

## 1: Women in Literature – A Literary Overview

*When first published in 1905, *A Literature of Their Own* quickly set the stage for the creative explosion of feminist literary studies that transformed the field in the 1970s. Launching a major new area for literary investigation, the book uncovered the long but neglected tradition of women writers in England.*

But not everything expressed in words—even when organized and written down—is counted as literature. Those writings that are primarily informative—technical, scholarly, journalistic—would be excluded from the rank of literature by most, though not all, critics. Certain forms of writing, however, are universally regarded as belonging to literature as an art. Individual attempts within these forms are said to succeed if they possess something called artistic merit and to fail if they do not. The nature of artistic merit is less easy to define than to recognize. The writer need not even pursue it to attain it. On the contrary, a scientific exposition might be of great literary value and a pedestrian poem of none at all. The purest or, at least, the most intense literary form is the lyric poem, and after it comes elegiac, epic, dramatic, narrative, and expository verse. Most theories of literary criticism base themselves on an analysis of poetry, because the aesthetic problems of literature are there presented in their simplest and purest form. Poetry that fails as literature is not called poetry at all but verse. The Greeks thought of history as one of the seven arts, inspired by a goddess, the muse Clio. The essay was once written deliberately as a piece of literature: Today most essays are written as expository, informative journalism, although there are still essayists in the great tradition who think of themselves as artists. Now, as in the past, some of the greatest essayists are critics of literature, drama, and the arts. Some examples of this biographical literature were written with posterity in mind, others with no thought of their being read by anyone but the writer. Some are in a highly polished literary style; others, couched in a privately evolved language, win their standing as literature because of their cogency, insight, depth, and scope. Many works of philosophy are classed as literature. The Dialogues of Plato 4th century bc are written with great narrative skill and in the finest prose; the Meditations of the 2nd-century Roman emperor Marcus Aurelius are a collection of apparently random thoughts, and the Greek in which they are written is eccentric. Yet both are classed as literature, while the speculations of other philosophers, ancient and modern, are not. Certain scientific works endure as literature long after their scientific content has become outdated. This is particularly true of books of natural history, where the element of personal observation is of special importance. Oratory, the art of persuasion, was long considered a great literary art. The oratory of the American Indian, for instance, is famous, while in Classical Greece, Polymnia was the muse sacred to poetry and oratory. Today, however, oratory is more usually thought of as a craft than as an art. Most critics would not admit advertising copywriting, purely commercial fiction, or cinema and television scripts as accepted forms of literary expression, although others would hotly dispute their exclusion. The test in individual cases would seem to be one of enduring satisfaction and, of course, truth. Indeed, it becomes more and more difficult to categorize literature, for in modern civilization words are everywhere. Man is subject to a continuous flood of communication. Most of it is fugitive, but here and there—in high-level journalism, in television, in the cinema, in commercial fiction, in westerns and detective stories, and in plain, expository prose—some writing, almost by accident, achieves an aesthetic satisfaction, a depth and relevance that entitle it to stand with other examples of the art of literature. Critical theories Western If the early Egyptians or Sumerians had critical theories about the writing of literature, these have not survived. From the time of Classical Greece until the present day, however, Western criticism has been dominated by two opposing theories of the literary art, which might conveniently be called the expressive and constructive theories of composition. The Greek philosopher and scholar Aristotle is the first great representative of the constructive school of thought. His Poetics the surviving fragment of which is limited to an analysis of tragedy and epic poetry has sometimes been dismissed as a recipe book for the writing of potboilers. Certainly, Aristotle is primarily interested in the theoretical construction of tragedy, much as an architect might analyze the construction of a temple, but he is not exclusively objective and matter of fact. He does, however, regard the expressive elements in literature as of secondary importance, and the terms he uses to describe them have been open to interpretation and a matter

