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UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE INTERNATIONAL EXAMINATIONS  
General Certificate of Education  
Advanced Subsidiary Level and Advanced Level

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**LITERATURE IN ENGLISH**

**9695/06**

Paper 6 20th Century Writing

**October/November 2007**

**2 hours**

Additional Materials: Answer Booklet/Paper

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**READ THESE INSTRUCTIONS FIRST**

If you have been given an Answer Booklet, follow the instructions on the front cover of the Booklet.

Write your Centre number, candidate number and name on all the work you hand in.

Write in dark blue or black pen.

Do not use staples, paper clips, highlighters, glue or correction fluid.

Answer **two** questions.

You are reminded of the need for good English and clear presentation in your answers.

At the end of the examination, fasten all your work securely together.

All questions in this paper carry equal marks.

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This document consists of **16** printed pages.



EDWARD ALBEE : *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*

- 1 **Either** (a) 'I will battle you to the death,' George says to Nick, who replies, 'I'm going to be the wave of the future.'  
What is the significance of the relationship between these two characters, in your reading of the play?
- Or (b) Discuss the dramatic effects of the following passage, considering what this exchange suggests about Martha and her relationship with George.

MARTHA [*her glass to her mouth*]: You're certainly a flop in some departments.

NICK [*wincing*]: I beg your pardon ...?

MARTHA [*unnecessarily loud*]: I said, you're certainly a flop in some ...

NICK [*he, too, too loud*]: I'm sorry you're disappointed.

MARTHA [*braying*]: I didn't say I was disappointed! Stupid! 5

NICK: You should try me some time when we haven't been drinking for ten hours, and maybe ...

MARTHA [*still braying*]: I wasn't talking about your potential; I was talking about your goddamn performance.

NICK [*softly*]: Oh. 10

MARTHA [*she softer, too*]: Your potential's fine. It's dandy. [*Wiggles her eyebrows*]. Absolutely dandy. I haven't seen such a dandy potential in a long time. Oh, but baby, you sure are a flop.

NICK [*snapping it out*]: Everybody's a flop to you! Your husband's a flop, *I'm* a flop ... 15

MARTHA [*dismissing him*]: You're all flops. I am the Earth Mother, and you're all flops. [*More or less to herself*] I disgust me. I pass my life in crummy, totally pointless infidelities ... [*Laughs ruefully*] *would-be* infidelities. Hump the Hostess? That's a laugh. A bunch of boozed-up ... impotent lunk-heads. Martha makes goo-goo eyes, and the lunk-heads grin, and roll 20  
their beautiful, beautiful eyes back, and grin some more, and Martha licks her chops, and the lunk-heads slap over to the bar to pick up a little courage, *and* they pick up a little courage, and they bounce back over to old Martha, who does a little dance for them, which heats them all up ... mentally ... and so they slap over to the bar again, and pick 25  
up a little more courage, and their wives and sweethearts stick their noses up in the air ... right through the ceiling, sometimes ... which sends the lunk-heads back to the soda fountain again where they fuel up some more, while Martha-poo sits there with her dress up over her head ... suffocating – you don't know how *stuffy* it is with your dress up 30  
over your head – suffocating! waiting for the lunk-heads; so, *finally* they get their courage up ... but that's all, baby! Oh my, there is sometimes some very nice potential, but, oh my! My, my, my. [*Brightly*] But that's how it is in a civilized society. [*To herself again*] All the gorgeous lunk-heads. Poor babies. [*To NICK, now; earnestly*] There is only one man in 35  
my life who has ever ... made me happy. Do you know that? One!

NICK: The ... the what-do-you-call-it? ... uh ... the lawn mower, or something?

MARTHA: No; I'd forgotten him. But when I think about him and me it's almost like being a voyeur. Hunh. No; I didn't mean him; I meant George, of course [*No response from NICK.*] Uh ... George; my husband. 40

NICK [*disbelieving*]: You're kidding.

