

# Virginia Woolf

1882–1941

Virginia Woolf was born Adeline Virginia Stephen to well-educated upper-middle-class English parents. Her mother, née Julia Jackson, had participated as a young girl in a cultured social circle that included Pre-Raphaelite painters Holman Hunt and Edward Burne-Jones, actress Ellen Terry, and poet Alfred, Lord Tennyson. At the age of nineteen, Julia had married lawyer Herbert Duckworth, who died and left her with three children, Stella, George, and Gerald. Julia then devoted herself to nursing and published a book about it. Woolf's father, Leslie Stephen, was a well-known man of letters, author of numerous literary-critical, biographical, and philosophical works and editor of *The Cornhill Magazine*, an influential literary journal, and the *Dictionary of National Biography*. His first wife, a daughter of novelist William Makepeace Thackeray, had died, leaving him with a daughter, Laura, who was mentally retarded. Julia and Leslie married and had four more children: Vanessa, who became a painter; Thoby, who was a brilliant university student before his early death; Virginia; and Adrian, who became a psychiatrist.

The Stephen household, located in Kensington, a well-to-do section of London, was a lively place to grow up, full of children and literary visitors, including English novelist and poet George Meredith, American poet James Russell Lowell, and American novelist Henry James. Virginia and her sisters were educated at home by their mother and by tutors, while her brothers were sent away to school; she would later resent their superior education. Yet she appreciated being able to take part in literary discussions among her father's friends and to read freely in his excellent library. A homebound education may in fact have suited Virginia best, because her physical and mental health was frail. The women's colleges Newnham and Girton, on a par with the men's universities, did exist, but there is no evidence that Virginia pushed to attend them. Perhaps anticipation of her father's disapproval prevented her from trying.

This relatively happy childhood ended in 1895 when Julia Stephen died, precipitating Woolf's first mental breakdown. Woolf's older half-sister Stella filled the maternal role for a time, but within two years of Julia's death she had married and died in childbirth. Woolf's father, elderly, deaf, and ill, increasingly left the direction of the household to his stepson George Duckworth. George was apparently a caricature of the Victorian gentleman, demanding silence and obedience from his sisters in public to facilitate his social climbing, and sexually molesting them in their beds at night.

When Leslie Stephen died in 1904, his and Julia's four children moved out of the family home into their own establishment in Bloomsbury, a London neighborhood frequented by artists and literary people. Woolf's brother Thoby brought his university friends to the house, and they were a brilliant group, including biographer Lytton Strachey, economist John Maynard Keynes, art critic Clive Bell (whom Vanessa would later marry), novelist E. M. Forster, and literary critic Leonard Woolf. Virginia found their conversation stimulating, as well as their openness to

her own literary and intellectual ambitions, which had been sternly censured by her father and her stepbrother George. The Bloomsbury Group, as they came to be called, encouraged frank discussion of sexuality, artistic experimentation, and left-oriented analysis of social inequalities. Initially, too, male members of the group did not discourage Woolf's growing feminism, although they would later disapprove some of her more public feminist stands.

In this congenial environment, Woolf recovered from another period of mental instability that occurred after her father's death, and she began to write a novel. But in 1906, when the four siblings toured Greece together, Thoby contracted typhoid fever, from which he died after they returned to England. Woolf took a long time to adjust to this loss, delaying completion of her book until after her marriage to Leonard Woolf in 1912. By all accounts her marriage was a happy one to the end, although apparently without a sexual dimension. Leonard Woolf encouraged his wife's literary ambitions and gave her practical support, nursing her through illness and helping with publishing. *The Voyage Out*, her first novel, was printed in 1915.

When *The Voyage Out* appeared, Virginia Woolf was already widely known and respected as a literary reviewer for the prestigious *Times Literary Supplement* and other journals. Her first novel was well received, and over the next ten years she published a series of works of fiction that made her one of the most important writers in Britain: *Night and Day* (1919), *Jacob's Room* (1922), *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925), *To the Lighthouse* (1927), and *Orlando* (1928). In these works Woolf experimented with multiple viewpoints, fragmented narrative form, and allusive, poetic language that attempts to capture the quality of moment-by-moment conscious experience. She continued to write literary reviews and other nonfiction pieces as well, which also were often stylistically experimental—such as *A Room of One's Own* (1929; excerpted here), now a classic exposition of what women's education, economic liberation, and literary development would require. Woolf and her husband also founded the Hogarth Press, which was notable for publishing avant-garde literature such as the poems of T. S. Eliot and the short stories of Katherine Mansfield, controversial texts such as English translations of Freud, and more. During this same decade, Woolf fell in love with a younger writer, Victoria Sackville-West, known as Vita. Both Leonard Woolf and Vita's husband, Harold Nicolson, acquiesced in this passionate relationship, the great love of Woolf's life.

The 1920s was a decade of triumph for Woolf. She received high praise as a fiction writer, and with her literary criticism and other social commentary, became a leader of the Bloomsbury Group and a dominant force on the Anglo-American literary scene. Both her marriage and her affair with Vita were sustaining. But things began to change for Woolf in the 1930s. Her production of fiction, though still well regarded, slowed considerably: *The Waves* (1931), perhaps her greatest work, was not followed until 1937, by *The Years*, and her last novel, *Between the Acts*, was published posthumously in 1941. Although she continued to write reviews and essays, her dominant position as literary and social arbiter eroded, and her essay *Three Guineas* (1938), her most passionate defense of her feminist, socialist, and pacifist views, drew heavy fire. She and Vita drifted apart, and Woolf was increasingly troubled by bouts of the mental illness that had plagued her since adolescence.

Finally, World War II was imminent, horrifying Woolf not only with the general destruction it promised but also with the specific threat a potential German invasion of England posed to her Jewish husband. She and Leonard procured a drug from her brother Adrian with which to take their lives if the invasion happened. Tormented by inner voices that presaged a permanent descent into madness, Woolf did not wait, but filled her pockets with stones and walked into a river near the Woolfs' country cottage in 1941.

Virginia Woolf now holds an undisputed position as one of the most important novelists writing in English in the twentieth century. Her fiction has drawn exhaustive critical attention, but until very recently, scholarship virtually ignored her non-fiction writing and its relevance to women and rhetoric, even though Woolf published over five hundred literary reviews and essays. This neglect may have been caused in part by the experimental style in which Woolf wrote much of her nonfiction, which disguised the cogency of her arguments. Rhetorician Thomas J. Farrell has characterized it as a "female mode of rhetoric" with the following traits: Woolf pursues arguments indirectly, usually not stating her thesis until the end of a piece and even then presenting it tentatively and leaving the discussion open-ended; her structure is generally associative, appearing to imitate the way ideas occur to the mind, although at times she may use what Farrell calls a "male mode" that is more overtly logical and linear or hierarchical; her tone is usually not aggressive or agonistic, but rather light and charming; at the same time, she carefully builds up a position to support her point of view; and she often relies on personal experience (sometimes thinly disguised as fiction) for evidence, without drawing explicit generalizations from it.<sup>1</sup> Literary scholar Catherine Sandbach-Dahlström has suggested that these stylistic traits reinforce a method of essay writing that Woolf deliberately sets against the essay tradition dominated by men: She resists this tradition, critiques male chauvinism generally, and enacts a "skeptical feminism" through carnivalesque attacks on pompous and oppressive male-maintained social structures.<sup>2</sup> Literary critic Jane Marcus has noted that Woolf's stylistic experiments anticipate French theorist Hélène Cixous's (p. 1520) call for "writing the body."<sup>3</sup> Marcus describes Woolf's rhetoric as "sapphisty," which subverts male-oriented classical rhetorical techniques to speak for and to attract an audience of women, and perhaps especially gay women.<sup>4</sup> In Marcus's view, then, Woolf pioneered not only women's rhetoric generally, but also lesbian rhetoric.

Woolf chose her style and her intellectual agenda to match her analysis of the situation of writers, especially women writers. As rhetorician Krista Ratcliffe has explained, especially in *A Room of One's Own* Woolf focuses on the material and historical conditions that foster or hinder literary production. She sees how these conditions have always hindered women, who have not had the education, leisure,

<sup>1</sup>See Thomas J. Farrell, "Female and Male Modes of Rhetoric," *College English* 40 (1979): 909–21.

<sup>2</sup>Catherine Sandbach-Dahlström, "'Que scais-je?': Virginia Woolf and the Essay as Feminist Critique," in *Virginia Woolf and the Essay*, ed. Beth Carole Rosenberg and Jeanne Dubino (New York: St. Martin's, 1997), p. 276 passim.

<sup>3</sup>Jane Marcus, "Sapphisty: Narration as Lesbian Seduction in *A Room of One's Own*," in *Virginia Woolf and the Languages of Patriarchy* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), p. 170.

<sup>4</sup>Marcus, p. 169 passim.

I really do like  
the term here;  
"sapphisty"

or economic independence for writing. They have been forcibly confined to the domestic sphere and taught to value their restricted role through such ideological constructs as the selfless “Angel in the House,” whom Woolf identifies and vows to kill in “Professions for Women” (included here). Moreover, Woolf believes that the principal language available for literary and intellectual expression has been “the language of men,”<sup>5</sup> so long used to express only men’s concerns that women have difficulty adapting it to their needs. Woolf calls on women writers to select from the language of men what they can use and recombine its elements to create a discourse more congenial and useful to women, as she tried to do in her own fiction and non-fiction work. A “woman’s sentence” is needed, and Woolf applauds any signs of its development, for example, in the work of novelist Dorothy Richardson, her contemporary and a great influence on her (see review included here). As Ratcliffe notes, Woolf argues that many literary genres have been so male-dominated that women should begin with the novel, which, as a younger form with fewer male examples in the canon, might provide them with more creative space. Women should feel free to blur genres to devise forms that fit what they want to say. Implicitly, Woolf treats literary tradition as tremendously influential on new writers: hence the importance of recovering, and creating, women’s literary traditions. Women writers must not listen to those who would censure their experiments, whether male or female, but find new audiences—especially young women—who will encourage their new work. Woolf’s analysis amounts to the first twentieth-century manifesto for women’s rhetoric.

