




# STUDY QUESTIONS FOR ART OF *FICTION & MODERN FICTION*


Dr. Nihal TOPCU



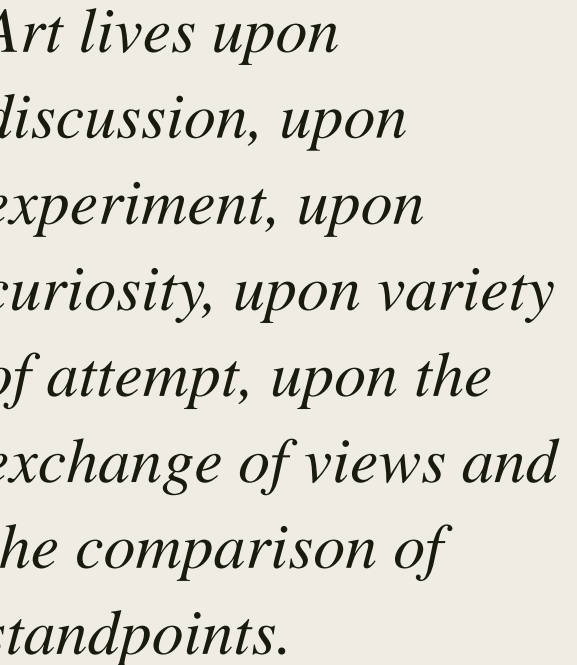
HENRY JAMES'S *ART OF*  
*FICTION* (1884)




**WHAT IS THE  
BACKGROUND OF  
HENRY JAMES AND  
HIS ESSAY *THE ART  
OF FICTION?***

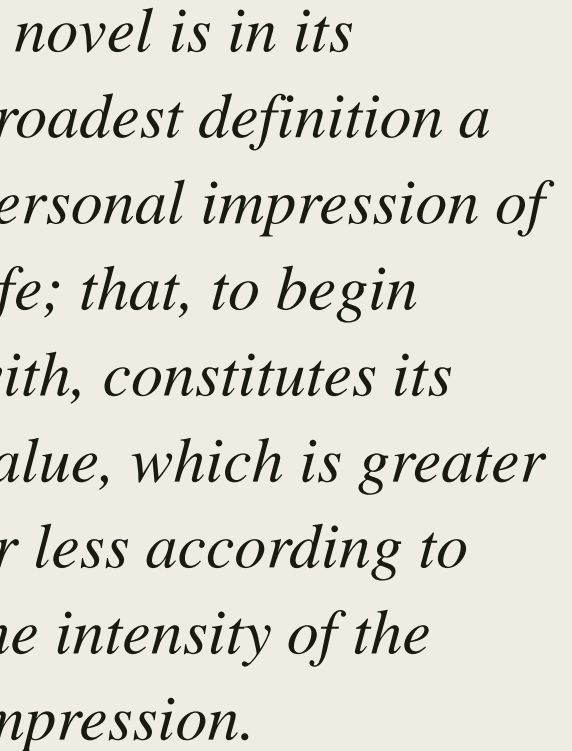


*Art lives upon  
discussion, upon  
experiment, upon  
curiosity, upon variety  
of attempt, upon the  
exchange of views and  
the comparison of  
standpoints.*





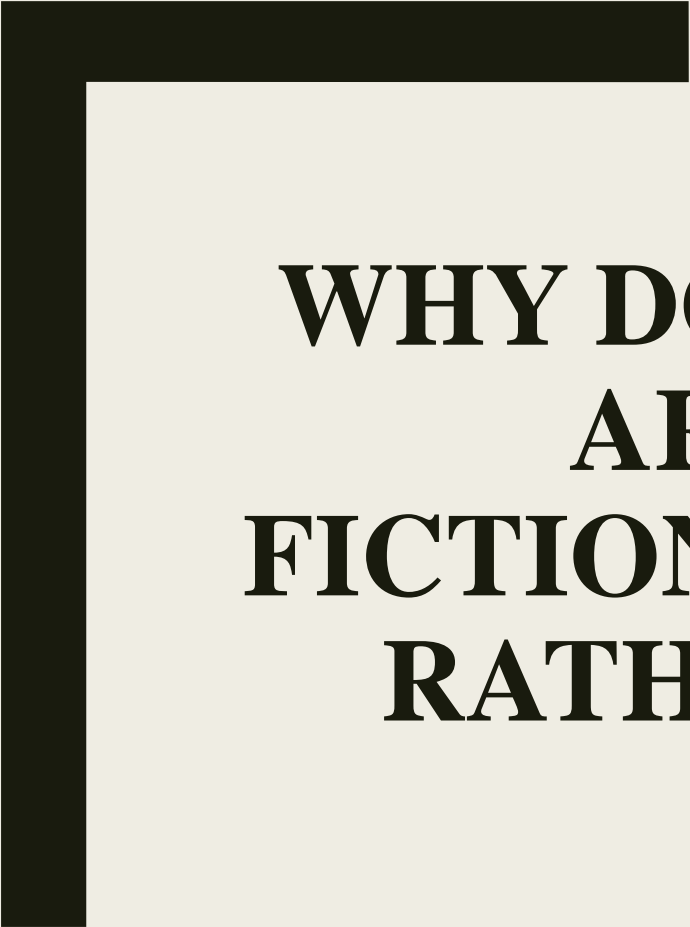
**HOW DOES JAMES  
DEFINE THE NOVEL  
IN THE ART OF  
FICTION?**



*A novel is in its  
broadest definition a  
personal impression of  
life; that, to begin  
with, constitutes its  
value, which is greater  
or less according to  
the intensity of the  
impression.*