- MARTHA: Am I?
- NICK: You must be. Him?
- MARTHA: Him.
- NICK [*as if in on a joke*]: Sure; sure. 45
- MARTHA: You don't believe it.
- NICK [*mocking*]: Why, of course I do.
- MARTHA: You always deal in appearances?
- NICK [*derisively*]: Oh, for God's sake. ...
- MARTHA: ... George who is out somewhere there in the dark ... George who is good to me, and whom I revile; who understands me, and whom I push off; who can make me laugh, and I choke it back in my throat; who can hold me, at night, so that it's warm, and whom I will bite so there's blood; who keeps learning the games we play as quickly as I can change the rules; who can make me happy and I do not wish to be happy, and yes I do wish to be happy. George and Martha: sad, sad, sad. 50 55
- NICK [*echoing, still not believing*]: Sad.
- MARTHA: ... whom I will not forgive for having come to rest; for having seen me and having said: yes; this will do; who has made the hideous, the hurting, the insulting mistake of loving me and must be punished for it. George and Martha: sad, sad, sad. 60
- NICK [*puzzled*]: Sad.
- MARTHA: ... who tolerates, which is intolerable; who is kind, which is cruel; who understands, which is beyond comprehension. ...
- NICK: George and Martha: sad, sad, sad. 65
- MARTHA: Some day ... hah! some *night* ... some stupid, liquor-ridden night ... I will go too far ... and I'll either break the man's back ... or push him off for good ... which is what I deserve.
- NICK: I don't think he's got a vertebra intact.
- MARTHA [*laughing at him*]: You don't, huh? You don't think so. Oh, little boy, you got yourself hunched over that microphone of yours. ... 70
- NICK: Microscope. ...
- MARTHA: ... yes ... and you don't see anything, do you? You see everything but the goddamn mind; you see all the little specs and crap, but you don't see what goes on, do you? 75
- NICK: I know when a man's had his back broken; I can see that.
- MARTHA: Can you!
- NICK: You're damn right.
- MARTHA: Oh ... you know so little. And you're going to take over the world, hunh?
- NICK: All right, now. ... 80
- MARTHA: You think a man's got his back broken 'cause he makes like a clown and walks bent, hunh? Is that *really* all you know?
- NICK: I said, all *right*!
- MARTHA: Ohhhh! The stallion's mad, hunh. The gelding's all upset. Ha, ha, ha, HA! 85
- NICK [*softly; wounded*]: You ... you swing wild, don't you.
- MARTHA [*triumphant*]: HAH!

SAMUEL BECKETT : *Endgame*

- 2 **Either** (a) In what ways do you think *Endgame* is an appropriate title for the play?
- Or (b) The following passage opens the play. Discuss the dramatic effects of the writing, considering ways in which methods and concerns of the play are introduced here.

*Bare interior.*

*Grey Light.*

*Left and right back, high up, two small windows, curtains drawn. Front right, a door. Hanging near door, its face to wall, a picture. Front left, touching each other, covered with an old sheet, two ashbins. Center, in an armchair on castors, covered with an old sheet, Hamm. Motionless by the door, his eyes fixed on Hamm, Clov. Very red face. Brief tableau.* 5

*Clov goes and stands under window left. Stiff, staggering walk. He looks up at window left. He turns and looks at window right. He goes and stands under window right. He looks up at window right. He turns and looks at window left. He goes out, comes back immediately with a small step-ladder, carries it over and sets it down under window left, gets up on it, draws back curtain. He gets down, takes six steps [for example] towards window right, goes back for ladder, carries it over and sets it down under window right, gets up on it, draws back curtain. He gets down, takes three steps towards window left, goes back for ladder, carries it over and sets it down under window left, gets up on it, looks out of window. Brief laugh. He gets down, takes one step towards window right, goes back for ladder, carries it over and sets it down under window right, gets up on it, looks out of window. Brief laugh. He gets down, goes with ladder towards ashbins, halts, turns, carries back ladder and sets it down under window right, goes to ashbins, removes sheet covering them, folds it over his arm. He raises one lid, stoops and looks into bin. Brief laugh. He closes lid. Same with other bin. He goes to Hamm, removes sheet covering him, folds it over his arm. In a dressing-gown, a stiff toque on his head, a large blood-stained handkerchief over his face, a whistle hanging from his neck, a rug over his knees, thick socks on his feet, Hamm seems to be asleep. Clov looks him over. Brief laugh. He goes to door, halts, turns towards auditorium.* 10  
15  
20  
25

