

sStudent Name

Dr. Marchbanks

ENGL 305

13 October 2020

Does Woolf destabilize or reify the notion of *truth*?

In *A Room of One's Own*, Woolf concretizes the concept of truth by explaining the mind's innate ability to identify it, and the good writer's ability to reveal it. Using *War and Peace* as her example, Woolf explains that good novels endure when they have "integrity" (Woolf 72). Further, she describes, "What one means by integrity, in the case of the novelist, is the conviction that he gives one that this is the truth," leaving the reader to feel that they have been "convinced that it is, so it happens" (Woolf 72). **This assertion may appear to imply that lies can masquerade as truths if an astute author can be confident enough.** Woolf uses "conviction" and "convinced," which could indicate deceitfulness, destabilizing the concept of truth.

However, Woolf's following statement rejects that implication by explaining the inherent ability readers have to discern the truth from falsity. She believes, "Nature, in her most irrational mood, has traced in invisible ink on the walls of the mind a premonition which these great artists confirm" (Woolf 72). Woolf grants the reader an almost sixth sense to distinguish between the truth and lies. **Understanding candor** is in the makeup of human beings; it is not abstract and challenging to locate. Good writers can access this inborn skill and use it to their benefit, not in a deceitful way, but in a way that has "integrity." Reading then becomes a confirmation of truths that the reader has always known were there, but could not see because they were written in

“invisible ink.” Great novels endure because they reveal hidden truths about the world, truths that the reader has always known.

This essay anticipates the antagonistic response that a convincing writer might become a deceitful one, and deftly undermines it by pointing to Woolf’s assumption of each individual’s instinctual ability to distinguish reality from falsehood. Well done! [9.3 of 10]

Student Name

ENGL 305

Dr. Marchbanks

October 13, 2020

12. does Woolf ultimately reify sexual and critical binaries, or dissolve them?

Although the narrator asserts that the unification of the two sexes creates good literature, Woolf ultimately reifies the sexual binaries in writing. Even though she never directly speaks on the topic, Woolf claims that writers must write in “relation [...] to the world of reality” (Woolf 114). By doing this, Woolf strays away from the narrator’s view on the sexless mind and adopts a view of literature that focuses more on the freedom to write as one desires to communicate worldly experiences and reality to its audience.

Commented [PRM1]: ?? Do you mean that she does not articulate exactly what constitutes reality? Rephrase to clarify.

The narrator focuses on the creation of good literature as maintaining the mind in a state of unity that allows for its relatability within both sexes. Aiming to create works that “transmit emotion without impediment” and are “naturally creative, incandescent and undivided” leads to the unification and cooperation of the two sexes in the mind of the writer (98). In contrast, Woolf states in her own voice that, “what you wish to write, [...] is all that matters” (106), essentially, advocating for freedom in writing. While the narrator notably promotes the use of an unsexed mind in creating literature, Woolf tells the audience to take the narrator’s words as they like, making her voice seem inconsequential to Woolf’s

Commented [PRM2]: Are these two ideas mutually exclusive, as you imply? You’ve not yet made this obvious.

purpose for writing. According to Woolf, if given a room of their own, women would have “the habit of freedom and the courage to write exactly what [they] think” (113). In stating this, Woolf doesn’t view the need to dissolve sexual binaries but, instead, sees a writer’s freedom as a means for the communication of human’s relation to reality. Furthermore, Woolf believes in the freedom of women to write what they wish as a way to give a voice to those women, like Shakespeare’s sister, who went down in history unnoticed. In the end, Woolf supports the creation of space for women in literature more than dissolving the sexual binaries.

Commented [PRM3]: You need to bear down more on this particular idea which appears key to your argument: you're suggesting that by her continuing to emphasize the need for financial and spatial freedom in order to express one's view of reality, that she never steps away completely from emphasizing gendered societal and professional differences that need to be dissolved.