# WHAT IS JAMES'S MAIN CRITIQUE OF WALTER BESANT'S VIEWS ON FICTION?

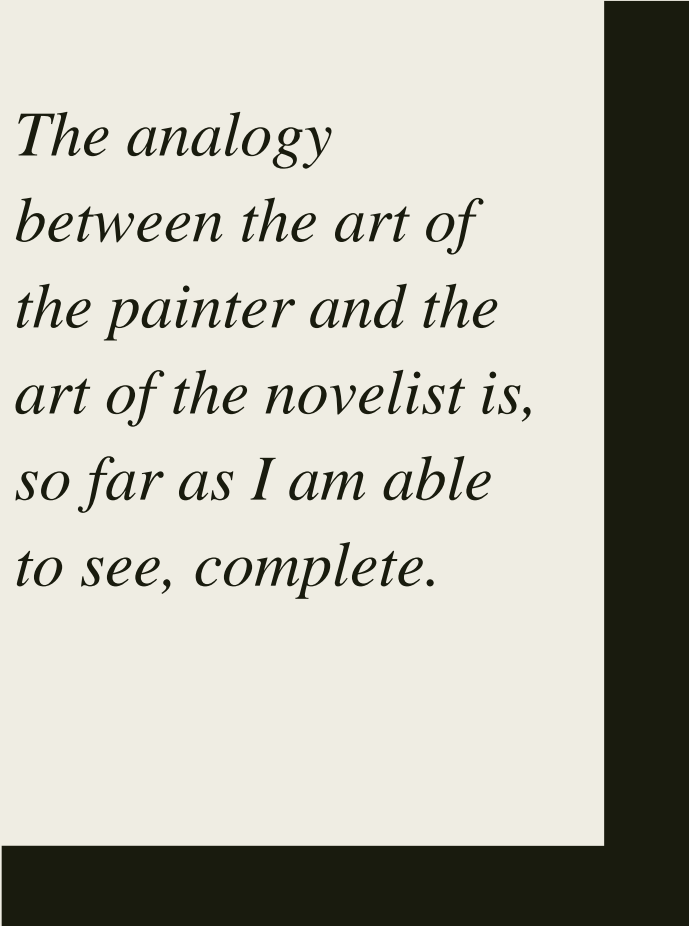
*Mr. Besant seems to me to mistake in attempting to say so definitely beforehand what sort of an affair the good novel will be (...) The good health of an art which undertakes so immediately to reproduce life must demand that it be perfectly free.*




**WHY DOES JAMES  
ARGUE THAT  
FICTION IS AN ART  
RATHER THAN A  
CRAFT?**



*The analogy  
between the art of  
the painter and the  
art of the novelist is,  
so far as I am able  
to see, complete.*

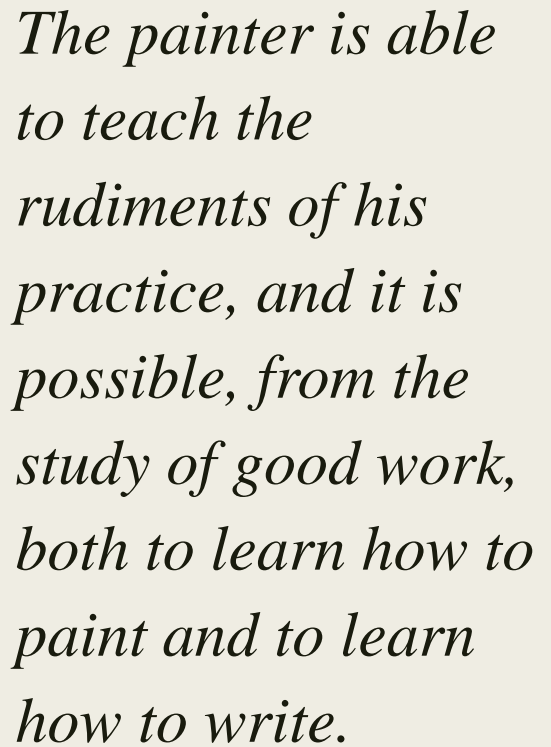




# HOW DOES JAMES COMPARE FICTION TO PAINTING?




*The painter is able to teach the rudiments of his practice, and it is possible, from the study of good work, both to learn how to paint and to learn how to write.*



**WHAT DOES  
JAMES SAY ABOUT  
THE ROLE OF  
EXPERIENCE IN  
WRITING FICTION?**

*Experience is never limited and it is never complete; it is an immense sensibility, a kind of huge spider-web, of the finest silken threads, suspended in the chamber of consciousness and catching every air-borne particle in its tissue.*