of controversy ever since. Its standards are almost entirely expressive. Where Aristotle is analytical and states general principles, the pseudo-Longinus is more specific and gives many quotations: Thus, at the beginning of Western literary criticism, the controversy already exists. Is the artist or writer a technician, like a cook or an engineer, who designs and constructs a sort of machine that will elicit an aesthetic response from his audience? Or is he a virtuoso who above all else expresses himself and, because he gives voice to the deepest realities of his own personality, generates a response from his readers because they admit some profound identification with him? This antithesis endures throughout western European history—Scholasticism versus Humanism, Classicism versus Romanticism, Cubism versus Expressionism—and survives to this day in the common judgment of our contemporary artists and writers. It is surprising how few critics have declared that the antithesis is unreal, that a work of literary or plastic art is at once constructive and expressive, and that it must in fact be both. Eastern Critical theories of literature in Asian cultures, however, have been more varied. There is an immense amount of highly technical, critical literature in India. Some works are recipe books, vast collections of tropes and stylistic devices; others are philosophical and general. In the best period of Indian literature, the cultural climax of Sanskrit c. There are no long epic poems in Chinese, no verse novels of the sort written in England by Robert Browning or Alfred Lord Tennyson in the 19th century. In Chinese drama, apart from a very few of the songs, the verse as such is considered doggerel. The versified treatises on astronomy, agriculture, or fishing, of the sort written in Greek and Roman times and during the 18th century in the West, are almost unknown in East Asia. Chinese poetry is almost exclusively lyric, meditative, and elegiac, and rarely does any poem exceed lines—most are little longer than Western sonnets; many are only quatrains. In Japan this tendency to limit length was carried even further. From the 17th century and onward, the most popular poetic form was the haiku, which has only 17 syllables. This development is relevant to the West because it spotlights the ever-increasing emphasis which has been laid on intensity of communication, a characteristic of Western poetry and of literature generally as it has evolved since the late 19th century. In East Asia all cultivated people were supposed to be able to write suitable occasional poetry, and so those qualities that distinguished a poem from the mass consequently came to be valued above all others. Literary language In some literatures notably classical Chinese, Old Norse, Old Irish, the language employed is quite different from that spoken or used in ordinary writing. This marks off the reading of literature as a special experience. In the Western tradition, it is only in comparatively modern times that literature has been written in the common speech of cultivated men. The Elizabethans did not talk like Shakespeare nor 18th-century people in the stately prose of Samuel Johnson or Edward Gibbon the so-called Augustan plain style in literature became popular in the late 17th century and flourished throughout the 18th, but it was really a special form of rhetoric with antecedent models in Greek and Latin. The first person to write major works of literature in the ordinary English language of the educated man was Daniel Defoe? Robinson Crusoe is much more contemporary in tone than the elaborate prose of 19th-century writers like Thomas De Quincey or Walter Pater. Ambiguity Other writers have sought to use language for its most subtle and complex effects and have deliberately cultivated the ambiguity inherent in the multiple or shaded meanings of words. Eliot in his literary essays is usually considered the founder of this movement. Actually, the platform of his critical attitudes is largely moral, but his two disciples, I. The basic document of the movement is C. Only a generation later, however, their ideas were somewhat at a discount. However, ambiguity remained a principal shaping tool for the writer and a primary focus in literary criticism. Translation Certainly, William Blake or Thomas Campion, when they were writing their simple lyrics, were unaware of the ambiguities and multiple meanings that future critics would find in them. Nevertheless, language is complex. Words do have overtones; they do stir up complicated reverberations in the mind that are ignored in their dictionary definitions. Great stylists, and most especially great poets, work with at least a half-conscious, or subliminal, awareness of the infinite potentialities of language. This is one reason why the essence of most poetry and great prose is so resistant to translation quite apart from the radically different sound patterns that are created in other-language versions. The translator must project himself into the mind of the original author; he must transport himself into an entirely different world of relationships between sounds and meanings, and at the same time he must establish an equivalence between one infinitely complex system and another. Since no two languages are truly