Woolf’s view of herself as a rhetor was complex. As literary scholars Beth Carole Rosenberg and Jeanne Dubino argue, Woolf believed that “essays are not written to *prove* anything.”<sup>6</sup> Although she was well aware of the political implications of both the production and the reception of art, she still believed that the best art transcended history and addressed “the meaning of life.”<sup>7</sup> The personality of the artist should disappear; as literary critic Lisa Low has argued, above all else Woolf abhorred egotism, which she saw as the male besetting sin.<sup>8</sup> In addition, art was damaged by any emergence of political grievances, even feminist critique. In *Three Guineas*, Woolf develops a metaphor in which literary art is a horse and “propaganda” is a donkey—attempting to mingle the two can produce only sterile offspring.

Yet the lines between art and “propaganda” are not so easily established in Woolf’s writing. Many critics have felt that her novels speak to a feminist agenda. Furthermore, Woolf also wrote much nonfiction prose, addressing social and political issues of the day not only in her literary reviews but, more important, in longer

love this as well

I think I really like this as well

✓ Better than old this  
distinction as well

<sup>5</sup>Krista Ratcliffe, *Anglo-American Feminist Challenges to the Rhetorical Traditions* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1996), p. 42.

<sup>6</sup>Beth Carole Rosenberg and Jeanne Dubino, “Introduction,” in *Virginia Woolf and the Essay*, ed. Beth Carole Rosenberg and Jeanne Dubino (New York: St. Martin’s, 1997), p. 11, emphasis in original.

<sup>7</sup>Quoted in Michèle Barrett, “Introduction,” in *Virginia Woolf: Women and Writing*, ed. Michèle Barrett (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1979), p. 19.

<sup>8</sup>See Lisa Low, “Refusing to Hit Back: Virginia Woolf and the Impersonality Question,” in *Virginia Woolf and the Essay*, ed. Beth Carole Rosenberg and Jeanne Dubino (New York: St. Martin’s, 1997), pp. 257–73.

essays such as *A Room of One's Own* and *Three Guineas*. Her analysis in this work is prescient. She was among the first to link women's literary creativity with their education and economic position, and not simply to claim a public forum for women but to name and attack the patriarchy that blocked their access. She also was among the first to link social class oppression and gender oppression, identifying with working-class people without romanticizing them and calling on the middle and upper classes to give up the privileges that cemented economic inequalities, and to link patriarchy and fascism. This last view may have had much to do with the long occulting of her rhetorical accomplishments. She had the courage, and the misfortune, to advocate resistance to war among women just at the time that Hitler and Mussolini were coming to dominate Europe. Her pacifism thus came to seem like acquiescence in fascist conquest and even, for later critics, in the Holocaust. At best, she was made to seem politically naive. But both the arguments and the stylistic experiments in her essays are now central to feminist understanding.

does her social  
class background  
play into this?

### SYNOPSIS OF *A ROOM OF ONE'S OWN*

"Women and Fiction" (included here) is a summary of the main points of *A Room of One's Own*, which is based on two papers Woolf read to the students at the women's colleges Newnham and Girton in 1928. What follows is a more detailed précis of *Room*.

The need of a room  
(a material setting)

Woolf begins by imagining that her audience, women at Newnham and Girton who invited her to speak on "women and fiction," is puzzled by her attention to "a room of one's own." She explains this focus by saying that she can offer no great generalizations on her announced subject, but can only tell them that "a woman must have money and a room of her own if she is to write fiction." She will try to explain to them why this is so. To accomplish this task, she invents a persona for herself and imagines that this "I" is visiting the great men's university of "Oxbridge." Strolling around the campus, she is warned off the grass by an officious beadle and barred entry to the library because she is a woman. She contemplates the beautiful old buildings and imagines how much money, over how many centuries, has been contributed to build and maintain them. She is then taken as a guest to a sumptuous luncheon at a men's college, and finally ushered out of the grounds as the gates are locked behind her. She walks down the road to a nearby women's college, to which she gives the name "Fernham." Here she eats a dinner very much inferior in quality to the luncheon she enjoyed at the men's college. She reflects that the women's college is poor because women have never been able to make the large sums of money needed to endow institutions of higher learning. They have usually been fully occupied with raising children.

In Chapter Two, Woolf's "I" goes to the British Museum to research the questions of why women are so much poorer than men and whether their poverty affects their ability to write fiction. She finds that whereas women have written few books about men, men have written many, many books about women, and most of them are devoted to analyzing women's inferiority. Angrily she concludes that "England is under the rule of a patriarchy" and that men denigrate women only to build them-

selves up. Furthermore, men also expect the women in their lives to flatter them. She mentions here how grateful she is for the legacy from an aunt that enables her to be independent of male support and of the menial and degrading jobs that are open to women who must support themselves by working. She imagines how England will be improved when every profession is open to women.

Woolf begins Chapter Three with the question of why “no woman wrote a word” of the great literature produced in the Elizabethan period. Exploring the books in her own library for answers to this question, she discovers that little is said about women in histories of the period, except to note their illiteracy, legal inability to own property, and brutal control by fathers and husbands. She now narrates the life of an imaginary sister of William Shakespeare’s, whom she calls Judith. Though uneducated compared to her brother, Judith too runs away to London to act and write plays, only to be ridiculed and rejected at every turn, and finally, when she becomes pregnant, to kill herself. Next Woolf briefly considers the careers of some women writers and speculates on the effects of the strangling discouragement with which women writers have always been met—“not indifference but hostility.” She cites several examples of such hostility in the form of scathing judgments of female ability pronounced by male authorities, past and present.

In Chapter Four, Woolf looks in more detail at the careers of women writers from the Renaissance to the mid-nineteenth century. She sees that a few aristocratic women were sometimes able to find the time and space to write, though often against gender-based opposition, lack of helpful criticism, and debilitating attacks on their capacity. Aphra Behn then is cited as an important figure because she showed that a woman could make money writing; this opened avenues for many middle-class women to write. This development is important because, Woolf believes, the more women who are writing or who have written, the more likely it is that works of genius will be produced by a woman. Such works cannot occur in a vacuum, but only in the context of rich traditions. Women’s best genre, to date, has been the novel, she says, because that form is less dominated by male examples. But, in addition to the debilitating effects of opposition to women’s writing, women’s accomplishments as novelists have been hampered by social barriers to their gaining broad life experience and by the temptations to alter their writing either to please male critics or to push too vigorously for righting wrongs done to women.

Woolf begins Chapter Five (included here) by noting that in her own day women are writing all kinds of texts—not only fiction, but many kinds of nonfiction, a development she celebrates. She explores the implications of this development for women’s fiction by analyzing a hypothetical contemporary novel by a woman novelist. Woolf notes how the woman writing now must find new structures for her plot and her sentences. Women’s writing can depict a much wider range of women’s experiences and emotions, especially their relationships with each other, whereas men’s writing about women neglects these relationships and virtually every experience in women’s lives except their love for men. It is entirely fitting that women’s writing should differ from men’s. The differences should be praised and developed so that more of life can be treated faithfully in fiction. Women should not be required

to write like men, even though this will create difficulties in evaluating women's writing, because their own tradition is still relatively scanty. Things are moving in the right direction, Woolf concludes, and if no great women writers have yet emerged, she feels sure that they soon will.

Chapter Six begins with a gaze away from shelves of books, out the window to the London street, where Woolf sees a man and a woman get into a taxi together. The sight reminds her that, although she has just been insisting on the important differences between male and female artistic visions, the greatest creativity happens in the mind that incorporates both male and female points of view, a mind that is, whether in a biologically male or female body, androgynous. She shows the weakness of the mind that ignores one-half of this creative duality by analyzing men's writing, which, Woolf suggests, is deformed by egotism. She hints that such writing is congenial to, or even contributes to, fascism. The greatest male writers have been androgynous. Now, stepping out of her constructed persona, Woolf the speaker summarizes her argument and anticipates objections, such as that she has been too materialistic. But she is convinced that "intellectual freedom depends upon material things." She notes that most of the greatest male writers have been at least middle class. She stresses again the importance of recognizing and fostering a tradition of women's writing. Finally, she heralds the advent of the truly great woman writer, who will come as times change.

"MATERIAL THINGS"

### ***Selected Bibliography***

Andrew McNeillie's multivolume edition of Woolf's essays (1986– ) has, so far, published only her work up to 1924. Michèle Barrett has collected many of Woolf's shorter essays and literary reviews on women and writing in *Virginia Woolf: Women and Writing* (1979); Barrett's introduction also provides a helpful overview of Woolf's feminist literary theory. This is the source of "Women and Fiction," "Professions for Women," and the review of Dorothy Richardson included here. Our excerpt from *A Room of One's Own* is taken from a 1981 edition with a foreword by Mary Gordon.

