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Virginia Woolf's Neville and Rhoda Ontology

Virginia Woolf created the ontology of Neville and Rhoda to be unique to their own individual experiences and personalities. The characters I decided to focus on were Rhoda and Neville because they both share the more dark and abstract versions of Woolf. The obvious dark quality is the concept of suicide, death and solitude that Rhoda fixates on. The simple act of suicide is enough to set her philosophy of life in a classification of her own.. Neville also explores the concept of life and death, more life than death, as he finds comfort in his art and literature as an escape from the imperfection of the world. But to understand how these characters represent a separation in ontological views, there needs to be some clarification of Woolf's life. Woolf grew up in an upper-middle class family, where in the early years of her life she experienced the death of her sister, mother, sexual abuse by her brothers, and as treatment was given the "rest cure;" which is just fancy way of telling people that what they feel is all in their head (x-xi). Woolf experienced great trauma at a young age to be familiar with the concept of death and the fragility of life. This kind of trauma, especially at an early age can attribute to Woolf's fascination with death. Also, why she used Neville as an example of persecution and dedication.

Rhoda is described as an extremely reclusive person, with Bernard even saying, "Rhoda loves to be alone. She fears us because we shatter the sense of being which is so extreme in solitude. . ." (96). Rhoda's whole identity revolves around someone who is trapped, or willfully

trapped, in their own mind. She hates the outside world because it's not as expansive or lively as one's own mind. In the same way a writer lives in their mind to build a world more lively than the real one, Rhoda decided her own mind was better than the one before her. Woolf clearly explored the recess of her mind to the point that the concept of death, while familiar, was a concept worth representing through Rhoda.

In that same being of unique perspective, Neville was a queer man in the early 1900's. That alone speaks for the level of persecution that he would have to face. Because it's known that Woolf was forced into "rest cure" it can be tied with how gay men were seen as sick or unnatural. Neville's queerness and pursuit for perfection are his version of uniqueness. But more impressive was the level of dedication that Neville put into his literature. Neville says, "Now begins to rise in me the familiar rhythm; words that have lain dormant now lift, now toss their crests, and fall and rise. . . I am a poet, yes. Surely I am a great poet," (59). Neville's pursuit for perfection affected his work and relationships. He was conscious of his humanity but refused to accept that as his perfect self. His claim that he is a "great poet" shows how much he wanted to see himself as a great literary figure.