equivalent in anything except the simplest terms, this is a most difficult accomplishment. Certain writers are exceptionally difficult to translate. There are no satisfactory English versions, for example, of the Latin of Catullus, the French of Baudelaire, the Russian of Pushkin, or of the majority of Persian and Arabic poetry. On the other hand, the Germans insist that Shakespeare is better in German than he is in English, a humorous exaggeration perhaps. But again, Shakespeare is resistant to translation into French. His English seems to lack equivalents in that language. The very greatest translations may become classics in their own right, of enduring literary excellence the King James Version of the Bible, appearing in , is an outstanding example, but on the whole the approximate equivalence of most translations to their originals seems to have a very short life. The original work remains the same, of lasting value to its own people, but the translation becomes out of date with each succeeding generation as the language and criteria of literary taste change. Nothing demonstrates the complexity of literary language more vividly. Yet the values of great literature are more fundamental than complexity and subtleties of meaning arising from language alone. Works far removed from contemporary man in time and in cultural background, composed in a variety of languages utterly different from one another in structure, have nevertheless been translated successfully enough to be deeply moving. The 20th century witnessed an immense mass of the oral literature of preliterate peoples and of the writings of all the great civilizations translated into modern languages. Translations of these literatures often distorted the original stories and, at best, captured only their essence. However, without these translations, such stories would most likely be forever lost. The craft of literature, indeed, can be said to be in part the manipulation of a structure in time, and so the simplest element of marking time, rhythm, is therefore of basic importance in both poetry and prose. Prosody, which is the science of versification, has for its subject the materials of poetry and is concerned almost entirely with the laws of metre, or rhythm in the narrowest sense. It deals with the patterning of sound in time; the number, length, accent, and pitch of syllables; and the modifications of rhythm by vowels and consonants. In most poetry, certain basic rhythms are repeated with modifications that is to say, the poem rhymes or scans or both but not in all. Since lyric poetry is either the actual text of song or else is immediately derived from song, it is regular in structure nearly everywhere in the world, although the elements of patterning that go into producing its rhythm may vary. The most important of these elements in English poetry, for example, have been accent, grouping of syllables called feet, number of syllables in the line, and rhyme at the end of a line and sometimes within it. Other elements such as pitch, resonance, repetition of vowels assonance, repetition of consonants alliteration, and breath pauses cadence have also been of great importance in distinguishing successful poetry from doggerel verse, but on the whole they are not as important as the former, and poets have not always been fully conscious of their use of them. The rhythms of prose are more complicated, though not necessarily more complex, than those of poetry. The rules of prose patterning are less fixed; patterns evolve and shift indefinitely and are seldom repeated except for special emphasis. So the analysis of prose rhythm is more difficult to make than, at least, the superficial analysis of poetry. Structure The craft of writing involves more than mere rules of prosody. First, the literary situation has to be established. The reader must be directly related to the work, placed in it—given enough information on who, what, when, or why—so that his attention is caught and held or, on the other hand, he must be deliberately mystified, to the same end.

### 2: literature of their own | Download eBook pdf, epub, tuebl, mobi

*Like that later work I find "A Literature of Their Own" to be outstanding. Showalter's title was influenced by Virginia Woolf's famous essay "A Room of Their Own" in which she argued that for women to be able to write fiction they needed their own income, a quiet room and a spirit of androgyny.*

Ebook, read on Open Library. Think of this as a literature seminar with a really interesting professor who at times will read you passages of books and then tie them all back to the central theme. This however is a good thing, because the focus Ebook, read on Open Library. Charlotte Bronte and George Eliot V. Subverting the Feminine Novel: The Female Aesthetic X. Beyond the Female Aesthetic: Contemporary Women Novelists Biographical Appendix and Selected Bibliography Showalter provides many examples from books and contemporary publications to support her statements, but quoting all of that in full would be even more lengthy. At the same time, I also want to save many quotes that I personally was interested in. This book is an attempt to fill in the terrain between these literary landmarks and to construct a more reliable map from which to explore the achievements of English women novelists. This book is an effort to describe the female literary tradition in the English novel from the generation of the Brontes to the present day, and to show how the development of this tradition is similar to the development of any literary subculture. The novelists publicly proclaimed, and sincerely believed, their antifeminism. By working in the home, by preaching submission and self-sacrifice, and by denouncing female self-assertiveness, they worked to atone for their own will to write. Victorian women were not accustomed to choosing a vocation; womanhood was a vocation in itself. This uniformity of social origin is true of English writers generally, but is more extreme in the case of women, who were even less likely than men to be the children of the laboring poor. Women novelists were overwhelmingly the daughters of the upper middle class, the aristocracy, and the professions. Tess Dubeyfield did not write fiction. Yet the comments of critics in Victorian journals give the impression that every woman in England was shouldering her pen. For example my copy of Mrs. Frances Poynter, and Martha Walker Freer? The Victorian illusion of enormous numbers [of female writers] came from overreaction of male competitors, the exaggerated visibility of the woman writer, the overwhelming success of a few novels in the s, the conjunction of feminist themes in fiction with with feminist activism in England, and the availability of biographical information about the novelists, which made them living heroines, rather than sets of cold and inky initials. It is a commonplace for an ambitious heroine in a feminine novel to make mastery of the classics the initial goal in her search for truth. It was not until much later that women writers began to understand that the classical curriculum and the conventional schoolroom offered a very limited education, and to appreciate that their own efforts may even have given them an advantage over their brothers. Furthermore, women writers were likely to be dependent on their earnings and contributing to the support of their families, and not, as has been conjectured, indulging themselves at the expense of fathers and husbands. One of the distinguishing characteristics of the female novelists is the seriousness with which they took their domestic roles. But neither condescension nor indignation is warranted. Up until about feminine novelists felt a sincere wish to integrate and harmonize the responsibilities of their personal and professional lives. Moreover, they believed that such a reconciliation of opposites would enrich their art and deepen their understanding. It was not exactly that critics revered motherhood and its wisdom, but that they regarded mothers as normal women; the unmarried and the childless had already a certain sexual stigma to overcome. In the early part of the century, attacks on the barren spinster novelist were part of the common fund of humor. As it became apparent that Jane Austen and Maria Edgeworth were not aberrations, but the forerunners of female participation in the development of the novel, jokes about dancing dogs no longer seemed an adequate response. Women novelists might have banded together and insisted on their vocation as something that made them superior to the ordinary women, perhaps even happier. Instead they adopted defensive positions and committed themselves to conventional roles. When the authors behind the pseudonyms [Eliot and Bronte] were revealed to be women, critics were dismayed. The main difference between the two episodes was that Charlotte Bronte had been shocked, dismayed, and hurt to discover that her realism struck others as improper; George Eliot had seen what happened to Charlotte Bronte,

