

Thesis Abstract

One of the basic principles of modernism was to evaluate existing traditions and cultural norms, to innovate them, and to get rid of them if necessary. The need and urge to innovate proved to be immensely productive in the short story genre. The short story is now perceived as independent of other prose forms precisely thanks to the modernists. Virginia Woolf was one of the most enthusiastic innovators of the form, her work in the genre is nevertheless often overlooked in comparison to her novels, or even in comparison to other short story writers, such as Katherine Mansfield or James Joyce.

This thesis deals with selected narrative structures in Virginia Woolf's shorter fiction. It works with the basic assumption that when Woolf's short stories are read, her novels have to be taken into account as well due to numerous thematic and other affinities. However, it is also of importance to evaluate Woolf's short fiction without measuring them against her novels as these are two distinct genres.

The thesis introduction presents an overview of the literary and cultural context of the times in which Woolf lived and wrote, with emphasis on her familiarity with the Russian writers, primarily Chekhov, and the first Post-Impressionist painters. The thesis then carries out four separate analyses of four of Woolf's shorter fictions: "Mrs Dalloway in Bond Street," "The New Dress," "Blue & Green," and "An Unwritten Novel."

The first half of Chapter 2 focuses on the intertextual nature of "Mrs Dalloway in Bond Street." Woolf was influenced by Joyce more than she would publicly admit, however the story has an affinity with the famous 1925 *Mrs Dalloway*, and this connection serves as the basis for the narrative analysis carried out in the subchapter.

Subchapter 2.2. comments on the influence of Chekhov on "The New Dress." It also analyses the epistemological concerns Woolf projected onto the character of Mabel Waring, whose self-perception is facilitated and at the same time distorted by the mirror in Clarissa

Dalloway's drawing room.

Chapter 3 presents two strategies Woolf used when she worked at the short story genre. "Blue & Green" is not really a story: it can be read as a verbal painting or as a prose poem. "An Unwritten Novel" questions the limits of the genre by fusing essayistic elements with features of metafiction into a story which interrogates its own existence.