CLOV [*fixed gaze, tonelessly*]: Finished, it's finished, nearly finished, it must be nearly finished. [*Pause.*] Grain upon grain, one by one, and one day, suddenly, there's a heap, a little heap, the impossible heap. [*Pause.*] I can't be punished any more. [*Pause.*] I'll go now to my kitchen, ten feet by ten feet by ten feet, and wait for him to whistle me. [*Pause.*] Nice dimensions, nice proportions, I'll lean on the table, and look at the wall, and wait for him to whistle me. 30

*[He remains a moment motionless, then goes out. He comes back immediately, goes to window right, takes up the ladder and carries it out. Pause. Hamm stirs. He yawns under the handkerchief. He removes the handkerchief from his face. Very red face. Glasses with black lenses.]* 35

HAMM: Me – [*he yawns*] – to play.

*[He takes off his glasses, wipes his eyes, his face, the glasses, puts them on again, folds the handkerchief and puts it back neatly in the breast pocket of his dressing gown. He clears his throat, joins the tips of his fingers.]* 40

Can there be misery – [*he yawns*] – loftier than mine? No doubt. Formerly. But now? [*Pause.*] My father? [*Pause.*] My mother? [*Pause.*] My ... dog? [*Pause.*] 45

- Oh I am willing to believe they suffer as much as such creatures can suffer. But does that mean their sufferings equal mine? No doubt. [Pause.] No, all is a – [he yawns] – bsolute, [proudly] the bigger a man is the fuller he is. [Pause. Gloomily.] And the emptier. [He sniffs.] Clov! 50  
 [Pause.] No, alone. [Pause.] What dreams! Those forests! [Pause.] Enough, it's time it ended, in the shelter, too. [Pause.] And yet I hesitate, I hesitate to ... to end. Yes, there it is, it's time it ended and yet I hesitate to – [He yawns.] to end. [Yawns.]
- God, I'm tired, I'd be better off in bed. 55  
 [He whistles. Enter Clov immediately. He halts beside the chair.]  
 You pollute the air! [Pause.] Get me ready, I'm going to bed.
- CLOV: I've just got you up.  
 HAMM: And what of it?  
 CLOV: I can't be getting you up and putting you to bed every five minutes, I 60  
 have things to do.  
 [Pause.]
- HAMM: Did you ever see my eyes?  
 CLOV: No.  
 HAMM: Did you never have the curiosity, while I was sleeping, to take off my 65  
 glasses and look at my eyes?  
 CLOV: Pulling back the lids? [Pause.] No.  
 HAMM: One of these days I'll show them to you. [Pause.] It seems they've gone  
 all white. [Pause.] What time is it?
- CLOV: The same as usual. 70  
 HAMM [gesture towards window right]: Have you looked?  
 CLOV: Yes.  
 HAMM: Well?  
 CLOV: Zero.  
 HAMM: It'd need to rain. 75  
 CLOV: It won't rain.  
 [Pause.]
- HAMM: Apart from that, how do you feel?  
 CLOV: I don't complain.  
 HAMM: You feel normal? 80  
 CLOV [irritably]: I tell you I don't complain.  
 HAMM: I feel a little strange. [Pause.] Clov!  
 CLOV: Yes.  
 HAMM: Have you not had enough?  
 CLOV: Yes! [Pause.] Of what? 85  
 HAMM: Of this ... this ... thing.  
 CLOV: I always had.

