

Virginia woolf's literary work: a conscious experiment and exploration

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Virginia Woolf

Virginia Woolf is considered one of the most visionary pioneers of feminist texts and modernist classics to date. Her explorations of consciousness and experimentation in her writings, as well as her challenge of the male dominated writing scene really make themselves bold in her piece titled “ A Room of One’s Own” published in October of 1929, it was the third piece Virginia released and has since claimed critical acclaim as the “ go-to” book for woman and the feminism movement in general. Virginia Woolf manages to blend romantic ideas with modern, sharp perspectives on her surroundings and can twist her words in a way that makes a description of a boring dinner plate turn into a magnificent blend of words that can make you almost taste the food she’s describing. Virginia Woolf was born into a well-off English family in 1882, her parents were free thinkers, which some would say contributed to Virginia’s pro-feminism movements in her writings and her focus’ on consciousness and the individual perspective. Her brothers went to Cambridge and she was homeschooled, instead using the confines of her intellectual prison to her advantage, taking special interest in her family’s vast library. Her parents were also well connected to other great thinkers of their time, most notable, William Thackeray and George Henry Lewes. The acquaintance those great thinkers had with her parents could have rubbed off onto Virginia, leading her to the words she would write down later in life. Woolf’s last piece, “ Between the Acts” was written during World War II, as the German aggressors descended upon Britain, Woolf sunk into a deep depression, ultimately ending her life, less than a year after the Germans destroyed her home during the Blitz. The end of World War II saw Woolf’s

works drop in popularity, but her books and short stories began to gain recognition again during the feminist movements of the 1970's.

Woolf's works tackled many subjects. In "A Room of One's Own" she discusses the differences between conversations that were had before and after World War One. She states, "Before the war at a luncheon party people would have said precisely the same things but they would have sounded different, because in those days they were accompanied by a sort of humming noise...musical, exciting, which changed the value of the words themselves." (Woolf 7) In this passage Woolf is explaining how the horrors of the war changed the way people speak to each other. Before the war, people's words had an excited buzz to them, as if everyone was ready and excited for what the future had in store, but after World War One, people saw what real terror and suffering was, and the acknowledgement and understanding of the atrocities that took place during that time also took with it the excited buzz in the air and instead replaced it with uneasiness and a general feeling of lacking that Woolf touched upon.

The struggles of trying to get to places that only certain people could be in during that time, such as the Oxford library where "ladies are only admitted to the library if accompanied by a Fellow of the College or furnished with a letter of introduction." (Woolf 3) was something that Woolf brought up in "A Room of One's Own". This mention of being denied entry into the library may seem like nothing more than a passing note, but one can look at this encounter Woolf faced as one of the leading factors into her push of the feminist movement. The theme of modernism is prevalent throughout

Woolf's work. Her uses of experimentation and individualism, as well as making the focuses on consciousness and the individual perspective make her one of the best modern writers of the era. Her use of experimentation is enlightening, as we see in "A Room of One's Own" she uses experimentation when she decides that, in her speech, she may be speaking truths or lies with truths in them, or possibly just lies, and she makes it up to the listener to decide. "It is for you to seek out this truth and to decide whether any part of it is worth keeping. If not, you will of course throw the whole of it into the waste-paper basket and forget all about it." (Woolf 2)

What Virginia is saying is that she wants her audience to actually pay attention to the words she is saying, and that she feels that if people don't look for the truths in her words, they will just completely forget about it and move on.

This modern view of writing was a sharp contrast to the Victorian school of writing, using realism and authority as the overarching theme of the pieces, instead of the open-ended self-discovery of the modern era. An excellent comparison one can make would be the distinction between William Faulkner and Virginia Woolf. Faulkner used a very streamlined and structured writing process while Woolf used a sort of flowing natural progression in her writings. Faulkner used this process to make the reader focus on one important part of the story, while Woolf used her flowing progressions to jump from topic to topic, making the reader understand the big picture. Virginia Woolf is considered to be one of the most critically acclaimed writers of the 21st century, and her works have propelled the feminist movements

to new highs, and truly helped drive the push for equality across the board. Her uses of experimentation, consciousness and individualism paved the way for female and minority authors to take a step forward and stand up for themselves and their works.