You appear to suggest that until the inequalities of opportunity that divide the sexes have been removed, Woolf cannot abandon her push for a woman’s functional freedom from a patriarchal society. It would be great if you more explicitly developed this idea within the context of the androgynous ideal to which you allude: that tension can, I think, be resolved. [8.5 of 10]

Student Name

Dr. Paul Marchbanks

English 305

October 13th, 2020

what characterizes the fully developed, “androgynous mind”?

Woolf addresses Coleridge’s idea of the androgynous mind, and makes several inferences as to what he means. An androgynous mind, according to her inferences, can use all of its faculties, and convey emotion without any hindrance or disturbance. The ability for the mind to convey emotion seamlessly requires a balance between masculine and feminine perspective.

Commented [PRM4]: Please grant us specificity much sooner.

Woolf writes that a mind which “is purely masculine can not create, any more than a mind that is purely feminine.” This idea Woolf presents of the “man-womanly” or the “woman-manly” mind refers to a writer’s ability to accurately address the human condition. In order to successfully address the human condition, a writer can not depart solely from their masculinity, or femininity. An androgynous mind ceases to root the ego within gender in order to create a purely human perspective, and therefore create. When the androgynous mind creates it can be “incandescent and undivided.” There can be no division established between masculinity and femininity, therefore the human perspective can be reached. Woolf attributes this ability to Shakespeare. His ability to create works which highlighted the human condition proved that he wrote from a “man-womanly” perspective. Therefore, Woolf addresses Shakespeare as a good example of the fully developed androgynous mind.

Commented [PRM5]: Page citation?

Commented [PRM6]: Avoid repeating phrases

Commented [PRM7]: One word. Also, do you mean should not?

This essay hits some of the most important features of Woolf’s idea, but has not yet woven together and properly elaborated those ideas. Say more about less by veering clear of repetitive phrasing, and practicing concision. [8 of 10]

Student Name
English 305
Professor Marchbanks
14 October 2020

14. Are Francie’s health issues more an obstacle than an inducement to marital closeness?

Within Elizabeth Bowen’s novel, *The Last September*, Francie faces many health issues that create challenges within her relationships that other characters do not have to particularly face. While her health issues are a possibly hindering factor in the marriage, her choice to hide the pain and tiredness from her husband cause these issues to be more prominently an obstacle rather than an inducement to marital closeness. Health itself does indeed make things more difficult, however as the reader first witnesses her internal monologue over how tired and drained she is yet how little desire there is to tell Hugo (p.18), inferring that her decision to bottle up further exploits and divides the possible intimacy between both Francie and Hugo.

Commented [PRM8]: Logic unclear—why would others need to face her personal, relational challenges? Rephrase to clarify.

Commented [PRM9]: Textual evidence?

Commented [PRM10]: The word “as” throws this sentence off track

Commented [PRM11]: Unclear exactly who does the inferring here: the reader or Francie? Rephrase.

Commented [PRM12]: How does one “divide” intimacy?

Already submissive to her husband Hugo as a female of the time, Francie is not only dependent upon him to provide, she also internally wrestles with health issues that push her further from truth and intimacy with him and closer to this codependent parental/caretaker dynamic. After lying down to rest and telling Francie to do the same, Hugo states, "Then would you like me to brush your hair?"(19). Typically a picture painted within that of a parent/child relationship, this further proves how her choice to brush her health struggles aside and bottle them up, only pushes her further from marital intimacy and into this odd paternal like dependency between her and her husband. By brushing her hair, Hugo further polishes and primes the external, surface image of Francie, telling her what to do and brushing her hair like a doll. This further displays how thus far within the novel, Francie's conscious choice to suppress her exhausted pain state after this initial long journey, proves to only exasperate the prominence of her health issues as an obstacle to marital closeness.

Commented [PRM13]: Please elaborate a bit more.

Commented [PRM14]: That depends, doesn't it? I'm sure some couples would consider brushing one another's hair as intimate contact. Please explain.