Woolf's life has invited the efforts of many biographers. *Virginia Woolf: A Biography* (1972), in two volumes, by Woolf's nephew Quentin Bell, is still a major source, although Bell has been faulted for perpetuating the view of Woolf as a snobbish, hypochondriacal esthete that developed among the younger generation of English writers in the 1930s as they defined their work in contrast to hers. A shorter biography that counters Bell's bias and attends to the central role of feminism in Woolf's thought is Phyllis Rose's *Woman of Letters: A Life of Virginia Woolf* (1978). A well-regarded recent treatment is Hermione Lee's *Virginia Woolf* (1996; American edition 1997).

The major study of Woolf as feminist rhetorician is Krista Ratcliffe's treatment in *Anglo-American Feminist Challenges to the Rhetorical Traditions* (1996). *Virginia Woolf: Emerging Perspectives* (ed. Mark Hussey and Vara Neverow, 1994) contains three essays that link Woolf with rhetoric and composition studies: Vara Neverow's "A Room of One's Own as a Model of Composition Theory" suggests that the relationship Woolf describes between the woman writer and her male critic resembles that between any undergraduate student and his or her professor, requiring the writer in both cases to overcome the blocking caused by anxiety and to resist debilitating negative criticism; in "The Chameleon Voice and Classical Structure in *Three Guineas* and *A Room of One's Own*," Nancy Hynes analyzes these essays

as classical orations with exordium, narrative, partition, and so on; and in “Doodling Her Way to Insight: From Incompetent Student to Empowered Rhetor in *A Room of One’s Own*,” Lillian M. Bisson demonstrates that the composing process described in Woolf’s essay resembles that advocated by process-writing composition pedagogues such as Donald Murray and Ann Berthoff.

Thomas J. Farrell uses Woolf as a prime example of the “female mode of rhetoric” in “Female and Male Modes of Rhetoric” (*College English* 40 [1979]: 909–21). Other interesting analyses of the feminist import of Woolf’s style can be found in the chapter on Woolf in Shari Benstock’s *Textualizing the Feminine* (1991) and in Pamela L. Caughie’s *Virginia Woolf and Postmodernism* (1991). For more on connections between Woolf and *écriture* feminine, see Françoise Defromont, “Metaphorical Thinking and Poetic Writing in Virginia Woolf and Hélène Cixous,” in *The Body and the Text: Hélène Cixous, Reading and Teaching* (ed. Helen Wilcox, Keith McWatters, Ann Thompson, and Linda R. Williams, 1990). Michèle Barrett’s introduction to her collection of Woolf’s essays on women and writing, noted above, surveys Woolf’s feminist literary theory. Aiming primarily to restore Woolf’s reputation as a literary critic, but also with helpful information for rhetorical analysis, are the editors’ introduction and articles by Lisa Low (“Refusing to Hit Back: Virginia Woolf and the Impersonality Question”), Catherine Sandbach-Dahlström (“‘Que scais-je?’: Virginia Woolf and the Essay as Feminist Critique”), and others in *Virginia Woolf and the Essay* (ed. Beth Carole Rosenberg and Jeanne Dubino, 1997). Woolf’s thoughts on art and “propaganda” in *Three Guineas*, as analyzed by Jane Marcus in “‘No More Horses’: Virginia Woolf on Art and Propaganda” (*Women’s Studies* 4 [1977]: 265–90), are relevant to rhetoric. Marcus’s essays on Woolf, including “Sapphistry: Narration as Lesbian Seduction in *A Room of One’s Own*,” are collected in *Virginia Woolf and the Languages of Patriarchy* (1987).

## Professions for Women

When your secretary invited me to come here, she told me that your Society is concerned with the employment of women and she suggested that I might tell you something about my own professional experiences. It is true I am a woman; it is true I am employed; but what professional experiences have I had? It is difficult to say. My profession is literature; and in that profession there are fewer experiences for women than in any other, with the exception of the stage—fewer, I mean, that are peculiar to women. For the road was cut many years ago—by Fanny Burney, by Aphra Behn, by Harriet Martineau, by Jane Austen, by George Eliot—many famous women, and many more unknown and forgotten, have been before me, making the path smooth, and regulating my steps. Thus, when I came to write, there were very few material obstacles in my way.

Writing was a reputable and harmless occupation. The family peace was not broken by the scratching of a pen. No demand was made upon the family purse. For ten and sixpence one can buy paper enough to write all the plays of Shakespeare—if one has a mind that way. Pianos and models, Paris, Vienna and Berlin, masters and mistresses, are not needed by a writer. The cheapness of writing paper is, of course, the reason why women have succeeded as writers before they have succeeded in the other professions.

But to tell you my story—it is a simple one. You have only got to figure to yourselves a girl in a bedroom with a pen in her hand. She had only to move that pen from left to right—from ten o’clock to one. Then it occurred to her to do what is simple and cheap enough after all—to slip a few of those pages into an envelope, fix a



penny stamp in the corner, and drop the envelope into the red box at the corner. It was thus that I became a journalist; and my effort was rewarded on the first day of the following month—a very glorious day it was for me—by a letter from an editor containing a cheque for one pound ten shillings and sixpence. But to show you how little I deserve to be called a professional woman, how little I know of the struggles and difficulties of such lives, I have to admit that instead of spending that sum upon bread and butter, rent, shoes and stockings, or butcher's bills, I went out and bought a cat—a beautiful cat, a Persian cat, which very soon involved me in bitter disputes with my neighbours.

What could be easier than to write articles and to buy Persian cats with the profits? But wait a moment. Articles have to be about something. Mine, I seem to remember, was about a novel by a famous man. And while I was writing this review, I discovered that if I were going to review books I should need to do battle with a certain phantom. And the phantom was a woman, and when I came to know her better I called her after the heroine of a famous poem, *The Angel in the House*. It was she who used to come between me and my paper when I was writing reviews. It was she who bothered me and wasted my time and so tormented me that at last I killed her. You who come of a younger and happier generation may not have heard of her—you may not know what I mean by the *Angel in the House*. I will describe her as shortly as I can. She was intensely sympathetic. She was immensely charming. She was utterly unselfish. She excelled in the difficult arts of family life. She sacrificed herself daily. If there was chicken, she took the leg; if there was a draught she sat in it—in short she was so constituted that she never had a mind or a wish of her own, but preferred to sympathize always with the minds and wishes of others. Above all—I need not say it—she was pure. Her purity was supposed to be her chief beauty—her blushes, her great grace. In those days—the last of Queen Victoria—every house had its Angel. And when I came to write I encountered her with the very first words. The shadow of her wings fell on my page; I heard the rustling of her skirts in the room. Directly, that is to say, I took my pen in

my hand to review that novel by a famous man, she slipped behind me and whispered: "My dear, you are a young woman. You are writing about a book that has been written by a man. Be sympathetic; be tender; flatter; deceive; use all the arts and wiles of our sex. Never let anybody guess that you have a mind of your own. Above all, be pure." And she made as if to guide my pen. I now record the one act for which I take some credit to myself, though the credit rightly belongs to some excellent ancestors of mine who left me a certain sum of money—shall we say five hundred pounds a year?—so that it was not necessary for me to depend solely on charm for my living. I turned upon her and caught her by the throat. I did my best to kill her. My excuse, if I were to be had up in a court of law, would be that I acted in self-defence. Had I not killed her she would have killed me. She would have plucked the heart out of my writing. For, as I found, directly I put pen to paper, you cannot review even a novel without having a mind of your own, without expressing what you think to be the truth about human relations, morality, sex. And all these questions, according to the *Angel of the House*, cannot be dealt with freely and openly by women; they must charm, they must conciliate, they must—to put it bluntly—tell lies if they are to succeed. Thus, whenever I felt the shadow of her wing or the radiance of her halo upon my page, I took up the inkpot and flung it at her. She died hard. Her fictitious nature was of great assistance to her. It is far harder to kill a phantom than a reality. She was always creeping back when I thought I had despatched her. Though I flatter myself that I killed her in the end, the struggle was severe: it took much time that had better have been spent upon learning Greek grammar; or in roaming the world in search of adventures. But it was a real experience; it was an experience that was found to befall all women writers at that time. Killing the *Angel in the House* was part of the occupation of a woman writer.

But to continue my story. The *Angel* was dead; what then remained? You may say that what remained was a simple and common object—a young woman in a bedroom with an inkpot. In other words, now that she had rid herself of falsehood, that young woman had only to

"a simple and common object"

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8 16

what is "herself"?

"experiences  
as a body"

be herself. Ah, but what is "herself"? I mean, what is a woman? I assure you, I do not know. I do not believe that you know. I do not believe that anybody can know until she has expressed herself in all the arts and professions open to human skill. That indeed is one of the reasons why I have come here—out of respect for you, who are in process of showing us by your experiments what a woman is, who are in process of providing us, by your failures and successes, with that extremely important piece of information.