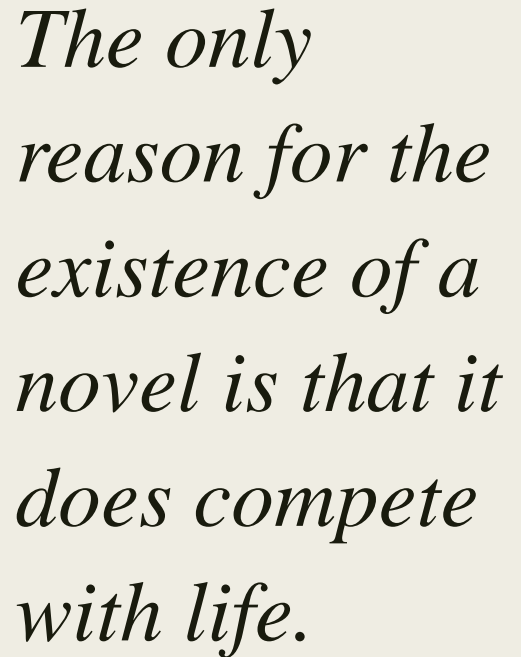




**HOW DOES JAMES  
VIEW THE  
RELATIONSHIP  
BETWEEN REALITY  
AND FICTION?**

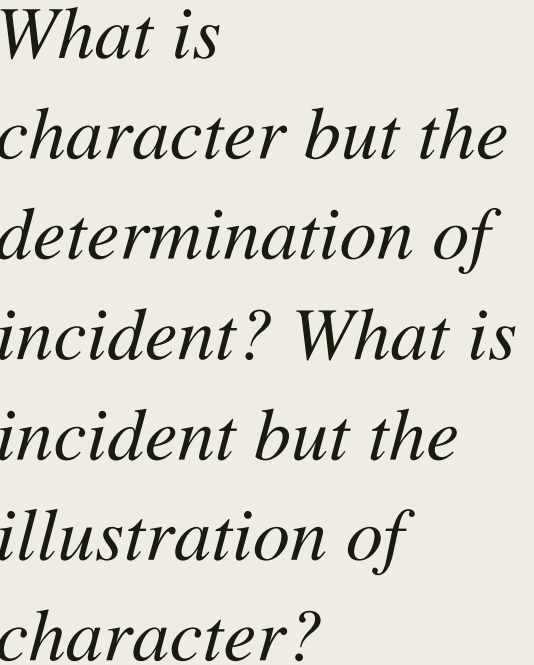


*The only  
reason for the  
existence of a  
novel is that it  
does compete  
with life.*






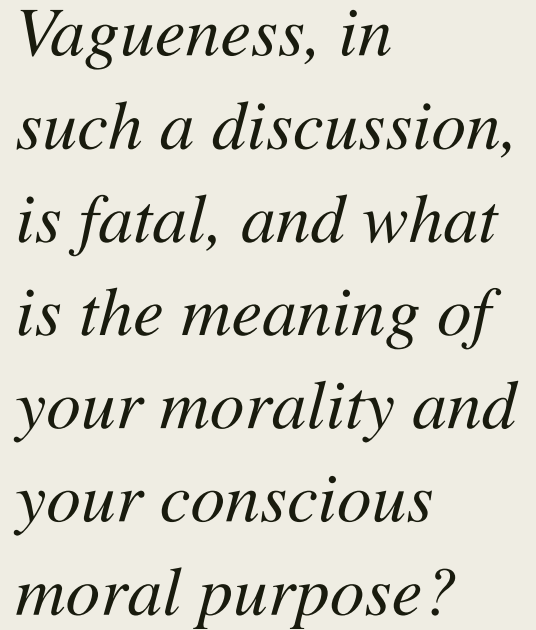
**WHAT DOES JAMES  
SAY ABOUT THE  
IMPORTANCE OF  
CHARACTER IN  
FICTION?**



*What is  
character but the  
determination of  
incident? What is  
incident but the  
illustration of  
character?*




**HOW DOES JAMES  
ADDRESS THE  
QUESTION OF  
MORALITY IN  
FICTION?**



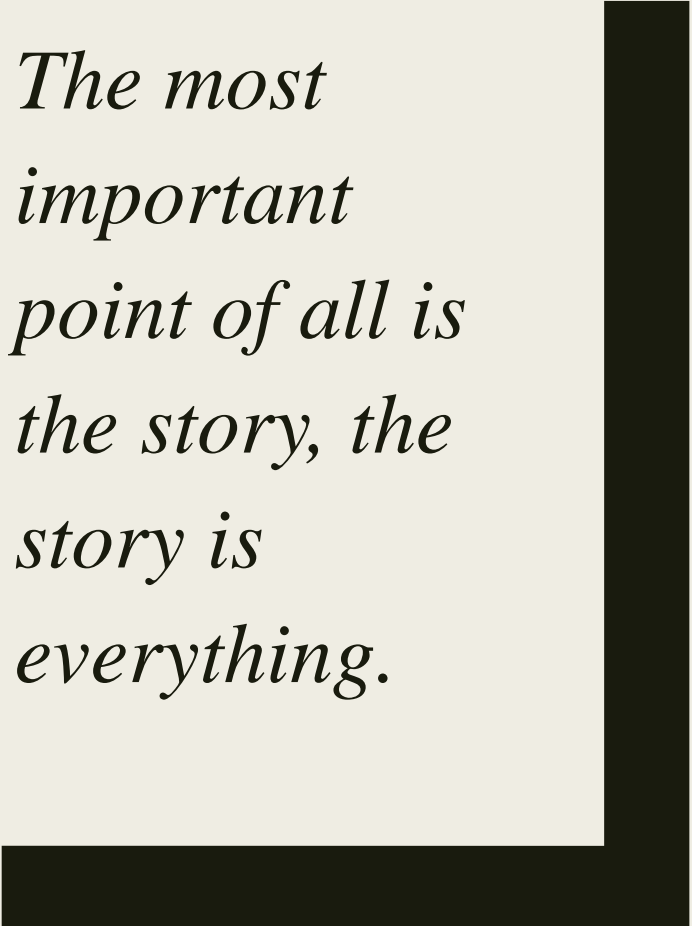
*Vagueness, in  
such a discussion,  
is fatal, and what  
is the meaning of  
your morality and  
your conscious  
moral purpose?*