Commented [PRM15]: hyphenate

Commented [PRM16]: Hmm. He did ask. Explain further.

Commented [PRM17]: "journey only exasperates"

This essay holds that Francie's downplaying her fatigue instead of openly discussing it with Hugo provides an obstacle to intimacy. Do you not, then, think that he recognizes her fatigue despite her words?

Please allow yourself the opportunity to revise and polish. This essay retains a number of avoidable errors and imprecisions. [7 of 10]

Student Name

Dr. Paul Marchbanks

English 305-01

15 October 2020

Does Lois's interest in Gerald outweigh her ambivalence about some of his characteristics?

Lois romanticizes many aspects of her interest in Gerald to compensate for both of their lack of genuine emotions towards each other. Throughout the first part of the novel, Lois refers, on numerous occasions, to Gerald's feelings for her as an "illusion" rather than a "real love" (Bowen 40, 60, 64). She makes this important distinction to highlight that the two know relatively little about each other and that he is still somewhat of a mystery to her and to the people around her. **Most of the narrator and Lois's depictions of Gerald, especially at the**

Commented [PRM18]: This word can mean so many things . . . Choose a more precise term, please. They obviously do feel certain things powerfully. Whether these constitute healthy, productive emotions is a different question than whether they are "genuine."

tennis party, rely on discussing his image instead of his personality. When writing about him to Viola, Lois finds she has “difficulty...describing Gerald” and resorts to paying more attention to his handsome physical attributes since she knows nothing of substance about him (69). However, while she is aware of the superficiality of their relationship, she recognizes its potential. Lois gives some indications that she wants to pursue a relationship with him, feeling “the perfectness of their being together” (41) and saying that “[s]he would have loved to love him” (71), but she feels too confined by his expectations and illusions of her and is consequently put off with him projecting his feelings onto her. Although, she continues to self-servingly use Gerald to fill the deficiencies in her own life. Rather than pursuing Gerald because of a genuine interest in him as a person and for his character, her interest lies in finding a temporary fix for her childish desires. Lois and Gerald both seek different needs from their relationship: while Gerald wants Lois to fill one of his “repositories for his emotions” (53), Lois craves the “eagerness and constancy” (41) he can offer that even her family cannot. Lois’s interest in Gerald is not based on a true connection, but rather, more of a means to an end.

Commented [PRM19]: “expectations for and illusions about”

Commented [PRM20]: “hihs”

Commented [PRM21]: What kind of end? A “selfish” or “undefined” end? Add a modifier . . .

Works Cited

Bowen, Elizabeth. *The Last September*. Anchor Books, 1929.

This essay neatly traps the ambiguity of Lois’s feelings for Gerald, and helpfully glances at the equally problematic nature of his feelings for her. Well-written, though a bit more precision in a few places would tighten things up still more. [9.3 of 10]

Student Name

P. Marchbanks

English 305-02

19 October 2020

The Last September: Point of Reflection #2

“Is the social dynamic between Mrs. Fogarty and the British subalterns mutually beneficial?”

Mrs. Fogarty and the British subalterns seem to engage in a mutually beneficial social dynamic. Fogarty’s home is “screened from outside observation by cubes of evergreen” (Bowen 102). No one can see into the home, with its privacy from onlookers giving it a sense of isolation from the outside world. **Once inside, the divide between Irishman and Englishman seems to blur.** Mrs. Fogarty owns cushions “with Union Jacks that she wouldn’t... put away,” not even if “They” were to come for her. Even though Mrs. Fogarty is Irish she distances herself, instead aligning herself with the British flag. Additionally, Black and Tans gained their name from their dark green (almost black) and khaki uniform, with Mrs. Fogarty’s “brown lace blouse” and “green shell rope” **mirroring that** (Bowen 103). The subalterns on the other hand “all felt very easy and Irish,” and the room is described as “warm” and “harmonious” (Bowen 102). Mrs. Fogarty “did not know how she would have lived at all without the military at Clonmore,” and the young soldiers are provided with a place to socialize and enjoy the smaller things such as flirting and food.