But to continue the story of my professional experiences. I made one pound ten and six by my first review; and I bought a Persian cat with the proceeds. Then I grew ambitious. A Persian cat is all very well, I said; but a Persian cat is not enough. I must have a motor car. And it was thus that I became a novelist—for it is a very strange thing that people will give you a motor car if you will tell them a story. It is a still stranger thing that there is nothing so delightful in the world as telling stories. It is far pleasanter than writing reviews of famous novels. And yet, if I am to obey your secretary and tell you my professional experiences as a novelist, I must tell you about a very strange experience that befell me as a novelist. And to understand it you must try first to imagine a novelist's state of mind. I hope I am not giving away professional secrets if I say that a novelist's chief desire is to be as unconscious as possible. He has to induce in himself a state of perpetual lethargy. He wants life to proceed with the utmost quiet and regularity. He wants to see the same faces, to read the same books, to do the same things day after day, month after month, while he is writing, so that nothing may break the illusion in which he is living—so that nothing may disturb or disquiet the mysterious nosings about, feelings round, darts, dashes and sudden discoveries of that very shy and illusive spirit, the imagination. I suspect that this state is the same both for men and women. Be that as it may, I want you to imagine me writing a novel in a state of trance. I want you to figure to yourselves a girl sitting with a pen in her hand, which for minutes, and indeed for hours, she never dips into the inkpot. The image that comes to my mind when I think of this girl is the image of a fisherman lying sunk in dreams on the verge of a

deep lake with a rod held out over the water. She was letting her imagination sweep unchecked round every rock and cranny of the world that lies submerged in the depths of our unconscious being. Now came the experience, the experience that I believe to be far commoner with women writers than with men. The line raced through the girl's fingers. Her imagination had rushed away. It had sought the pools, the depths, the dark places where the largest fish slumber. And then there was a smash. There was an explosion. There was foam and confusion. The imagination had dashed itself against something hard. The girl was roused from her dream. She was indeed in a state of the most acute and difficult distress. To speak without figure she had thought of something, something about the body, about the passions which it was unfitting for her as a woman to say. Men, her reason told her, would be shocked. The consciousness of what men will say of a woman who speaks the truth about her passions had roused her from her artist's state of unconsciousness. She could write no more. The trance was over. Her imagination could work no longer. This I believe to be a very common experience with women writers—they are impeded by the extreme conventionality of the other sex. For though men sensibly allow themselves great freedom in these respects, I doubt that they realize or can control the extreme severity with which they condemn such freedom in women.

These then were two very genuine experiences of my own. These were two of the adventures of my professional life. The first—killing the Angel in the House—I think I solved. She died. But the second, telling the truth about my own experiences as a body, I do not think I solved. I doubt that any woman has solved it yet. The obstacles against her are still immensely powerful—and yet they are very difficult to define. Outwardly, what is simpler than to write books? Outwardly, what obstacles are there for a woman rather than for a man? Inwardly, I think, the case is very different; she has still many ghosts to fight, many prejudices to overcome. Indeed it will be a long time still, I think, before a woman can sit down to write a book without finding a phantom to be slain, a rock to be dashed against. And if this is so in literature, the freest of

"here in  
this hall"

all professions for women, how is it in the new professions which you are now for the first time entering?

Those are the questions that I should like, had I time, to ask you. And indeed, if I have laid stress upon these professional experiences of mine, it is because I believe that they are, though in different forms, yours also. Even when the path is nominally open—when there is nothing to prevent a woman from being a doctor, a lawyer, a civil servant—there are many phantoms and obstacles, as I believe, looming in her way. To discuss and define them is I think of great value and importance; for thus only can the labour be shared, the difficulties be solved. But besides this, it is necessary also to discuss the ends and the aims for which we are fighting, for which we are doing battle with these formidable obstacles. Those aims cannot be taken for granted; they must be perpetually questioned and examined. The whole position, as I see it—here

in this hall surrounded by women practising for the first time in history I know not how many different professions—is one of extraordinary interest and importance. You have won rooms of your own in the house hitherto exclusively owned by men. You are able, though not without great labour and effort, to pay the rent. You are earning your five hundred pounds a year. But this freedom is only a beginning; the room is your own, but it is still bare. It has to be furnished; it has to be decorated; it has to be shared. How are you going to furnish it, how are you going to decorate it? With whom are you going to share it, and upon what terms? These, I think are questions of the utmost importance and interest. For the first time in history you are able to ask them; for the first time you are able to decide for yourselves what the answers should be. Willingly would I stay and discuss those questions and answers—but not tonight. My time is up; and I must cease.

conscious ambiguity  
as a mark of the 20<sup>th</sup>

## Century *Women and Fiction*

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The title of this article can be read in two ways: it may allude to women and the fiction that they write, or to women and the fiction that is written about them. The ambiguity is intentional, for in dealing with women as writers, as much elasticity as possible is desirable; it is necessary to leave oneself room to deal with other things besides their work, so much has that work been influenced by conditions that have nothing whatever to do with art.

The most superficial inquiry into women's writing instantly raises a host of questions. Why, we ask at once, was there no continuous writing done by women before the eighteenth century? Why did they then write almost as habitually as men, and in the course of that writing produce, one after another, some of the classics of English fiction? And why did their art then, and why to some extent does their art still, take the form of fiction?

A little thought will show us that we are ask-

ing questions to which we shall get, as answer, only further fiction. The answer lies at present locked in old diaries, stuffed away in old drawers, half-obliterated in the memories of the aged. It is to be found in the lives of the obscure—in those almost unlit corridors of history where the figures of generations of women are so dimly, so fitfully perceived. For very little is known about women. The history of England is the history of the male line, not of the female. Of our fathers we know always some fact, some distinction. They were soldiers or they were sailors; they filled that office or they made that law. But of our mothers, our grandmothers, our great-grandmothers, what remains? Nothing but a tradition. One was beautiful; one was red-haired; one was kissed by a Queen. We know nothing of them except their names and the dates of their marriages and the number of children they bore.

Thus, if we wish to know why at any particular time women did this or that, why they wrote

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nothing, why on the other hand they wrote masterpieces, it is extremely difficult to tell. Anyone who should seek among those old papers, who should turn history wrong side out and so construct a faithful picture of the daily life of the ordinary women in Shakespeare's time, in Milton's time, in Johnson's time, would not only write a book of astonishing interest, but would furnish the critic with a weapon which he now lacks. The extraordinary woman depends on the ordinary woman. It is only when we know what were the conditions of the average woman's life—the number of her children, whether she had money of her own, if she had a room to herself, whether she had help in bringing up her family, if she had servants, whether part of the housework was her task—it is only when we can measure the way of life and the experience of life made possible to the ordinary woman that we can account for the success or failure of the extraordinary woman as a writer.

Strange spaces of silence seem to separate one period of activity from another. There was Sappho and a little group of women all writing poetry on a Greek island six hundred years before the birth of Christ. They fall silent. Then about the year 1000 we find a certain court lady, the Lady Murasaki, writing a very long and beautiful novel in Japan. But in England in the sixteenth century, when the dramatists and poets were most active, the women were dumb. Elizabethan literature is exclusively masculine. Then, at the end of the eighteenth century and in the beginning of the nineteenth, we find women again writing—this time in England—with extraordinary frequency and success.

Law and custom were of course largely responsible for these strange intermissions of silence and speech. When a woman was liable, as she was in the fifteenth century, to be beaten and flung about the room if she did not marry the man of her parents' choice, the spiritual atmosphere was not favourable to the production of works of art. When she was married without her own consent to a man who thereupon became her lord and master, "so far at least as law and custom could make him," as she was in the time of the Stuarts, it is likely she had little time for writing, and less encouragement. The immense effect

of environment and suggestion upon the mind, we in our psychoanalytical age are beginning to realize. Again, with memoirs and letters to help us, we are beginning to understand how abnormal is the effort needed to produce a work of art, and what shelter and what support the mind of the artist requires. Of those facts the lives and letters of men like Keats and Carlyle and Flaubert assure us.

Thus it is clear that the extraordinary outburst of fiction in the beginning of the nineteenth century in England was heralded by innumerable slight changes in law and customs and manners. And women of the nineteenth century had some leisure; they had some education. It was no longer the exception for women of the middle and upper classes to choose their own husbands. And it is significant that of the four great women novelists—Jane Austen, Emily Brontë, Charlotte Brontë, and George Eliot—not one had a child, and two were unmarried.

Yet, though it is clear that the ban upon writing had been removed, there was still, it would seem, considerable pressure upon women to write novels. No four women can have been more unlike in genius and character than these four. Jane Austen can have had nothing in common with George Eliot; George Eliot was the direct opposite of Emily Brontë. Yet all were trained for the same profession; all, when they wrote, wrote novels.

Fiction was, as fiction still is, the easiest thing for a woman to write. Nor is it difficult to find the reason. A novel is the least concentrated form of art. A novel can be taken up or put down more easily than a play or a poem. George Eliot left her work to nurse her father. Charlotte Brontë put down her pen to pick the eyes out of the potatoes. And living as she did in the common sitting-room, surrounded by people, a woman was trained to use her mind in observation and upon the analysis of character. She was trained to be a novelist and not to be a poet.

Even in the nineteenth century, a woman lived almost solely in her home and her emotions. And those nineteenth-century novels, remarkable as they were, were profoundly influenced by the fact that the women who wrote them were excluded by their sex from certain kinds of experience.

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we think  
of this

That experience has a great influence upon fiction is indisputable. The best part of Conrad's novels, for instance, would be destroyed if it had been impossible for him to be a sailor. Take away all that Tolstoi knew of war as a soldier, of life and society as a rich young man whose education admitted him to all sorts of experience, and *War and Peace* would be incredibly impoverished.

Yet *Pride and Prejudice*, *Wuthering Heights*, *Villette*, and *Middlemarch* were written by women from whom was forcibly withheld all experience save that which could be met with in a middle-class drawing-room. No first-hand experience of war or seafaring or politics or business was possible for them. Even their emotional life was strictly regulated by law and custom. When George Eliot ventured to live with Mr Lewes without being his wife, public opinion was scandalized. Under its pressure she withdrew into a suburban seclusion which, inevitably, had the worst possible effects upon her work. She wrote that unless people asked of their own accord to come and see her, she never invited them. At the same time, on the other side of Europe, Tolstoi was living a free life as a soldier, with men and women of all classes, for which nobody censured him and from which his novels drew much of their astonishing breadth and vigour.