LES MURRAY : *Selected Poems*

- 4 **Either** (a) How far and in what ways would you agree that Murray's poems offer a 'celebration of the ordinary'? You should refer to at least **three** poems in your answer.
- Or** (b) Write a critical appreciation of the following poem, showing how far you think its methods and concerns are characteristic of Murray's poems.

## Driving Through Sawmill Towns

1

In the high cool country,  
 having come from the clouds,  
 down a tilting road  
 into a distant valley,  
 you drive without haste. Your windscreen parts the forest, 5  
 swaying and glancing, and jammed midday brilliance  
 crouches in clearings...  
 then you come across them,  
 the sawmill towns, bare hamlets built of boards  
 with perhaps a store, 10  
 perhaps a bridge beyond  
 and a little sidelong creek alive with pebbles.

2

The mills are roofed with iron, have no walls:  
 you look straight in as you pass, see lithe men working,  
 the swerve of a winch, 15  
 dim dazzling blades advancing  
 through a trolley-borne trunk  
 till it sags apart  
 in a manifold sprawl of weatherboards and battens.

The men watch you pass: 20  
 when you stop your car and ask them for directions,  
 tall youths look away –  
 it is the older men who  
 come out in blue singlets and talk softly to you.

Beside each mill, smoke trickles out of mounds 25  
 of ash and sawdust.

3

You glide on through town,  
 your mudguards damp with cloud.  
 The houses there wear verandahs out of shyness,  
 all day in calendared kitchens, women listen 30  
 for cars on the road,  
 lost children in the bush,  
 a cry from the mill, a footstep –  
 nothing happens.

The half-heard radio sings  
its song of sidewalks. 35

Sometimes a woman, sweeping her front step,  
or a plain young wife at a tankstand fetching water  
in a metal bucket will turn around and gaze  
at the mountains in wonderment, 40  
looking for a city.

Evenings are very quiet. All around  
the forest is there.  
As night comes down, the houses watch each other:  
a light going out in a window here has meaning. 45

You speed away through the upland,  
glare through towns  
and are gone in the forest, glowing on far hills.

On summer nights  
ground-cricket sing and pause. 50  
In the dark of winter, tin roofs sough with rain,  
downpipes chafe in the wind, agog with water.

Men sit after tea  
by the stove while their wives talk, rolling a dead match  
between their fingers, 55  
thinking of the future.

- 5 **Either** (a) 'I have to play the part expected of me; there is no escape.'  
How far and in what ways is Raju's view of himself borne out by the narrative of the novel as a whole?
- Or** (b) Discuss the effects of the writing in the following passage, considering the significance of Raju's relationship with his mother, here and in the novel as a whole.

Within a short time my mother understood everything. When Rosie had gone in for a bath, she said, cornering me, "This cannot go on long, Raju – you must put an end to it."

"Don't interfere, Mother. I am an adult. I know what I am doing."

"You can't have a dancing girl in your house. Every morning with all that dancing and everything going on! What is the home coming to?" 5

Encouraged by me, Rosie had begun to practice. She got up at five in the morning, bathed, and prayed before the picture of a god in my mother's niche, and began a practice session which went on for nearly three hours. The house rang with the jingling of her anklets. She ignored her surroundings completely, her attention being concentrated upon her movements and steps. After that she helped my mother, scrubbed, washed, swept, and tidied up everything in the house. My mother was pleased with her and seemed kind to her. I never thought that my mother would create a problem for me now, but here she was. I said, "What has come over you all of a sudden?" 10 15

My mother paused. "I was hoping you would have the sense to do something about it. It can't go on like this forever. What will people say?"

"Who are 'people?'" I asked.

"Well, my brother and your cousins and others known to us."

"I don't care for their opinion. Just don't bother about such things." 20

"Oh! That's a strange order you are giving me, my boy. I can't accept it."