and was prepared. Charlotte Bronte and George Eliot p. Critics have been rather slow to perceive that much of the wish-fulfillment in the feminine novel comes from women wishing they were men, with the greater freedom and range masculinity confers. Their heroes are not so much their ideal lovers as their projected egos. Rochester, a race of novel-heroes have sprung up They are not conventionally handsome, and often are downright ugly; they have piercing eyes; they are brusque and cynical in speech, impetuous in action. Thrilling the heroine with their rebellion and power, they simultaneously appeal to her reforming energies. The problem with the brute hero, the reason that he was considered so much a feminine property, was not that he was an unconvincing man, but that to the conservative male Victorian mind he was unlovable. At least one woman critic recognized the appeal of the rough lover. Sensationalism and Feminine Protest p Dr George Black warned in that incautious perusal of such novels had a "tendency to accelerate the occurrence of menstruation. Marian Halcombe, as her first name suggests, is an anomalous figure somewhat similar to George Eliot Collins did not like women novelists. She is particularly dangerous because she looks so innocent. Wicked women used to be brunettes long ago, now they are the daintiest, softest, prettiest of blonde creatures; and this change has been wrought by Lady Audley and her influence on contemporary novels. This time around, women rejected the passivity and the non competitive separation of spheres basic to the feminine ideal. The campaign reached its full strength at just about the time that *The Subjection of Women* appeared. On December 31, the *Daily News* published a manifesto demanding the abolition of the Acts that was signed by prominent women, including Florence Nightingale and Harriet Martineau. From then on, respectable women were confronted with an ever-escalating series of shocking stories of male brutality, profligacy, and vice. The policeman and the doctor became agents of the state in their forcible examinations of women accused of prostitution. The suicide of an innocent suspect, Mrs. Percy, in , consolidated the view of a male alliance dedicated to the persecution of women. Women objected because men were neither examined nor punished for their part in the transactions.

### 3: A Literature of Their Own: British Women Novelists From Brontë to Lessing by Elaine Showalter

*elaine showalter i revisiting a literature of their own and the women's movement collection at the Fawcett Library, I found "free zones in the library world, new found lands for scholars to explore" ("Notes" ).*

### 4: A Literature of Their Own by Elaine Showalter ~ things mean a lot

*A Literature of Their Own is one of the major works of feminist literary criticism written in the second feminist wave. It is truly seminal in many of its ideas, and forms a brave attempt at finding and (re)creating a sense of feminine heritage in literature.*

### 5: A literature of their own : British women novelists from Brontë to Lessing in SearchWorks catalog

*When first published in , A LITERATURE OF THEIR OWN quickly set the stage for the creative explosion of feminist literary studies that transformed the field in the s.*

### 6: A Literature of Their Own Critical Essays - [www.enganchecubano.com](http://www.enganchecubano.com)

*Showalter asserts that women in England shared a subculture through the physical experience of the sexual life cycle, which could not be openly discussed. This situation created a close sisterly.*

### 7: A Literature of Their Own Analysis - [www.enganchecubano.com](http://www.enganchecubano.com)

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*A Literature of Their Own is Showalter's response to Virginia Woolf's call for a history of women writers in Woolf's A Room of One's Own (). Showalter's analysis of a woman's.*

### 9: A literature of their own ( edition) | Open Library

*A Literature of Their Own places the women novelists everyone has heard of in a new setting, considering them in relation to their relatively unknown female contemporaries. The resulting shift of perspective generates fresh social and literary understanding.*

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