But the novels of women were not affected only by the necessarily narrow range of the writer's experience. They showed, at least in the nineteenth century, another characteristic which may be traced to the writer's sex. In *Middlemarch* and in *Jane Eyre* we are conscious not merely of the writer's character, as we are conscious of the character of Charles Dickens, but we are conscious of a woman's presence—of someone resenting the treatment of her sex and pleading for its rights. This brings into women's writing an element which is entirely absent from a man's, unless, indeed, he happens to be a working-man, a Negro, or one who for some other reason is conscious of disability. It introduces a distortion and is frequently the cause of weakness. The desire to plead some personal cause or to make a character the mouthpiece of some personal discontent or grievance always has a distressing effect, as if the spot at which the reader's

attention is directed were suddenly twofold instead of single.

The genius of Jane Austen and Emily Brontë is never more convincing than in their power to ignore such claims and solicitations and to hold on their way unperturbed by scorn or censure. But it needed a very serene or a very powerful mind to resist the temptation to anger. The ridicule, the censure, the assurance of inferiority in one form or another which were lavished upon women who practised an art, provoked such reactions naturally enough. One sees the effect in Charlotte Brontë's indignation, in George Eliot's resignation. Again and again one finds it in the work of the lesser women writers—in their choice of a subject, in their unnatural self-assertiveness, in their unnatural docility. Moreover, insincerity leaks in almost unconsciously. They adopt a view in deference to authority. The vision becomes too masculine or it becomes too feminine; it loses its perfect integrity and, with that, its most essential quality as a work of art.

The great change that has crept into women's writing is, it would seem, a change of attitude. The woman writer is no longer bitter. She is no longer angry. She is no longer pleading and protesting as she writes. We are approaching, if we have not yet reached, the time when her writing will have little or no foreign influence to disturb it. She will be able to concentrate upon her vision without distraction from outside. The aloofness that was once within the reach of genius and originality is only now coming within reach of ordinary women. Therefore the average novel by a woman is far more genuine and far more interesting today than it was a hundred or even fifty years ago.

But it is still true that before a woman can write exactly as she wishes to write, she has many difficulties to face. To begin with, there is the technical difficulty—so simple, apparently; in reality, so baffling—that the very form of the sentence does not fit her. It is a sentence made by men; it is too loose, too heavy, too pompous for a woman's use. Yet in a novel, which covers so wide a stretch of ground, an ordinary and usual type of sentence has to be found to carry the reader on easily and naturally from one end of the book to the other. And this a woman must

make for herself, altering and adapting the current sentence until she writes one that takes the natural shape of her thought without crushing or distorting it.

But that, after all, is only a means to an end, and the end is still to be reached only when a woman has the courage to surmount opposition and the determination to be true to herself. For a novel, after all, is a statement about a thousand different objects—human, natural, divine; it is an attempt to relate them to each other. In every novel of merit these different elements are held in place by the force of the writer's vision. But they have another order also, which is the order imposed upon them by convention. And as men are the arbiters of that convention, as they have established an order of values in life, so too, since fiction is largely based on life, these values prevail there also to a very great extent.

It is probable, however, that both in life and in art the values of a woman are not the values of a man. Thus, when a woman comes to write a novel, she will find that she is perpetually wishing to alter the established values—to make serious what appears insignificant to a man, and trivial what is to him important. And for that, of course, she will be criticized; for the critic of the opposite sex will be genuinely puzzled and surprised by an attempt to alter the current scale of values, and will see in it not merely a difference of view, but a view that is weak, or trivial, or sentimental, because it differs from his own.

But here, too, women are coming to be more independent of opinion. They are beginning to respect their own sense of values. And for this reason the subject matter of their novels begins to show certain changes. They are less interested, it would seem, in themselves; on the other hand, they are more interested in other women. In the early nineteenth century, women's novels were largely autobiographical. One of the motives that led them to write was the desire to expose their own suffering, to plead their own cause. Now that this desire is no longer so urgent, women are beginning to explore their own sex, to write of women as women have never been written of before; for of course, until very lately, women in literature were the creation of men.

Here again there are difficulties to overcome,

for, if one may generalize, not only do women submit less readily to observation than men, but their lives are far less tested and examined by the ordinary processes of life. Often nothing tangible remains of a woman's day. The food that has been cooked is eaten; the children that have been nursed have gone out into the world. Where does the accent fall? What is the salient point for the novelist to seize upon? It is difficult to say. Her life has an anonymous character which is baffling and puzzling in the extreme. For the first time, this dark country is beginning to be explored in fiction; and at the same moment a woman has also to record the changes in women's minds and habits which the opening of the professions has introduced. She has to observe how their lives are ceasing to run underground; she has to discover what new colours and shadows are showing in them now that they are exposed to the outer world.

If, then, one should try to sum up the character of women's fiction at the present moment, one would say that it is courageous; it is sincere; it keeps closely to what women feel. It is not bitter. It does not insist upon its femininity. But at the same time, a woman's book is not written as a man would write it. These qualities are much commoner than they were, and they give even to second- and third-rate work the value of truth and the interest of sincerity.

But in addition to these good qualities, there are two that call for a word more of discussion. The change which has turned the English woman from a nondescript influence, fluctuating and vague, to a voter, a wage-earner, a responsible citizen, has given her both in her life and in her art a turn towards the impersonal. Her relations now are not only emotional; they are intellectual, they are political. The old system which condemned her to squint askance at things through the eyes or through the interests of husband or brother, has given place to the direct and practical interests of one who must act for herself, and not merely influence the acts of others. Hence her attention is being directed away from the personal centre which engaged it exclusively in the past to the impersonal, and her novels naturally become more critical of society, and less analytical of individual lives.

We may expect that the office of gadfly to the state, which has been so far a male prerogative,

will now be discharged by women also. Their novels will deal with social evils and remedies. Their men and women will not be observed wholly in relation to each other emotionally, but as they cohere and clash in groups and classes and races. That is one change of some importance. But there is another more interesting to those who prefer the butterfly to the gadfly—that is to say, the artist to the reformer. The greater impersonality of women's lives will encourage the poetic spirit, and it is in poetry that women's fiction is still weakest. It will lead them to be less absorbed in facts and no longer content to record with astonishing acuteness the minute details which fall under their own observation. They will look beyond the personal and political relationships to the wider questions which the poet tries to solve—of our destiny and the meaning of life.

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The basis of the poetic attitude is of course largely founded upon material things. It depends upon leisure, and a little money, and the chance which money and leisure give to observe impersonally and dispassionately. With money and leisure at their service, women will naturally occupy themselves more than has hitherto been possible with the craft of letters. They will make a fuller and a more subtle use of the instrument of writing. Their technique will become bolder and richer.

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In the past, the virtue of women's writing often lay in its divine spontaneity, like that of the

blackbird's song or the thrush's. It was untaught; it was from the heart. But it was also, and much more often, chattering and garrulous—mere talk spilt over paper and left to dry in pools and blots. In future, granted time and books and a little space in the house for herself, literature will become for women, as for men, an art to be studied. Women's gift will be trained and strengthened. The novel will cease to be the dumping-ground for the personal emotions. It will become, more than at present, a work of art like any other, and its resources and its limitations will be explored.

From this it is a short step to the practice of the sophisticated arts, hitherto so little practised by women—to the writing of essays and criticism, of history and biography. And that, too, if we are considering the novel, will be of advantage; for besides improving the quality of the novel itself, it will draw off the aliens who have been attracted to fiction by its accessibility while their hearts lay elsewhere. Thus will the novel be rid of those excrescences of history and fact which, in our time, have made it so shapeless.

So, if we may prophesy, women in time to come will write fewer novels, but better novels; and not novels only, but poetry and criticism and history. But in this, to be sure, one is looking ahead to that golden, that perhaps fabulous, age when women will have what has so long been denied them—leisure, and money, and a room to themselves.

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## Dorothy Richardson

### THE TUNNEL

Although *The Tunnel* is the fourth book that Miss Richardson has written, she must still expect to find her reviewers paying a great deal of attention to her method. It is a method that demands attention, as a door whose handle we wrench ineffectively calls our attention to the fact that it is locked. There is no slipping smoothly down the accustomed channels; the first chapters provide an amusing spectacle of hasty critics seeking

them in vain. If this were the result of perversity, we should think Miss Richardson more courageous than wise; but being, as we believe, not wilful but natural, it represents a genuine conviction of the discrepancy between what she has to say and the form provided by tradition for her to say it in. She is one of the rare novelists who believe that the novel is so much alive that it actually grows. As she makes her advanced critic, Mr Wilson, remark: "There will be books with all that cut out—him and her—all that sort of

she seems something what  
Kathleen Brooks: the use of the book

thing. The book of the future will be clear of all that." And Miriam Henderson herself reflects: "but if books were written like that, sitting down and doing it cleverly and knowing just what you were doing and just how somebody else had done it, there was something wrong, some mannish cleverness that was only half right. To write books knowing all about style would be to become like a man." So "him and her" are cut out, and with them goes the odd deliberate business: the chapters that lead up and the chapters that lead down; the characters who are always characteristic; the scenes that are passionate and the scenes that are humorous; the elaborate construction of reality; the conception that shapes and surrounds the whole. All these things are cast away, and there is left, denuded, unsheltered, unbegun and unfinished, the consciousness of Miriam Henderson, the small sensitive lump of matter, half transparent and half opaque, which endlessly reflects and distorts the variegated procession, and is, we are bidden to believe, the source beneath the surface, the very oyster within the shell.