The gentle singing in the bathroom ceased; my mother dropped the subject and went away as Rosie emerged from her bath fresh and blooming. Looking at her, one would have thought that she had not a care in the world. She was quite happy to be doing what she was doing at the moment, was not in the least bothered about the past, and looked forward tremendously to the future. She was completely devoted to my mother. 25

But unfortunately my mother, for all her show of tenderness, was beginning to stiffen inside. She had been listening to gossip, and she could not accommodate the idea of living with a tainted woman. I was afraid to be cornered by her, and took care not to face her alone. But whenever she could get at me, she hissed a whisper into my ear. "She is a real snake woman, I tell you. I never liked her from the first day you mentioned her." 30

I was getting annoyed with my mother's judgment and duplicity. The girl, in all innocence, looked happy and carefree and felt completely devoted to my mother. I grew anxious lest my mother should suddenly turn round and openly tell her to quit. I changed my tactics and said, "You are right, Mother. But you see, she is a refugee, and we can't do anything. We have to be hospitable." 35

"Why can't she go to her husband and fall at his feet? You know, living with a husband is no joke, as these modern girls imagine. No husband worth the name was ever conquered by powder and lipstick alone. You know, your father more than once ..." She narrated an anecdote about the trouble created by my father's unreasonable, obstinate attitude in some family matter and how she met it. I listened to her anecdote patiently and with admiration, and that diverted her for a while. After a few days she began to allude to the problems of husband and wife whenever she spoke to Rosie, and filled the time with anecdotes about husbands: good husbands, mad husbands, reasonable husbands, unreasonable ones, savage ones, slightly 40 45

deranged ones, moody ones, and so on and so forth; but it was always the wife, by her doggedness, perseverance, and patience, that brought him round. She quoted numerous mythological stories of Savitri Seetha, and all the well-known heroines. 50  
Apparently it was a general talk, apropos of nothing, but my mother's motives were naïvely clear. She was so clumsily roundabout that anyone could see what she was driving at. She was still supposed to be ignorant of Rosie's affairs, but she talked pointedly. I knew how Rosie smarted under these lessons, but I was helpless. I was 55  
afraid of my mother. I could have kept Rosie in a hotel, perhaps, but I was forced to take a more realistic view of my finances now. I was helpless as I saw Rosie suffer, and my only solace was that I suffered with her.

Chapter 7

JEAN RHYS : *Wide Sargasso Sea*

- 6 **Either** (a) 'It's cool today; cool, calm and cloudy as an English summer. But a lovely place in any weather, however far I travel I'll never see a lovelier.'  
Discuss ways in which the natural world is significant in the novel.
- Or** (b) Discuss the effects of the writing in the following passage, considering how it contributes to your view of Antoinette.

This convent was my refuge, a place of sunshine and of death where very early in the morning the clap of a wooden signal woke the nine of us who slept in the long dormitory. We woke to see Sister Marie Augustine sitting, serene and neat, bolt upright in a wooden chair. The long brown room was full of gold sunlight and shadows of trees moving quietly. I learnt to say very quickly as the others did, 'offer up all the prayers, works and sufferings of this day.' But what about happiness, I thought at first, is there no happiness? There must be. Oh happiness of course, happiness, well. 5

But I soon forgot about happiness, running down the stairs to the big stone bath where we splashed about wearing long grey cotton chemises which reached to our ankles. The smell of soap as you cautiously soaped yourself under the chemise, a trick to be learned, dressing with modesty, another trick. Great splashes of sunlight as we ran up the wooden steps of the refectory. Hot coffee and rolls and melting butter. But after the meal, now and at the hour of our death, and at midday and at six in the evening, now and at the hour of our death. Let perpetual light shine on them. This is for my mother, I would think, wherever her soul is wandering, for it has left her body. Then I remembered how she hated a strong light and loved the cool and the shade. It is a different light they told me. Still, I would not say it. Soon we were back in the shifting shadows outside, more beautiful than any perpetual light could be, and soon I learnt to gabble without thinking as the others did. About changing now and the hour of our death for that is all we have. 10 15 20