Commented [PRM22]: Just a little bit awkward

The whole affair is relatively intimate, but it is a reality contained only to Mrs. Fogarty’s drawing-room. **The pictures of the dead soldiers on the wall serve as a painful reminder of the reality that awaits outside.** Furthermore, Irish qualities “radiated from Mrs. Fogarty,” despite her apparent disdain for those fighting for Irish independence. This implies that, at the end of the day, she will still be Irish. This fragile dynamic can only exist within the walls of the Fogarty home.

However also note the brief appearance of Lois, an Anglo-Irish **woman**, among this crowd. Even though she is both English and Irish, she cannot seem to find a space for herself. ~~This is displayed when it is not pleasure,~~ but the appearance of rain that forces her to go to Fogarty’s in the first place. Lois ultimately decides to retire from the festivities early, **echoing the Anglo-Irish as a “nonentity,”** unable to navigate national identity even in a setting where both sides meld.

Do you think that Lois’s inability to feel at home lies in part in her *unwillingness* to define herself in terms of the cultural, nationalist criteria which lie thick about Mrs. Fogarty’s—even

though these criteria have been, as you rightly note, suspended in midair? After all, though Lois thinks she would appreciate being in the thick of the current guerrilla war, she only occasionally thinks about the nature of the conflict. Her identity formation seems more beholden to other factors. [8.5 of 10]

Student Name

Dr. Marchbanks

ENGL 305

20 October 2020

Does Lois thrive on fear?

Lois not only flourishes when driven by fear, but her true sentiments are often revealed when faced with feelings of consternation. Since Lois struggles to understand her place within Danielstown, she often retreats into herself. Fear allows Lois the clarity to make sense of the society she lives in. When Gerald tries to confess his love for her, Lois cuts him off both times. Through her palpable panic, the reader understands that her interruption signals her animosity towards love because she has not yet figured out what love is. While she does have a premature idea that love is transient and fleeting, as evident when “she thought of death and glanced at his body, quick, lovely, present and yet destructible” she has not yet discovered the ways in which fear will motivate her to believe otherwise (Bowen 128).

Class rules provided Lois with structure and an enjoyably easy roll to fill. As she puts it: “I like to be related; to have to be what I am” (Bowen 142). Fear allows her to break through the monotony of her aristotelian lifestyle and see past familial expectations. The mill scene

Commented [PRM23]: Do you see how the two passages I have highlighted appear to contradict one another?

Commented [PRM24]: Insert dash

Commented [PRM25]: Insert dash

Commented [PRM26]: How so? Explain, briefly.

emphasizes that fear is how people learn to think for themselves and is critical in establishing Lois's budding individual way of thinking. While Lois was hesitant about entering, Marda "put an arm around her waist...and entered the mill" (Bowen 180). **This sexually charged scene** makes it clear that by exploring the unknown, Lois is learning more about herself and her own desires. Bowen continues, "Fear heightened her gratification; she welcomed its inrush" (180). While initially reluctant to enter, she is quickly able to see what fear has to offer her. Fear gives her the opportunity to create her own identity and reject the narrative she has been taught to follow.

Commented [PRM27]: Clarify whether you're referring to Marda or to the male, Irish rebel she encounters within the mill.

The timeline of your comments fear and clarity remain a little unclear, complicated by your opening suggestion that Lois *regularly* thrives on fear. If you're later suggesting that the frightening mill incident clarifies things for Lois in a way that other, earlier, less intense forms of fear have *not*, then say so directly at the opening of your argument.

If you're suggesting attraction to Marda, then you should insert "heteronormative" into the phrase "reject the narrative." If, however, you're referring to the Irish rebel, then you should insert a modifier like "classist," "nationalist," or "cultural" into this phrase.