**WHAT IS JAMES'S  
VIEW ON THE  
IMPORTANCE OF  
STYLE IN FICTION?**



*The most  
important  
point of all is  
the story, the  
story is  
everything.*

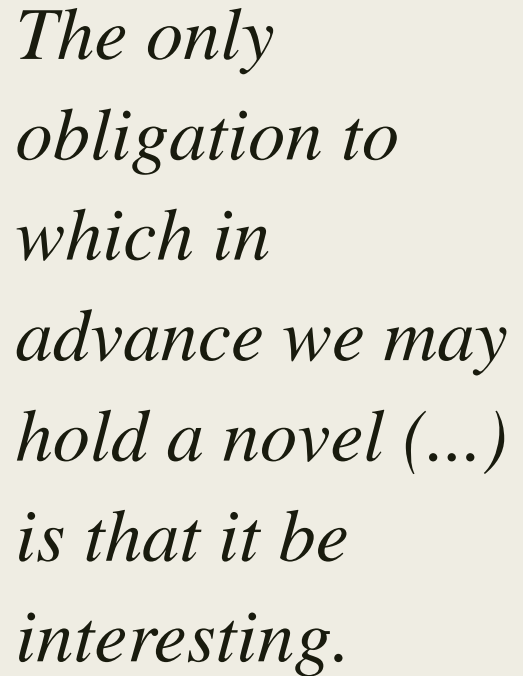





**HOW DOES JAMES  
DEFINE A “GOOD”  
NOVEL?**




*The only  
obligation to  
which in  
advance we may  
hold a novel (...)   
is that it be  
interesting.*