Everything was brightness, or dark. The walls, the blazing colours of the flowers in the garden, the nuns' habits were bright, but their veils, the Crucifix hanging from their waists, the shadow of the trees, were black. That was how it was, light and dark, sun and shadow, Heaven and Hell, for one of the nuns knew all about Hell and who does not? But another one knew about Heaven and the attributes of the blessed, of which the least is transcendent beauty. The very least. I could hardly wait for all this ecstasy and once I prayed for a long time to be dead. Then remembered that this was a sin. It's presumption or despair, I forget which, but a mortal sin. So I prayed for a long time about that too, but the thought came, so many things are sins, why? Another sin, to think that. However, happily, Sister Marie Augustine says thoughts are not sins, if they are driven away at once. You say Lord save me, I perish. I find it very comforting to know exactly what must be done. All the same, I did not pray so often after that and soon, hardly at all. I felt bolder, happier, more free. But not so safe. 25 30 35

During this time, nearly eighteen months, my step-father often came to see me. He interviewed Mother Superior first, then I would go into the parlour dressed ready for a dinner or a visit to friends. He gave me presents when we parted, sweets, a locket, a bracelet, once a very pretty dress which, of course, I could not wear. 40

The last time he came was different. I knew that as soon as I got into the room. He kissed me, held me at arm's length looking at me carefully and critically, then smiled and said that I was taller than he thought. I reminded him that I was over seventeen, a grown woman. 'I've not forgotten your present,' he said. 45

Because I felt shy and ill at ease I answered coldly, 'I can't wear all these things you buy for me.'

'You can wear what you like when you live with me,' he said.

'Where? In Trinidad?'

'Of course not. Here, for the time being. With me and your Aunt Cora who is coming home at last. She says another English winter will kill her. And Richard. You can't be hidden away all your life.'

50

'Why not?' I thought.

I suppose he noticed my dismay because he began to joke, pay me compliments, and ask me such absurd questions that soon I was laughing too. How would I like to live in England? Then, before I could answer, had I learnt dancing, or were the nuns too strict?

55

'They are not strict at all,' I said. 'The Bishop who visits them every year says they are lax. Very lax. It's the climate he says.'

'I hope they told him to mind his own business.'

'She did. Mother Superior did. Some of the others were frightened. They are not strict but no one has taught me to dance.'

60

'That won't be the difficulty. I want you to be happy, Antoinette, secure, I've tried to arrange, but we'll have time to talk about that later.'

Chapter 1

DEREK WALCOTT : *Selected Poetry*

- 7 **Either** (a) 'The islander haunted by the colonial past and his ambivalent feelings about the island's present is a constant figure in Walcott's poems.'  
How far and in what ways do you think this is a helpful description of Walcott's poetry? You should refer to at least **two** poems in your answer.
- Or** (b) Write a critical appreciation of the following poem, considering the view of London that it presents.

## The Bright Field

My nerves steeled against the power of London,  
I hurried home that evening, with the sense  
we all have, of the crowd's hypocrisy,  
to feel my rage, turned on in self-defence,  
bear mercy for the anonymity 5  
of every self humbled by massive places,  
and I, who moved against a bitter sea,  
was moved by the light on Underground-bound faces.

Their sun that would not set was going down  
on their flushed faces, brickwork like a kiln, 10  
on pillar-box-bright buses between trees,  
with the compassion of calendar art;  
like walking sheaves of harvest, the quick crowd  
thickened in separate blades of cane or wheat  
from factories and office doors conveyed 15  
to one end by the loud belt of the street.  
And that end brings its sadness, going in  
by Underground, by cab, by bullock-cart,  
and lances us with punctual, maudlin  
pity down lanes or cane-fields, till the heart, 20  
seeing, like dark canes, the river-spires sharpen,  
feels an involuntary bell begin  
to toll for everything, even in London,  
heart of our history, original sin.