The critic is thus absolved from the necessity of picking out the themes of the story. The reader is not provided with a story; he is invited to embed himself in Miriam Henderson's consciousness, to register one after another, and one on top of another, words, cries, shouts, notes of a violin, fragments of lectures, to follow these impressions as they flicker through Miriam's mind, waking incongruously other thoughts, and plaiting incessantly the many-coloured and innumerable threads of life. But a quotation is better than description.

She was surprised now at her familiarity with the details of the room . . . that idea of visiting places in dreams. It was something more than that . . . all the real part of your life has a real dream in it; some of the real dream part of you coming true. You know in advance when you are really following your life. These things are familiar because reality is here. Coming events cast *light*. It is like dropping everything and walking backward to something you know is there. However far you go out you come back. . . . I am back now where I was before I began trying to do things like other people. I left home to get here. None of those things can touch me here. They are mine.

Here we are thinking, word by word, as Miriam thinks. The method, if triumphant, should make us feel ourselves seated at the centre of another mind, and, according to the artistic gift of the writer, we should perceive in the helter-skelter of flying fragments some unity, significance, or design. That Miss Richardson gets so far as to achieve a sense of reality far greater than that produced by the ordinary means is undoubted. But, then, which reality is it, the superficial or the profound? We have to consider the quality of Miriam Henderson's consciousness, and the extent to which Miss Richardson is able to reveal it. We have to decide whether the flying helter-skelter resolves itself by degrees into a perceptible whole. When we are in a position to make up our minds we cannot deny a slight sense of disappointment. Having sacrificed not merely "hims and hers," but so many seductive graces of wit and style for the prospect of some new revelation or greater intensity, we still find ourselves distressingly near the surface. Things look much the same as ever. It is certainly a very vivid surface. The consciousness of Miriam takes the reflection of a dentist's room to perfection. Her senses of touch, sight and hearing are all excessively acute. But sensations, impressions, ideas and emotions glance off her, unrelated and unquestioned, without shedding quite as much light as we had hoped into the hidden depths. We find ourselves in the dentist's room, in the street, in the lodging-house bedroom frequently and convincingly; but never, or only for a tantalizing second, in the reality which underlies these appearances. In particular, the figures of other people on whom Miriam casts her capricious light are vivid enough, but their sayings and doings never reach that degree of significance which we, perhaps unreasonably, expect. The old method seems sometimes the more profound and economical of the two. But it must be admitted that we are exacting. We want to be rid of realism, to penetrate without its help into the regions beneath it, and further require that Miss Richardson shall fashion this new material into something which has the shapeliness of the old accepted forms. We are asking too much; but the extent of our asking proves that *The Tunnel* is better in its failure than most books in their success.

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## REVOLVING LIGHTS

There is no one word, such as romance or realism, to cover, even roughly, the works of Miss Dorothy Richardson. Their chief characteristic, if an intermittent student be qualified to speak, is one for which we still seek a name. She has invented, or, if she has not invented, developed and applied to her own uses, a sentence which we might call the psychological sentence of the feminine gender. It is of a more elastic fibre than the old, capable of stretching to the extreme, of suspending the frailest particles, of enveloping the vaguest shapes. Other writers of the opposite sex have used sentences of this description and stretched them to the extreme. But there is a difference. Miss Richardson has fashioned her sentence consciously, in order that it may descend to the depths and investigate the crannies of Miriam Henderson's consciousness. It is a woman's sentence, but only in the sense that it is used to describe a woman's mind by a writer who is neither proud nor afraid of anything that she may discover in the psychology of her sex. And therefore we feel that the trophies that Miss Richardson brings to the surface, however we may dispute their size, are undoubtedly genuine. Her discoveries are concerned with states of being and not with states of doing. Miriam is aware of "life itself"; of the atmosphere of the table rather than of the table; of the silence rather than of the sound. Therefore she adds an element

to her perception of things which has not been noticed before, or, if noticed, has been guiltily suppressed. A man might fall dead at her feet (it is not likely), and Miriam might feel that a violent-coloured ray of light was an important element in her consciousness of the tragedy. If she felt it, she would say it. Therefore, in reading *Revolving Lights* we are often made uncomfortable by feeling that the accent upon the emotions has shifted. What was emphatic is smoothed away. What was important to Maggie Tulliver no longer matters to Miriam Henderson. At first, we are ready to say that nothing is important to Miriam Henderson. That is the way we generally retaliate when an artist tells us that the heart is not, as we should like it to be, a stationary body, but a body which moves perpetually, and is thus always standing in a new relation to the emotions which are the same. Chaucer, Donne, Dickens—each if you read him, shows this change of the heart. That is what Miss Richardson is doing on an infinitely smaller scale. Miriam Henderson is pointing to her heart and saying she feels a pain on her right, and not on her left. She points too didactically. Her pain, compared with Maggie Tulliver's, is a very little pain. But, be that as it may, here we have both Miss Wilson and Miss Richardson proving that the novel is not hung upon a nail and festooned with glory, but on the contrary, walks the high road, alive and alert, and brushes shoulders with real men and women.

my body as a  
perpetual change

## *A Room of One's Own*

### *Chapter Five*

I had come at last, in the course of this rambling, to the shelves which hold books by the living; by women and by men; for there are almost as many books written by women now as by men. Or if that is not yet quite true, if the male is still the voluble sex, it is certainly true that women no longer write novels solely. There are Jane Harrison's books on Greek archaeology; Vernon Lee's books on aesthetics; Gertrude Bell's books on

Persia. There are books on all sorts of subjects which a generation ago no woman could have touched. There are poems and plays and criticism; there are histories and biographies, books of travel and books of scholarship and research; there are even a few philosophies and books about science and economics. And though novels predominate, novels themselves may very well have changed from association with books of a different feather. The natural simplicity, the epic age of women's writing, may have gone. Read-

ing and criticism may have given her a wider range, a greater subtlety. The impulse towards autobiography may be spent. She may be beginning to use writing as an art, not as a method of self-expression. Among these new novels one might find an answer to several such questions.

I took down one of them at random. It stood at the very end of the shelf, was called *Life's Adventure*, or some such title, by Mary Carmichael, and was published in this very month of October. It seems to be her first book, I said to myself, but one must read it as if it were the last volume in a fairly long series, continuing all those other books that I have been glancing at—Lady Winchelsea's poems and Aphra Behn's plays and the novels of the four great novelists. For books continue each other, in spite of our habit of judging them separately. And I must also consider her—this unknown woman—as the descendant of all those other women whose circumstances I have been glancing at and see what she inherits of their characteristics and restrictions. So, with a sigh, because novels so often provide an anodyne and not an antidote, glide one into torpid slumbers instead of rousing one with a burning brand, I settled down with a notebook and a pencil to make what I could of Mary Carmichael's first novel, *Life's Adventure*.

To begin with, I ran my eye up and down the page. I am going to get the hang of her sentences first, I said, before I load my memory with blue eyes and brown and the relationship that there may be between Chloe and Roger. There will be time for that when I have decided whether she has a pen in her hand or a pickaxe. So I tried a sentence or two on my tongue. Soon it was obvious that something was not quite in order. The smooth gliding of sentence after sentence was interrupted. Something tore, something scratched; a single word here and there flashed its torch in my eyes. She was "unhanding" herself as they say in the old plays. She is like a person striking a match that will not light, I thought. But why, I asked her as if she were present, are Jane Austen's sentences not of the right shape for you? Must they all be scrapped because Emma and Mr. Woodhouse are dead? Alas, I sighed, that it should be so. For while Jane Austen breaks from melody to melody as Mozart from song to

song, to read this writing was like being out at sea in an open boat. Up one went, down one sank. This terseness, this short-windedness, might mean that she was afraid of something; afraid of being called "sentimental" perhaps; or she remembers that women's writing has been called flowery and so provides a superfluity of thorns; but until I have read a scene with some care, I cannot be sure whether she is being herself or some one else. At any rate, she does not lower one's vitality, I thought, reading more carefully. But she is heaping up too many facts. She will not be able to use half of them in a book of this size. (It was about half the length of *Jane Eyre*.) However, by some means or other she succeeded in getting us all—Roger, Chloe, Olivia, Tony and Mr. Bigham—in a canoe up the river. Wait a moment, I said, leaning back in my chair, I must consider the whole thing more carefully before I go any further.

I am almost sure, I said to myself, that Mary Carmichael is playing a trick on us. For I feel as one feels on a switchback railway when the car, instead of sinking, as one has been led to expect, swerves up again. Mary is tampering with the expected sequence. First she broke the sentence; now she has broken the sequence. Very well, she has every right to do both these things if she does them not for the sake of breaking, but for the sake of creating. Which of the two it is I cannot be sure until she has faced herself with a situation. I will give her every liberty, I said, to choose what that situation shall be; she shall make it of tin cans and old kettles if she likes; but she must convince me that she believes it to be a situation; and then when she has made it she must face it. She must jump. And, determined to do my duty by her as reader if she would do her duty by me as writer, I turned the page and read . . . I am sorry to break off so abruptly. Are there no men present? Do you promise me that behind that red curtain over there the figure of Sir Chartres Biron is not concealed? We are all women, you assure me? Then I may tell you that the very next words I read were these—"Chloe liked Olivia . . ." Do not start. Do not blush. Let us admit in the privacy of our own society that these things sometimes happen. Sometimes women do like women.