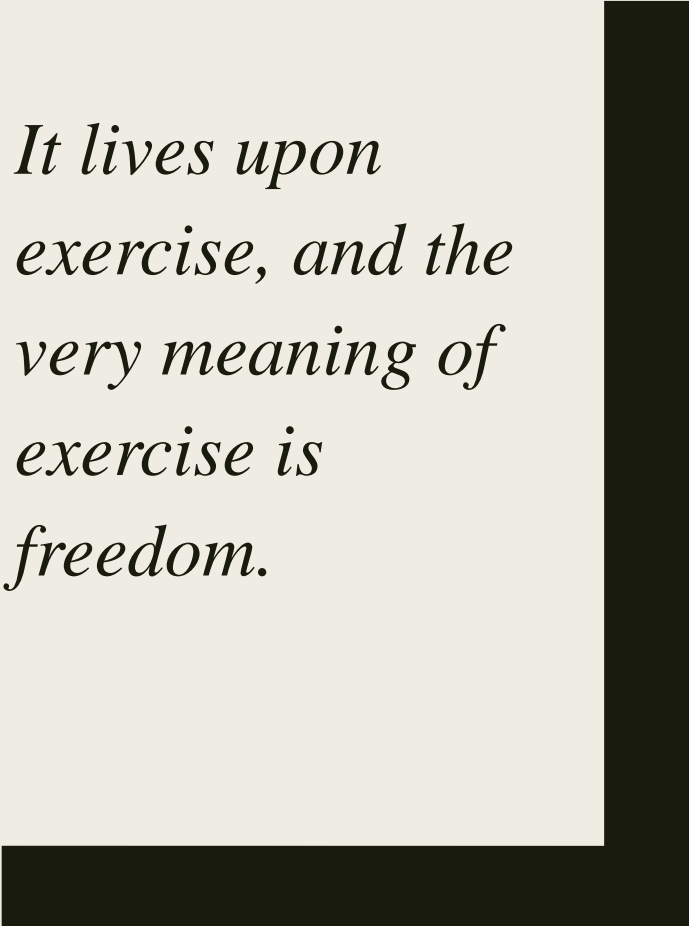




**WHAT DOES JAMES  
MEAN BY  
“FREEDOM” IN  
FICTION?**



*It lives upon  
exercise, and the  
very meaning of  
exercise is  
freedom.*

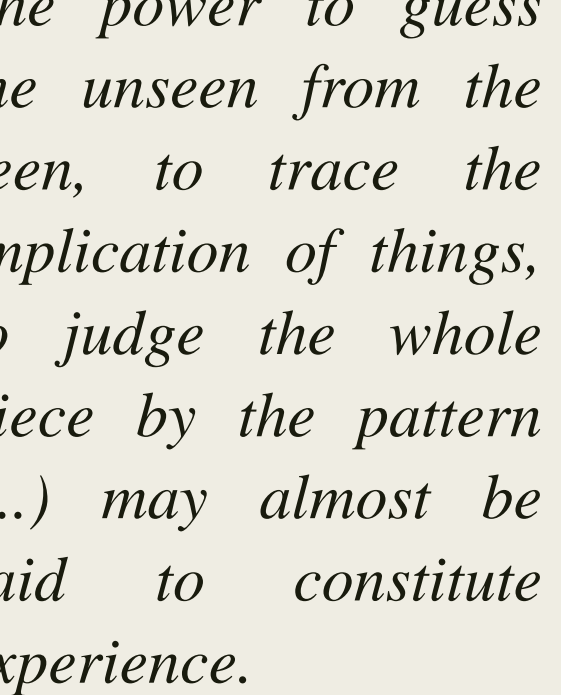


**HOW DOES JAMES  
RESPOND TO THE  
IDEA THAT NOVELS  
SHOULD BE  
“INSTRUCTIVE”?**

*Literature should  
be either  
instructive or  
amusing (...) This,  
however, is a view  
of the matter which  
carries us but a  
very short way.*



# WHAT IS JAMES'S PERSPECTIVE ON THE NOVELIST'S IMAGINATION?



*The power to guess  
the unseen from the  
seen, to trace the  
implication of things,  
to judge the whole  
piece by the pattern  
(...) may almost be  
said to constitute  
experience.*




**WHAT IS THE  
LASTING IMPACT OF  
*THE ART OF FICTION*  
ON LITERARY  
CRITICISM?**

*Remember that  
your first duty is to  
be as complete as  
possible—to make  
as perfect a work.  
Be generous and  
delicate, and then,  
in the vulgar  
phrase, go in!*



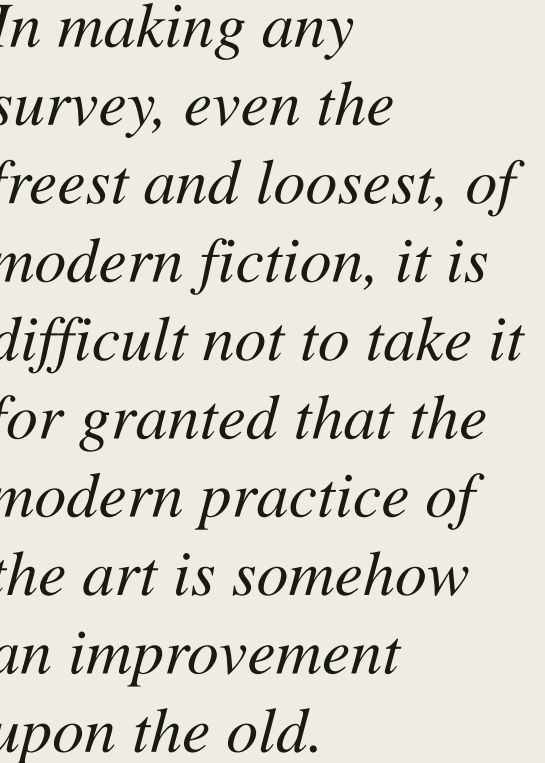
VIRGINIA WOOLF'S *MODERN  
FICTION* (1925)



**WHAT IS THE  
BACKGROUND OF  
VIRGINIA WOOLF  
AND HER ESSAY  
*MODERN FICTION*?**



*In making any survey, even the freest and loosest, of modern fiction, it is difficult not to take it for granted that the modern practice of the art is somehow an improvement upon the old.*



**WHAT IS WOOLF'S  
MAIN CRITICISM OF  
EDWARDIAN  
NOVELISTS LIKE H.G.  
WELLS, ARNOLD  
BENNETT, AND JOHN  
GALSWORTHY?**

*If we tried to formulate our meaning in one word we should say that these three writers are materialists. It is because they are concerned not with the spirit but with the body that they have disappointed us.*

# HOW DOES WOOLF CONTRAST MODERN FICTION WITH TRADITIONAL FICTION?

*The writer seems constrained, not by his own free will but by some powerful and unscrupulous tyrant (...) if a writer were a free man and not a slave, if he could write what he chose, not what he must, if he could base his work upon his own feeling and not upon convention, there would be no plot, no comedy, no tragedy, no love interest or catastrophe in the accepted style.*

**WHAT DOES  
WOOLF MEAN BY  
THE TERM  
“MATERIALISTS” IN  
THE ESSAY?**

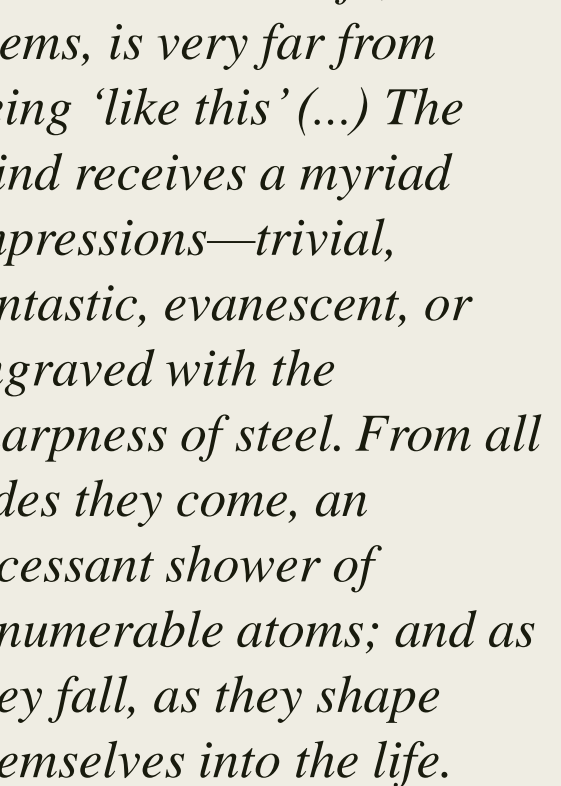
*If we fasten, then, one label on all these books, on which is one word—materialists—we mean by it that they write of unimportant things; that they spend immense skill and immense industry making the trivial and the transitory appear the true and the enduring.*




