



Imagining Virginia Woolf: An Experiment in Critical Biography

Maria DiBattista

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Where other works of literary criticism are absorbed with the question--How to read a book?--*Imagining Virginia Woolf* asks a slightly different but more intriguing one: how does one read an author? Maria DiBattista answers this by undertaking an experiment in critical biography. The subject of this work is not Virginia Woolf, the person who wrote the novels, criticism, letters, and famous diary, but a different being altogether, someone or something Maria DiBattista identifies as "the figment of the author." This is the Virginia Woolf who lives intermittently in the pages of her writings and in the imagination of her readers. Drawing on Woolf's own extensive remarks on the pleasures and perils of reading, DiBattista argues that reading Woolf, in fact reading any author, involves an encounter with this imaginative figment, whose distinct, stylistic traits combine to produce that beguiling phantom--the literary personality.

DiBattista reveals a writer who possessed not a single personality, but a cluster of distinct, yet complementary identities: the Sibyl of Bloomsbury, the Author, the Critic, the World Writer, and the Adventurer, the last of which, DiBattista claims, unites them all.

Imagining Virginia Woolf provides an original way of reading, one that captures with variety and subtlety the personality that exists only in Woolf's works and in the minds of her readers.

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