Brian Petersen P. 7

Woolf Essay Rewrite

In Woolf’s time, the difference between male and female colleges was major and presented a social difference between the two. Using the meals served at each respective college, she was able illustrate the differences of the colleges, and in doing so she was able to illustrate her opinion on woman’s position in society. Through analyzing the tone Woolf uses to describe the important elements of each meal and their contrasts we can see that Woolf views women’s place in society as unfair and not justified.

To begin with, the way Woolf describes the surroundings of a meal is the first underlying difference and is the first illustration Woolf uses. Woolf said about the men’s meal, “no need to hurry, no need to sparkle, no need to be anybody but oneself.” This suggests that the men are in care free attitude where no one will judge them. In contrast, Woolf says about the women’s meal, “The meal was over, that was all… the hall was emptied… and made ready for breakfast the next morning.” In short, it can be seen that the men’s meal is a feast that is to be enjoyed and taken in while the women’s meal is more of something that they are doing solely for survival, little to be enjoyed and quickly. From these two descriptions of the meals, an apparent contrast is shown and Woolf did this intentionally and it reflects her attitude about women’s place in society. This attitude of Woolf’s can be summarized by the idea that it is unfair that men are spoiled based solely on the fact that they are male.

Next, the word choice she uses to describe the food of the meals suggests, once again, that men are supreme. Woolf states, “The partridges came with all their sauces and salads… [and]… their potatoes thin as coins but not so hard.” She continues to do this, expressing each food in eloquent language for the men’s meal. For the women’s, she says, “Here is the food… a plain gravy soup.” From these two contrast presented once again, we can see that he men’s meal is more desirable. The men’s meal is describe with eloquent language and is suggested to be satisfying and substantial while the women’s meal is described with a lack of visual appeal using bland, staccato and straight language. This contrast was purposively written in by Woolf and she illustrates her view of women’s place once again. Through this contrast, the natural desire of the men’s meal versus the lack thereof for the woman’s meal, Woolf expresses her attitude of women’s place in society and an unfair and skewed with no proper justification making men unrightfully supreme once again.

To end, the social interactions Woolf describes, or the lack thereof and her word choice used also shows her attitude. She describes the men’s course by saying, “the rich yellow frame of rational intercourse.” This statement suggests that the men are enjoying each other’s relationships and is reinforced with the quote, “how admirable friendship and the society of one’s kind.” The men are having deep intellectual conversations which add to the depth and enjoyment of their meal. In contract, little description is given for the women’s social interactions, but this lack of description suggests that there was little social interaction between the women and is reinforced when Woolf said, “everybody was assembled in the big dining rom.” This statement limits the amount of social interactions between the women and suggests that this is the extent of their social interactions. Once again, this contrast was written intentionally and makes the men’s meal more appealing. This contrast, the enjoyable and depth of the men’s social interactions versus the lack of social interactions of the women’s meal suggests that women are viewed as inferior and intellectually less capable when compared to their male counterpart. Woolf’s attitude about this view of women is that it is unjustified and needs to be changed.

Through the contrasts that Woolf has intentionally written in her two essays about the men’s and women’s meals at their respective colleges, namely surroundings, food, and social interactions, we can see that Woolf views women’s place in society as unfair and not rightly justified by the reasons that people present to her.