**WHAT KIND OF  
FICTION DOES  
WOOLF SUPPORT  
IN *MODERN  
FICTION*?**

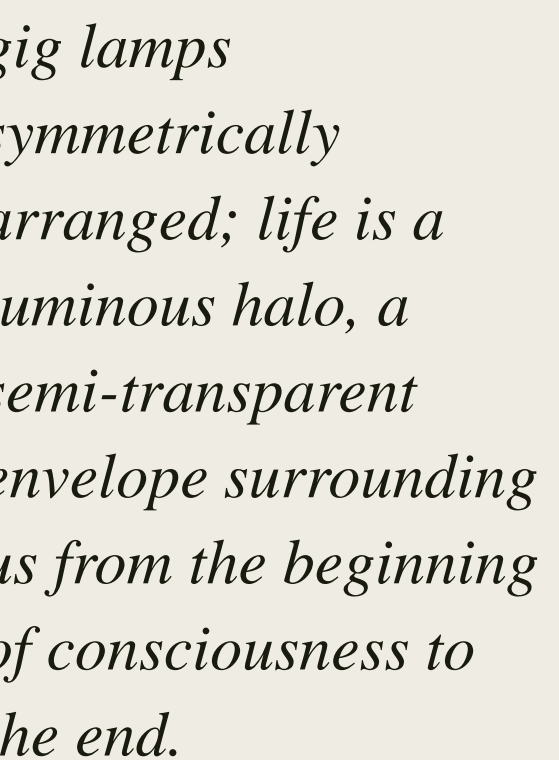


*Look within and life, it seems, is very far from being 'like this' (...) The mind receives a myriad impressions—trivial, fantastic, evanescent, or engraved with the sharpness of steel. From all sides they come, an incessant shower of innumerable atoms; and as they fall, as they shape themselves into the life.*





**HOW DOES WOOLF  
DESCRIBE LIFE IN  
RELATION TO  
FICTION?**

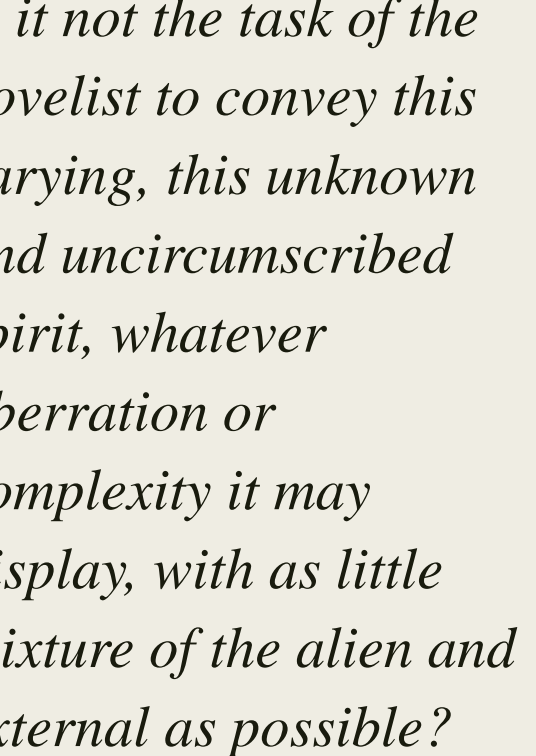


*Life is not a series of  
gig lamps  
symmetrically  
arranged; life is a  
luminous halo, a  
semi-transparent  
envelope surrounding  
us from the beginning  
of consciousness to  
the end.*






**WHAT DOES  
WOOLF SAY ABOUT  
THE ROLE OF THE  
NOVELIST?**



*Is it not the task of the novelist to convey this varying, this unknown and uncircumscribed spirit, whatever aberration or complexity it may display, with as little mixture of the alien and external as possible?*

**WHICH RUSSIAN  
WRITER DOES  
WOOLF PRAISE IN  
*MODERN FICTION*,  
AND WHY?**

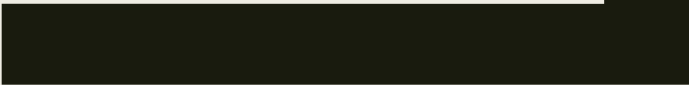
*No one but a modern,  
no one perhaps but a  
Russian, would have  
felt the interest of the  
situation which  
Tchekov has made into  
the short story which  
he calls 'Gusev'.*