“Chloe liked Olivia,” I read. And then it struck me how immense a change was there. Chloe liked Olivia perhaps for the first time in literature. Cleopatra did not like Octavia. And how completely *Antony and Cleopatra* would have been altered had she done so! As it is, I thought, letting my mind, I am afraid, wander a little from *Life's Adventure*, the whole thing is simplified, conventionalised, if one dared say it, absurdly. Cleopatra's only feeling about Octavia is one of jealousy. Is she taller than I am? How does she do her hair? The play, perhaps, required no more. But how interesting it would have been if the relationship between the two women had been more complicated. All these relationships between women, I thought, rapidly recalling the splendid gallery of fictitious women, are too simple. So much has been left out, unattempted. And I tried to remember any case in the course of my reading where two women are represented as friends. There is an attempt at it in *Diana of the Crossways*. They are confidantes, of course, in Racine and the Greek tragedies. They are now and then mothers and daughters. But almost without exception they are shown in their relation to men. It was strange to think that all the great women of fiction were, until Jane Austen's day, not only seen by the other sex, but seen only in relation to the other sex. And how small a part of a woman's life is that: and how little can a man know even of that when he observes it through the black or rosy spectacles which sex puts upon his nose. Hence, perhaps, the peculiar nature of woman in fiction; the astonishing extremes of her beauty and horror; her alternations between heavenly goodness and hellish depravity—for so a lover would see her as his love rose or sank, was prosperous or unhappy. This is not so true of the nineteenth-century novelists, of course. Woman becomes much more various and complicated there. Indeed it was the desire to write about women perhaps that led men by degrees to abandon the poetic drama which, with its violence, could make so little use of them, and to devise the novel as a more fitting receptacle. Even so it remains obvious, even in the writing of Proust, that a man is terribly hampered and partial in his knowledge of women, as a woman in her knowledge of men.

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Also, I continued, looking down at the page again, it is becoming evident that women, like men, have other interests besides the perennial interests of domesticity. “Chloe liked Olivia. They shared a laboratory together. . . .” I read on and discovered that these two young women were engaged in mincing liver, which is, it seems, a cure for pernicious anaemia: although one of them was married and had—I think I am right in stating—two small children. Now all that, of course, has had to be left out, and thus the splendid portrait of the fictitious woman is much too simple and much too monotonous. Suppose, for instance, that men were only represented in literature as the lovers of women, and were never the friends of men, soldiers, thinkers, dreamers; how few parts in the plays of Shakespeare could be allotted to them; how literature would suffer! We might perhaps have most of Othello; and a good deal of Antony; but no Caesar, no Brutus, no Hamlet, no Lear, no Jaques—literature would be incredibly impoverished, as indeed literature is impoverished beyond our counting by the doors that have been shut upon women. Married against their will, kept in one room, and to one occupation, how could a dramatist give a full or interesting or truthful account of them? Love was the only possible interpreter. The poet was forced to be passionate or bitter, unless indeed he chose to “hate women,” which meant more often than not that he was unattractive to them.

Now if Chloe likes Olivia and they share a laboratory, which of itself will make their friendship more varied and lasting because it will be less personal; if Mary Carmichael knows how to write, and I was beginning to enjoy some quality in her style; if she has a room to herself, of which I am not quite sure; if she has five hundred a year of her own—but that remains to be proved—then I think that something of great importance has happened.

For if Chloe likes Olivia and Mary Carmichael knows how to express it she will light a torch in that vast chamber where nobody has yet been. It is all half lights and profound shadows like those serpentine caves where one goes with a candle peering up and down, not knowing where one is stepping. And I began to read the book again, and read how Chloe watched Olivia put a

jar on a shelf and say how it was time to go home to her children. That is a sight that has never been seen since the world began, I exclaimed. And I watched too, very curiously. For I wanted to see how Mary Carmichael set to work to catch those unrecorded gestures, those unsaid or half-said words, which form themselves, no more palpably than the shadows of moths on the ceiling, when women are alone, unlit by the capricious and coloured light of the other sex. She will need to hold her breath, I said, reading on, if she is to do it; for women are so suspicious of any interest that has not some obvious motive behind it, so terribly accustomed to concealment and suppression, that they are off at the flicker of an eye turned observingly in their direction. The only way for you to do it, I thought, addressing Mary Carmichael as if she were there, would be to talk of something else, looking steadily out of the window, and thus note, not with a pencil in a notebook, but in the shortest of shorthand, in words that are hardly syllabled yet, what happens when Olivia—this organism that has been under the shadow of the rock these million years—feels the light fall on it, and sees coming her way a piece of strange food—knowledge, adventure, art. And she reaches out for it, I thought, again raising my eyes from the page, and has to devise some entirely new combination of her resources, so highly developed for other purposes, so as to absorb the new into the old without disturbing the infinitely intricate and elaborate balance of the whole.

But, alas, I had done what I had determined not to do; I had slipped unthinkingly into praise of my own sex. “Highly developed”—“infinitely intricate”—such are undeniably terms of praise, and to praise one’s own sex is always suspect, often silly; moreover, in this case, how could one justify it? One could not go to the map and say Columbus discovered America and Columbus was a woman; or take an apple and remark, Newton discovered the laws of gravitation and Newton was a woman; or look into the sky and say aeroplanes are flying overhead and aeroplanes were invented by women. There is no mark on the wall to measure the precise height of women. There are no yard measures, neatly divided into the fractions of an inch, that one can lay against the qualities of a good mother or the devotion of

a daughter, or the fidelity of a sister, or the capacity of a housekeeper. Few women even now have been graded at the universities; the great trials of the professions, army and navy, trade, politics and diplomacy have hardly tested them. They remain even at this moment almost unclassified. But if I want to know all that a human being can tell me about Sir Hawley Butts, for instance, I have only to open Burke or Debrett and I shall find that he took such and such a degree; owns a hall; has an heir; was Secretary to a Board; represented Great Britain in Canada; and has received a certain number of degrees, offices, medals and other distinctions by which his merits are stamped upon him indelibly. Only Providence can know more about Sir Hawley Butts than that.

When, therefore, I say “highly developed,” “infinitely intricate,” of women, I am unable to verify my words either in Whitaker, Debrett or the University Calendar. In this predicament what can I do? And I looked at the bookcase again. There were the biographies: Johnson and Goethe and Carlyle and Sterne and Cowper and Shelley and Voltaire and Browning and many others. And I began thinking of all those great men who have for one reason or another admired, sought out, lived with, confided in, made love to, written of, trusted in, and shown what can only be described as some need of and dependence upon certain persons of the opposite sex. That all these relationships were absolutely Platonic I would not affirm, and Sir William Joynson Hicks would probably deny. But we should wrong these illustrious men very greatly if we insisted that they got nothing from these alliances but comfort, flattery and the pleasures of the body. What they got, it is obvious, was something that their own sex was unable to supply; and it would not be rash, perhaps, to define it further, without quoting the doubtless rhapsodical words of the poets, as some stimulus, some renewal of creative power which is in the gift only of the opposite sex to bestow. He would open the door of drawing-room or nursery, I thought, and find her among her children perhaps, or with a piece of embroidery on her knee—at any rate, the centre of some different order and system of life, and the contrast between this world and his own, which might be the law courts or the House

of Commons, would at once refresh and invigorate; and there would follow, even in the simplest talk, such a natural difference of opinion that the dried ideas in him would be fertilised anew; and the sight of her creating in a different medium from his own would so quicken his creative power that insensibly his sterile mind would begin to plot again, and he would find the phrase or the scene which was lacking when he put on his hat to visit her. Every Johnson has his Thrale, and holds fast to her for some such reasons as these, and when the Thrale marries her Italian music master Johnson goes half mad with rage and disgust, not merely that he will miss his pleasant evening at Streatham, but that the light of his life will be "as if gone out."

And without being Dr. Johnson or Goethe or Carlyle or Voltaire, one may feel, though very differently from these great men, the nature of this intricacy and the power of this highly developed creative faculty among women. One goes into the room—but the resources of the English language would be much put to the stretch, and whole flights of words would need to wing their way illegitimately into existence before a woman could say what happens when she goes into a room. The rooms differ so completely; they are calm or thunderous; open on to the sea, or, on the contrary, give on to a prison yard; are hung with washing; or alive with opals and silks; are hard as horsehair or soft as feathers—one has only to go into any room in any street for the whole of that extremely complex force of femininity to fly in one's face. How should it be otherwise? For women have sat indoors all these millions of years, so that by this time the very walls are permeated by their creative force, which has, indeed, so overcharged the capacity of bricks and mortar that it must needs harness itself to pens and brushes and business and politics. But this creative power differs greatly from the creative power of men. And one must conclude that it would be a thousand pities if it were hindered or wasted, for it was won by centuries of the most drastic discipline, and there is nothing to take its place. It would be a thousand pities if women wrote like men, or lived like men, or looked like men, for if two sexes are quite inadequate, considering the vastness and variety of the world,

how should we manage with one only? Ought not education to bring out and fortify the differences rather than the similarities? For we have too much likeness as it is, and if an explorer should come back and bring word of other sexes looking through the branches of other trees at other skies, nothing would be of greater service to humanity; and we should have the immense pleasure into the bargain of watching Professor X rush for his measuring-rods to prove himself "superior."

