


Publications


Abstract

This dissertation examines everyday life in selected works by Dorothy Richardson, Virginia Woolf, and Katherine Mansfield. It builds on recent scholarship by Bryony Randall (2007) and Liesl Olson (2009), who have argued that modernism marks a turn to the mundane or the ordinary, a view that runs contrary to the long-established understanding of modernism as characterized by its stylistic difficulty, high culture aesthetics, and extraordinary moments. This study makes a departure from these seminal critical works, taking on a feminist perspective to look specifically at how modernist authors use style to enable inquiry into women’s everyday lives during the modernist period. This work draws on everyday life studies, particularly the theories of Henri Lefebvre, Michel de Certeau, and Rita Felski, to analyze what attention to the everyday can tell us about the feminist aims and arguments of the literary texts.

The literary works studied here include: Dorothy Richardson’s Pilgrimage (predominantly the fourth volume, The Tunnel), Virginia Woolf’s To The Lighthouse and The Waves, and Katherine Mansfield’s “Bliss” and “Marriage à la Mode.” This dissertation argues that these works reveal the ideological production of everyday life and how patriarchal power relations persist through mundane practices, while at the same time identifying or troubling sites of resistance to that ideology. This sustained attention to the everyday reveals that the transition from Victorian to modern gender roles was not all that straightforward, challenging potentially simplistic discourses of feminist progress. Literary technique and style are central to this study, which claims that Richardson, Woolf, and Mansfield use modernist stylistic techniques to articulate women’s particular experiences of everyday life and to critique the ideological production of everyday life itself. Through careful analysis of their various uses of modernist technique, this dissertation also challenges the vague or uncritical uses of the term ‘stream of consciousness’ that have long dominated modernist studies.

This dissertation makes several original contributions to modernist scholarship. Its sets these three authors alongside one another under the rubric of everydayness in Mansfield’s stories, and is the first to discuss cycling as a mode of resistance to domesticity in The Tunnel. It argues for the ‘mobile space’ of cycling as a supplement to the common symbol of feminist modernism, the ‘room of one’s own.’ The reading herein of Woolf’s contradictory approach to the everyday challenges the accepted view among Woolf scholars that her theory of ‘moments of being’ has transformative power in everyday life. This dissertation also makes a feminist intervention into everyday studies, which has been criticized for its failure to take account of women’s lives.

Awards, Scholarships, Fellowships

2011 Andy Farquharson Award for Excellence in Graduate Student Teaching, University of Victoria
2007-2010 SSHRC Doctoral Fellowship
2007-2010 President’s Research Scholarship, University of Victoria
2006-2007 English Department Fellowship, University of Victoria

Presentations