**HOW DOES WOOLF'S  
ARGUMENT CONNECT  
WITH THE MODERNIST  
MOVEMENT?**

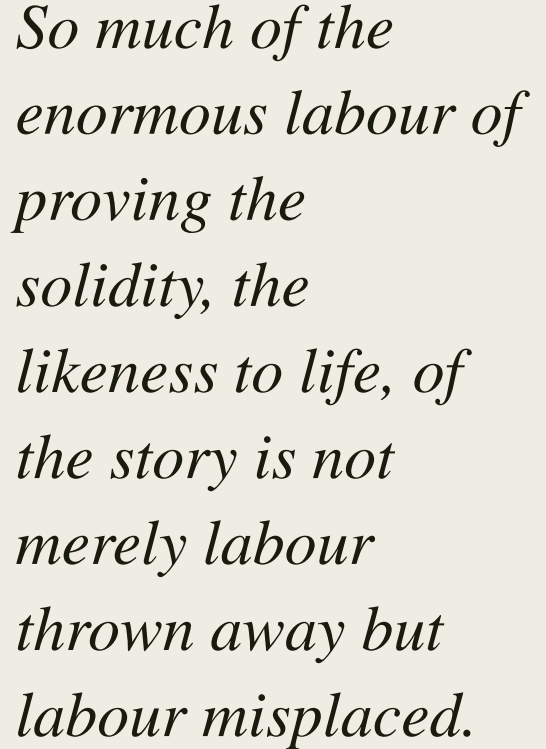


*They attempt to come closer to life, and to preserve more sincerely and exactly what interests and moves them, even if to do so they must discard most of the conventions which are commonly observed by the novelist.*

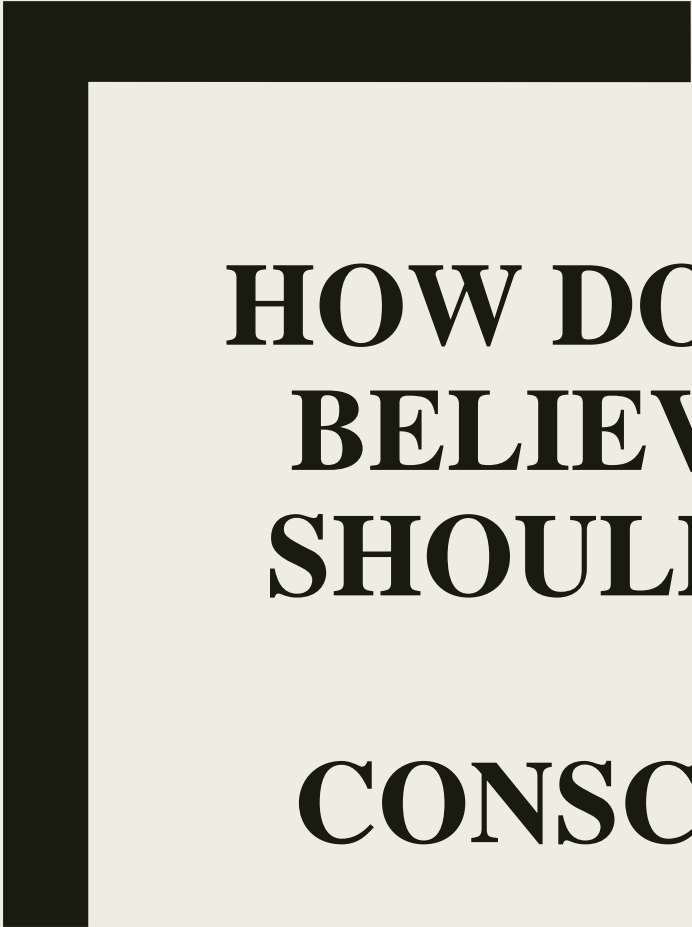




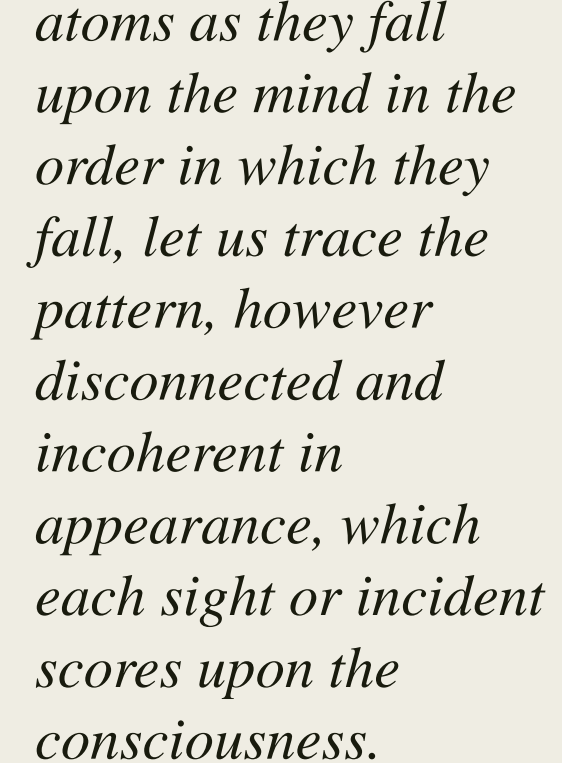
**WHAT IS WOOLF'S  
VIEW ON THE  
IMPORTANCE OF  
REALISM IN  
FICTION?**



*So much of the enormous labour of proving the solidity, the likeness to life, of the story is not merely labour thrown away but labour misplaced.*