Mary Carmichael, I thought, still hovering at a little distance above the page, will have her work cut out for her merely as an observer. I am afraid indeed that she will be tempted to become, what I think the less interesting branch of the species—the naturalist-novelist, and not the contemplative. There are so many new facts for her to observe. She will not need to limit herself any longer to the respectable houses of the upper middle classes. She will go without kindness or condescension, but in the spirit of fellowship into those small, scented rooms where sit the courtesan, the harlot and the lady with the pug dog. There they still sit in the rough and ready-made clothes that the male writer has had perforce to clap upon their shoulders. But Mary Carmichael will have out her scissors and fit them close to every hollow and angle. It will be a curious sight, when it comes, to see these women as they are, but we must wait a little, for Mary Carmichael will still be encumbered with that self-consciousness in the presence of "sin" which is the legacy of our sexual barbarity. She will still wear the shoddy old fetters of class on her feet.

However, the majority of women are neither harlots nor courtesans; nor do they sit clasping pug dogs to dusty velvet all through the summer afternoon. But what do they do then? and there came to my mind's eye one of those long streets somewhere south of the river whose infinite rows are innumably populated. With the eye of the imagination I saw a very ancient lady crossing the street on the arm of a middle-aged woman, her daughter, perhaps, both so respectably booted and furred that their dressing in the afternoon must be a ritual, and the clothes themselves put away in cupboards with camphor, year after year, throughout the summer months. They cross the road when the lamps are being lit (for the dusk is

ambiguity as resource

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their favourite hour), as they must have done year after year. The elder is close on eighty; but if one asked her what her life has meant to her, she would say that she remembered the streets lit for the battle of Balaclava, or had heard the guns fire in Hyde Park for the birth of King Edward the Seventh. And if one asked her, longing to pin down the moment with date and season, but what were you doing on the fifth of April 1868, or the second of November 1875, she would look vague and say that she could remember nothing. For all the dinners are cooked; the plates and cups washed; the children set to school and gone out into the world. Nothing remains of it all. All has vanished. No biography or history has a word to say about it. And the novels, without meaning to, inevitably lie.

All these infinitely obscure lives remain to be recorded, I said, addressing Mary Carmichael as if she were present; and went on in thought through the streets of London feeling in imagination the pressure of dumbness, the accumulation of unrecorded life, whether from the women at the street corners with their arms akimbo, and the rings embedded in their fat swollen fingers, talking with a gesticulation like the swing of Shakespeare's words; or from the violet-sellers and match-sellers and old crones stationed under doorways; or from drifting girls whose faces, like waves in sun and cloud, signal the coming of men and women and the flickering lights of shop windows. All that you will have to explore, I said to Mary Carmichael, holding your torch firm in your hand. Above all, you must illumine your own soul with its profundities and its shallows, and its vanities and its generousities, and say what your beauty means to you or your plainness, and what is your relation to the everchanging and turning world of gloves and shoes and stuffs swaying up and down among the faint scents that come through chemists' bottles down arcades of dress material over a floor of pseudomarble. For in imagination I had gone into a shop; it was laid with black and white paving; it was hung, astonishingly beautifully, with coloured ribbons. Mary Carmichael might well have a look at that in passing, I thought, for it is a sight that would lend itself to the pen as fittingly as any snowy peak or rocky gorge in the Andes. And there is the girl

behind the counter too—I would as soon have her true history as the hundred and fiftieth life of Napoleon or seventieth study of Keats and his use of Miltonic inversion which old Professor Z and his like are now inditing. And then I went on very warily, on the very tips of my toes (so cowardly am I, so afraid of the lash that was once almost laid on my own shoulders), to murmur that she should also learn to laugh, without bitterness, at the vanities—say rather at the peculiarities, for it is a less offensive word—of the other sex. For there is a spot the size of a shilling at the back of the head which one can never see for oneself. It is one of the good offices that sex can discharge for sex—to describe that spot the size of a shilling at the back of the head. Think how much women have profited by the comments of Juvenal; by the criticism of Strindberg. Think with what humanity and brilliancy men, from the earliest ages, have pointed out to women that dark place at the back of the head! And if Mary were very brave and very honest, she would go behind the other sex and tell us what she found there. A true picture of man as a whole can never be painted until a woman has described that spot the size of a shilling. Mr. Woodhouse and Mr. Casaubon are spots of that size and nature. Not of course that any one in their senses would counsel her to hold up to scorn and ridicule of set purpose—literature shows the futility of what is written in that spirit. Be truthful, one would say, and the result is bound to be amazingly interesting. Comedy is bound to be enriched. New facts are bound to be discovered.

However, it was high time to lower my eyes to the page again. It would be better, instead of speculating what Mary Carmichael might write and should write, to see what in fact Mary Carmichael did write. So I began to read again. I remembered that I had certain grievances against her. She had broken up Jane Austen's sentence, and thus given me no chance of pluming myself upon my impeccable taste, my fastidious ear. For it was useless to say, "Yes, yes, this is very nice; but Jane Austen wrote much better than you do," when I had to admit that there was no point of likeness between them. Then she had gone further and broken the sequence—the expected order. Perhaps she had done this unconsciously,

merely giving things their natural order, as a woman would, if she wrote like a woman. But the effect was somehow baffling; one could not see a wave heaping itself, a crisis coming round the next corner. Therefore I could not plume myself either upon the depths of my feelings and my profound knowledge of the human heart. For whenever I was about to feel the usual things in the usual places, about love, about death, the annoying creature twitched me away, as if the important point were just a little further on. And thus she made it impossible for me to roll out my sonorous phrases about "elemental feelings," the "common stuff of humanity," "depths of the human heart," and all those other phrases which support us in our belief that, however clever we may be on top, we are very serious, very profound and very humane underneath. She made me feel, on the contrary, that instead of being serious and profound and humane, one might be—and the thought was far less seductive—merely lazy minded and conventional into the bargain.

But I read on, and noted certain other facts. She was no "genius"—that was evident. She had nothing like the love of Nature, the fiery imagination, the wild poetry, the brilliant wit, the brooding wisdom of her great predecessors, Lady Winchilsea, Charlotte Brontë, Emily Brontë, Jane Austen and George Eliot; she could not write with the melody and the dignity of Dorothy Osborne—indeed she was no more than a clever girl whose books will no doubt be pulped by the publishers in ten years' time. But, nevertheless, she had certain advantages which women of far greater gift lacked even half a century ago. Men were no longer to her "the opposing faction"; she need not waste her time railing against them; she need not climb on to the roof and ruin her peace of mind longing for travel, experience and a knowledge of the world and character that were denied her. Fear and hatred were almost gone, or traces of them showed only in a slight exaggeration of the joy of freedom, a tendency to the caustic and satirical, rather than to the romantic, in her treatment of the other sex. Then there could be no doubt that as a novelist she enjoyed some natural advantages of a high order. She had a sensibility that was very wide, eager and free. It responded to an almost imperceptible touch on it.

boy, she  
can sure  
keep it real

It feasted like a plant newly stood in the air on every sight and sound that came its way. It ranged, too, very subtly and curiously, among almost unknown or unrecorded things; it lighted on small things and showed that perhaps they were not small after all. It brought buried things to light and made one wonder what need there had been to bury them. Awkward though she was and without the unconscious bearing of long descent which makes the least turn of the pen of a Thackeray or a Lamb delightful to the ear, she had—I began to think—mastered the first great lesson; she wrote as a woman, but as a woman who has forgotten that she is a woman, so that her pages were full of that curious sexual quality which comes only when sex is unconscious of itself.

All this was to the good. But no abundance of sensation or fineness of perception would avail unless she could build up out of the fleeting and the personal the lasting edifice which remains unthrown. I had said that I would wait until she faced herself with "a situation." And I meant by that until she proved by summoning, beckoning and getting together that she was not a skimmer of surfaces merely, but had looked beneath into the depths. Now is the time, she would say to herself at a certain moment, when without doing anything violent I can show the meaning of all this. And she would begin—how unmistakable that quickening is!—beckoning and summoning, and there would rise up in memory, half forgotten, perhaps quite trivial things in other chapters dropped by the way. And she would make their presence felt while some one sewed or smoked a pipe as naturally as possible, and one would feel, as she went on writing, as if one had gone to the top of the world and seen it laid out, very majestically, beneath.

At any rate, she was making the attempt. And as I watched her lengthening out for the test, I saw, but hoped that she did not see, the bishops and the deans, the doctors and the professors, the patriarchs and the pedagogues all at her shouting warning and advice. You can't do this and you shan't do that! Fellows and scholars only allowed on the grass! Ladies not admitted without a letter of introduction! Aspiring and graceful female novelists this way! So they kept at her like the crowd at a fence on the race-course, and it was

her trial to take her fence without looking to right or left. If you stop to curse you are lost, I said to her; equally, if you stop to laugh. Hesitate or fumble and you are done for. Think only of the jump, I implored her, as if I had put the whole of my money on her back; and she went over it like a bird. But there was a fence beyond that and a fence beyond that. Whether she had the staying power I was doubtful, for the clapping and the crying were fraying to the nerves. But she did her best. Considering that Mary Carmichael was no genius, but an unknown girl writing her first novel in a bed-sitting-room, without enough of

those desirable things, time, money and idleness, she did not do so badly, I thought.

Give her another hundred years, I concluded, reading the last chapter—people's noses and bare shoulders showed naked against a starry sky, for some one had twitched the curtain in the drawing-room—give her a room of her own and five hundred a year, let her speak her mind and leave out half that she now puts in, and she will write a better book one of these days. She will be a poet, I said, putting *Life's Adventure*, by Mary Carmichael, at the end of the shelf, in another hundred years' time.

boy, she's good!

this bears out the  
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material advantages  
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better

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notion of  
"genius" is used  
to keep in place  
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and privileges