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Essay Assignment #1 (Rough Draft)

In the introduction to the novel *The Artificial Silk Girl* by Irmgard Keun,the literary scholar Maria Tartar wrote “At once naïve and cynical, innocent and corrupt, she experiences life as a series of ‘episodes’, short-term affairs – bitter and sweet, in varying proportions – that lead nowhere.” This quote is about the main character Doris and how even through all the experiences she had from her time in Cologne to Berlin ultimately didn’t lead her to becoming a different person. I disagree with Maria Tartar’s quote because in my opinion the experiences that Doris lived through did change her to become a different person.

At first in chapter one, Doris, when living in Cologne, was a woman that one could consider the “New Woman” of that time. She loved her mother but didn’t want to be like her because she viewed her mother’s life as constraint. Doris want her life to be open to more possibilities than just being a house wife. She was also manipulative towards men, fake, and kind of full of herself. For example, she would attempt to seduce her boss, to let herself get away with not doing her work and leave work early. Then when her boss tried to express himself saying “My child, stop pretending. I’ve know for a long time that you have feelings for me and that your blood longs for me.” (17) was a misconception of what he thought Doris felt about him because he didn’t know she only would try to seduce him to get out of doing work. He would then proceed to harass her not knowing she had no interest in being with him. Which would lead to Doris fighting back kicking his shin then saying “Now tell me one thing, you stupid attorney, what on earth are you thinking? How can a highly educated man like yourself be so dumb to that that a pretty woman like myself would be crazy about him? “(18). Doris would then later blackmail her boss into giving her 120 marks so that she wouldn’t tell her other co-workers of the incident. Another incident happened where Doris was at the theater and wanted to be respected by the other actors, so she told them little stuff like “Leo had three pairs of pajamas made from this lovely fabric”(26) and “Leo doesn’t appreciate my talking about his sex life”(29) which would both imply that she and Leo were in a relationship or having an affair. Doris knowingly told these lies just to get respect so that these women would look up to her rather than just ignore her like before. These actions by Doris proves that she was fake and full of herself.

Then in chapter 2, when Doris had to run away to Berlin because of becoming a fugitive from stealing Frau Ellmann’s fur coat she experienced struggles and events that would cause her to change her way about thinking and going about life. An example of an event that occurred that changed Doris was when she was apart of a crowd of people in front of the Adlon hotel when politicians arrived at the balcony and everybody started to shout and plead at the politicians. All the emotions that the crowd of people were pouring out moved Doris. For example it’s quoted from chapter 2 “Then people were starting to disperse and I felt the strong urge to find out about politics and what those officials wanted and so on.”(61). Doris would then ask a man about what the people were shouting about and showed interest in the politics involving Berlin. This shows that Doris did change because politics was something she never really understood or gave the effort to understand back in Cologne. However, now she felt interested in knowing politics as it could be a way to be more connected with the people and city of Berlin. Doris also faced struggled with her living situation and money. These were factors to her changes in behavior. She would become more intimate with men and would become more comfortable with the life style of seeing men just so she could have them give her some money and pay for some of her expenses. She gets so comfortable with this life style that she isn’t too interested in getting a job or look for one. Another way Doris changes is through her relationship with Brenner. Brenner is blind, so he wants Doris to explain life like in Berlin to him. This allows Doris to view her surrounding with more depth and analysis. Doris in her mind says “I don’t want him to thank me. I just want him to like my Berlin. And now everything looks so different to me.”(103). This shows that Brenner did in fact change Doris’ view on Berlin and the life in Berlin. This makes her want to be more passionate about her life in Berlin.

In chapter 3, Doris goes from being homeless to be taken in to live with Ernst. Ernst is a 37-year-old man that works an advertising job. Ernst openly takes Doris in to live in his apartment without having to make her pay because he’s been very lonely and depressed ever since his wife left him to chase her dreams of becoming a star. He just wanted someone to come home to. Ernst was also very desperate to show someone affection, so he wanted to show his affection to Doris. Living with Ernst changed Doris. She would at first start doing things for Ernst because she felt like she owed him but then later on she would start doing things for Ernst because she wanted to. For example, chapter 3 it says “What am I going to cook today? There’s still leftover goose. We’ve got our money’s worth. You have to economize.”(150). This is different from what she wanted to be like when she was in Cologne. She is taking on this role as sort of like a housewife, something that she didn’t want to be like. Doris would even use her house hold responsibilities to hide herself from going in to get a job. She starting to accept this form of lifestyle and begins to feel affection towards Ernst. For example in the text it says “You don’t look so good, “I say to him, “Tonight you’re going to bed at ten.”(153). This proves that Doris has changed from a woman that would manipulate men into one that cares for the ones she feels is deserving. This ultimately leads her to making the decision to tell Ernst’s wife to go see Ernst because he needs her even though Doris has fallen in love to him.

The quote “At once naïve and cynical, innocent and corrupt, she experiences life as a series of ‘episodes’, short-term affairs – bitter and sweet, in varying proportions – that lead nowhere.” written by Maria Tatar is false. Doris went from a woman that would manipulate men, be fake, be full of herself and hoped to become a career woman to becoming a woman that enjoys being a house wife and making choices helping others rather than herself. Doris has changed for the better and is now searching for life with someone she can care for like she does for herself.