**HOW DOES WOOLF  
BELIEVE FICTION  
SHOULD REFLECT  
HUMAN  
CONSCIOUSNESS?**



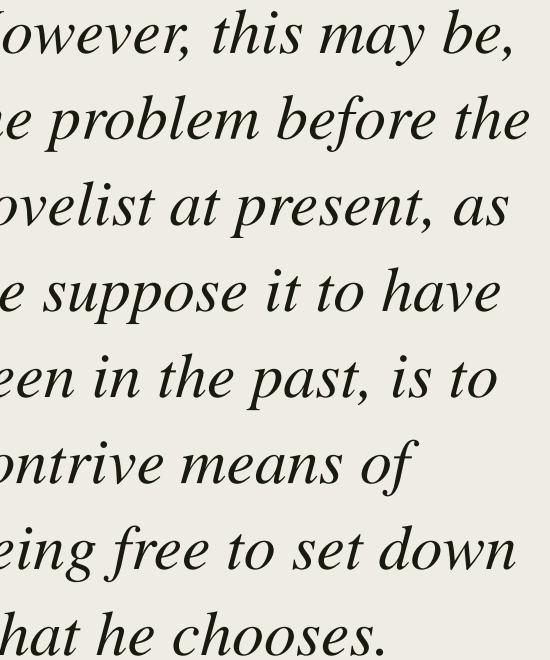
*Let us record the  
atoms as they fall  
upon the mind in the  
order in which they  
fall, let us trace the  
pattern, however  
disconnected and  
incoherent in  
appearance, which  
each sight or incident  
scores upon the  
consciousness.*

**WHAT DOES WOOLF  
MEAN WHEN SHE  
SAYS, “LET US  
RECORD THE ATOMS  
AS THEY FALL UPON  
THE MIND”?**

*Let us not take it  
for granted that life  
exists more fully in  
what is commonly  
thought big than in  
what is commonly  
thought small.*



**WHAT IS WOOLF'S  
OPINION ON THE  
FUTURE OF  
FICTION?**



*However, this may be, the problem before the novelist at present, as we suppose it to have been in the past, is to contrive means of being free to set down what he chooses.*

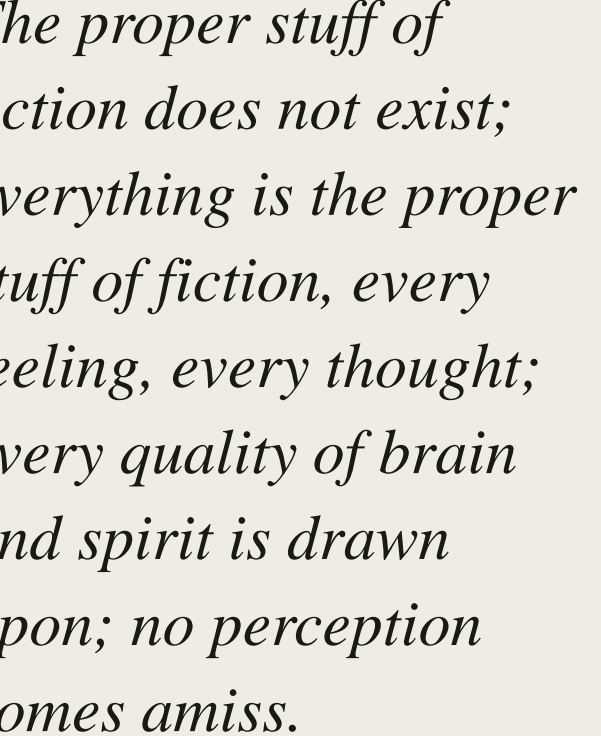
**HOW DOES  
WOOLF'S  
ARGUMENT IN  
*MODERN FICTION*  
INFLUENCE LATER  
WRITERS?**

*Any method is right,  
every method is  
right, that expresses  
what we wish to  
express, if we are  
writers; that brings  
us closer to the  
novelist's intention if  
we are readers.*





**WHAT IS THE  
LASTING IMPACT OF  
*MODERN FICTION*  
ON LITERARY  
CRITICISM?**



*The proper stuff of  
fiction does not exist;  
everything is the proper  
stuff of fiction, every  
feeling, every thought;  
every quality of brain  
and spirit is drawn  
upon; no perception  
comes amiss.*

## BONUS QUOTE 1: VIRGINIA WOOLF'S *MR. BENNET AND MRS. BROWN*

*On or about December 1910 human character changed (...) All human relations have shifted—those between masters and servants, husbands and wives, parents and children. And when human relations change there is at the same time a change in religion, conduct, politics, and literature. Let us agree to place one of these changes about the year 1910 (...) I ask myself, what is reality? And who are the judges of reality? A character may be real to Mr. Bennett and quite unreal to me.*

## BONUS QUOTE 2: VIRGINIA WOOLF'S *THE NARROW BRIDGE OF ART*

*The mind is full of monstrous, hybrid, unmanageable emotions. That the age of the earth is 3,000,000,000 years; that human life lasts but a second; the capacity of the human mind is nevertheless boundless; that life is infinitely beautiful yet repulsive; that one's fellow creatures are adorable but disgusting; that science and religion have between them destroyed belief; that all bonds of union seem broken, yet some control must exist—it is in this atmosphere of doubt and conflict that writers have now to create.*



THANK YOU

Dr. Nihal TOPCU