



Jamesian and Freudian Rhetoric and Themes in Virginia Woolf's Literary Manifestos

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Abstract

In her seminal work "Modern Fiction" (1925) Virginia Woolf asserts that the most interesting and fruitful way for the modernist novelist to proceed is to appropriate what she calls "the dark places of psychology" into literary writing. The image of "dark places", especially when put into the context of the psychology of the 1920's, almost immediately conjures up a Freudian perspective. However, as this paper argues, in addition to the Freudian overtones there is more to a full appreciation of Woolf's psychology-related assertions in "Modern Fiction." Taken in conjunction with her previous text, "Character in Fiction"(1924), it seems possible to read Woolf's manifestos through the lens of the empiricist psychology of William James. Primarily relying on rhetorical analysis of Woolf's vocabulary, this paper aims to disentangle the dynamic relationship between the distinct Jamesian and Freudian psychological schools influencing Woolf's programmatic writings.

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