The vision that brought Samuel Palmer peace, 25  
that stoked Blake's fury at her furnaces,  
flashes from doormen's buttons and the rocks  
around Balandra. These slow belfry-strokes –  
cast in the pool of London, from which swallows  
rise in wide rings, and from their bright field, rooks – 30  
mark the same beat by which a pelican goes  
across Salybia as the tide lowers.

VIRGINIA WOOLF : *Mrs Dalloway*

- 8 **Either** (a) 'Woolf succeeds in presenting the interior and spiritual life but neglects the material, external world.'  
How far and in what ways do you think this is an appropriate comment on *Mrs Dalloway*?
- Or** (b) Discuss the effects of the writing in the following passage, considering the significance of Sally Seton and her relationship with Mrs Dalloway in your reading of the novel.

But this question of love (she thought, putting her coat away), this falling in love with women. Take Sally Seton; her relation in the old days with Sally Seton. Had not that, after all, been love?

She sat on the floor – that was her first impression of Sally – she sat on the floor with her arms round her knees, smoking a cigarette. Where could it have been? The Mannings'? The Kinloch-Jones's? At some party (where she could not be certain), for she had a distinct recollection of saying to the man she was with, 'Who is *that*?' And he had told her, and said that Sally's parents did not get on (how that shocked her – that one's parents should quarrel!). But all that evening she could not take her eyes off Sally. It was an extraordinary beauty of the kind she most admired, dark, large-eyed, with that quality which, since she hadn't got it herself, she always envied – a sort of abandonment, as if she could say anything, do anything; a quality much commoner in foreigners than in Englishwomen. Sally always said she had French blood in her veins, an ancestor had been with Marie Antoinette, had his head cut off, left a ruby ring. Perhaps that summer she came to stay at Bourton, walking in quite unexpectedly without a penny in her pocket, one night after dinner, and upsetting poor Aunt Helena to such an extent that she never forgave her. There had been some awful quarrel at home. She literally hadn't a penny that night when she came to them – had pawned a brooch to come down. She had rushed off in a passion. They sat up till all hours of the night talking. Sally it was who made her feel, for the first time, how sheltered the life at Bourton was. She knew nothing about sex – nothing about social problems. She had once seen an old man who had dropped dead in a field – she had seen cows just after their calves were born. But Aunt Helena never liked discussion of anything (when Sally gave her William Morris, it had to be wrapped in brown paper). There they sat, hour after hour, talking in her bedroom at the top of the house, talking about life, how they were to reform the world. They meant to found a society to abolish private property, and actually had a letter written, though not sent out. The ideas were Sally's, of course – but very soon she was just as excited – read Plato in bed before breakfast; read Morris; read Shelley by the hour.

Sally's power was amazing, her gift, her personality. There was her way with flowers, for instance. At Bourton they always had stiff little vases all the way down the table. Sally went out, picked hollyhocks, dahlias – all sorts of flowers that had never been seen together – cut their heads off, and made them swim on the top of water in bowls. The effect was extraordinary – coming into dinner in the sunset. (Of course Aunt Helena thought it wicked to treat flowers like that.) Then she forgot her sponge, and ran along the passage naked. That grim old house-maid, Ellen Atkins, went about grumbling – 'Suppose any of the gentlemen had seen?' Indeed she did shock people. She was untidy, Papa said.

The strange thing, on looking back, was the purity, the integrity, of her feeling for Sally. It was not like one's feeling for a man. It was completely disinterested, and besides, it had a quality which could only exist between women, between women just grown up. It was protective, on her side; sprang from a sense of being in league together, a presentiment of something that was bound to part them (they spoke of marriage always as a catastrophe), which led to this chivalry, this protective feeling

which was much more on her side than Sally's. For in those days she was completely reckless; did the most idiotic things out of bravado; bicycled round the parapet on the terrace: smoked cigars. Absurd, she was – very absurd. But the charm was overpowering, to her at least, so that she could remember standing in her bedroom at the top of the house holding the hot-water can in her hands and saying aloud, 'She is beneath this roof ... She is beneath this roof!' 45  
50

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