the albatross

Friday, February 3, 2012

The Albatross - Peer Reviewer Comments - “Windows of Doom: A Psychoanalytic Reading of Spatial and Temporal Forces in To The Lighthouse”

Accept

Fairly clear argument, engaging, and easy to follow.

Revise

I found this paper to be one of interesting subject matter. I enjoyed that the paper's incorporation of another discipline and found this for the most part very well done. There are some portions of the paper that I found confusing, and should be tightened up a little.

I hesitate to redirect this essay merely because I had trouble following the argument. It deals with complex subject matter and thus demands an attentive reader. However, I do think this essay's readability could be improved. I highly recommend resubmission upon some further revision and clarification. The essay's discussion of Woolf's To the Lighthouse focuses on the contrast between the domestic setting of the Ramsay household and the natural world around it. Nature/landscape is construed as wild, unstructured, destructive and regenerative, with the “domestic” being construed as a confined but not impermeable space within it, where each character enacts a particular role in accordance with “the structural demands of domesticity”(2). The writer ultimately argues that Woolf's attempt to unify “the contrary forces of natural, cyclical temporality with structural domesticity” (1) fails precisely because the attempt “remains in the realm of abstraction and artistic ‘vision’”, thus illustrating that it is impossible to liberate “the natural life forces within a structural world that does not have room for them” (1). As someone who has not read any Kristeva nor Woolf's To the Lighthouse, I had trouble navigating through what is, in many ways, a very dense, technical discussion of Woolf's text. The essay posits a relation between the Kristevian concept of the abject and the Lacanian symbolic, in which the abject is said to be both constitutive of and opposed to the symbolic order (4). The Ramsay's cottage is construed as “emblematic” of the Lacanian symbolic order because it structures, governs and, presumably, determines relations and behaviour of the subjects within it. In turn, “cyclical, temporal nature”, is connected with the abject, “existing both in opposition to and in
concert with the structures of domesticity” (6). I found this paradoxical insight intriguing but difficult to grasp. When dealing with such paradoxical insights, I think the discussion must strive for a certain level of explication that I find myself wanting. The essay shows the promise of brilliance. What's missing is a certain level of clarity that allows one to appreciate its insights, rather than become lost amidst their complexity. I recommend revision and resubmission for future publication.