely masculine nor a woman completely female. Women should not be influenced by men and they should think about themselves in order to know their own objectives and purposes in this world. Once they find their man, they have to appear renovated and with a new mentality. This way, they will know how to change the situation they are living in and not feel subjected to men.

Many women had observed that a new moment was coming which implied a change in the treatment towards them. Some of these women are Maria Edgeworth (1767-1849), an Anglo-Irish novelist who recommended the domestic life. This recommendation can

³⁸ William Ellery Channing (1780 - 1842), clergyman of New England and antislavery

seem strange, but she wanted to promote an education that despised falsity, that developed a clear and independent trial, and that had its own habits of study and capacity to find new friends. In short, all she wanted to highlight was a more practical education. Another example of woman is the case of Anna Brownell Jameson (1794-1860), a British writer. She was more sentimental than Edgeworth and she wanted women to have a genuine courage. Margaret respects Edgeworth by the way in which she talks about those women who decided to turn away to prevent insults and derision from men.

To finish off with her work, Margaret Fuller addresses to young women. She says that she would like to see a society of ladies different to the ones known until that moment. They must have a religious faith, a faithful heart without disappointing the destiny promised by God, and to be conservative women of better habits different from the ones they have now. She knows some women who, from her point of view, are the leaders of the change. They are younger and they are not influenced by the male canons and for this reason, they can change their life to be different women. They can have aspirations in the life because they are women with a deep affect, strong nature and a wide spiritual development. She hopes that they become an example of instruction for the rest of women.

Margaret affirms that this is the moment in which women have to start to make an effort to change the society because now, men are less occupied with women than before. So, they have to make an effort and start to do what they are able to do in order to get achievements and to enter in the territory of men. However, this is not an easy task because the luck of women is awful. Nonetheless, there will come a moment in which all these thoughts about the position of women will change and Margaret strongly believed on this.

To sum up, Fuller says that this is the moment when women have to stop being treated in a submissive and deplorable way and that they have to experience more of their freedom and equality alongside men.

It is evident that there are two opposite barriers, the male and the feminine one, but if these barriers disappear, everything would be better for them and the society would be

more harmonious. The problem is that the man was created first and he had to be a kind of teacher or guardian for women. However, men have misinterpreted their duties and they have taken an opposite posture and abuse their position. They educated women as servants and for this reason, Margaret says that women have to be free to think, to act and to know what they want to. She only asks men to break down the barriers and the traditions disappear. She thinks that women have to develop a different occupation in which they could know their powers and abilities and this would enable them to become who they were meant to be and who they want to be. The most important aspect for her is that women should be free to create their lives and to live the experiences they wanted. They have to be self-sufficient because this is necessary for them to become independent women.

5. CONCLUSIONS

This dissertation aimed to analyze the situation of women in the nineteenth century according to the American author Margaret Fuller. For this reason, the main resource that has been used to develop the analysis is *Woman in the Nineteenth Century*. Besides, the Historical and Cultural contexts have been explained. The conclusion reached after its elaboration are the following:

Regarding the historical context, Margaret Fuller is situated between two outstanding wars which are the American Revolution and the American Civil War. In the first one, the independence of the United States was recognized and a Constitution was established which was based on the principles of equality and freedom although not all the citizens benefited such as women. With this Revolution, women started to fight for the independence of their country and they started to intervene in politics and social issues. In the case of the American Civil War, the objective was to fight for the union of the country and the abolition of slavery by the North. On the other hand, the South carried out the Independence of the confederate states.

In the case of feminism, it is a movement from the mid nineteenth century to the end of the First World War. Women started to talk in public defending their rights and with their perseverance not only their situation was enhanced, but also their education, economic power, family life, and so on. Due to all the efforts of women, they achieved the Declaration of Seneca Falls which was a document that denounced the restrictions that women were subjected to.

Regarding men we can ascertain that although the vast majority of men had negative views on women, there were also some men who supported women and who recognized that women did not have many opportunities in society.

It is also important to mention the very recurrent comparison between women and slaves since women had to be submissive and to obey men's orders. Fortunately, we start to see some glimpses of change when women realized that they were able to be and to have more than what they were until that moment.

The issue of law is also important since the majority of the laws of society were in favor of men, while women did not have anything in their favor. Besides, at the beginning, they could not enter the public sphere but this started to change and in the mid-nineteenth century, women started to intervene in political issues and participated in different acts such as social reforms campaigns.

It is remarkable the situation that women lived in the society, which was very difficult since it was a chauvinist society. However, the author advised women to fight for what they wanted and to feel confident, because if other women were able to get their purposes, they were they.

Furthermore, we start to appreciate an opposition between men and women that becomes even more remarkable when those women who started to succeed were considered a kind of masculine soul, since it was believed that women could not succeed in life. At the beginning, women were not well-received, but with the passage of time, they obtained the support and trust of the society, becoming more and more important.

Next, the most common role of women in society was that of wife and mother. She had to be submissive and to assume everything she was told to. In this respect, the issue of the consideration of women as angels in other countries start to be important for the American women since they were not. Women brought changes and they stood up for themselves being no longer dominated by men they grew in confidence and life improved.

Another important aspect that the author writes about is that of marriage. In this regard, marriage was the only way for women in spite of feeling inferior due to the way they were treated. Closely related to the issue of marriage is that of the education, in this sense, Mary Wollstonecraft appears and gives much importance to education because if women were educated at the same level than men, they could become independent and self-sufficient without a man. Thanks to the effort of these women, nowadays, we can see some cases of women who have spent all their lives without ever feeling the need to marry and have studied for themselves and became high achievers.

The author claims that the main aim of women was to be free and although they did not receive the support of big masses of people, there were some people who were in favor of women, and this was something positive for them that helped them to go forward. They admired some specimen women who had achieved a change by following their dreams.

Moreover, the author asserts that although it was obvious that men thought of themselves as being perfect beings, women should not lose their identity to a man and they should think about themselves, making every effort to bring about change and therefore bringing to pass their own ambitions for life.

Finally, the author addresses to all the young women that are not subdued under the authority of a man and she tells them that they should start the change now. She advises them to think about where they want to go, what they want to get and to fight for it. The most important idea was to create self-sufficient women that would become independent. Thanks to all the effort done by all these women, nowadays we can enjoy a pleasant freedom although there are still some barriers between men and women.

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