



## **Virginia Woolf's Genius**

This PDF is one of a series designed to assist scholars in their research on Isaiah Berlin, and the subjects in which he was interested.

The series will make digitally available both selected published essays and edited transcripts of unpublished material.

The PDF is posted by the Isaiah Berlin Legacy Fellow at Wolfson College, with the support of the Trustees of the Isaiah Berlin Literary Trust.

All enquiries, including those concerning rights, should be directed to the Legacy Fellow at [berlin@wolfson.ox.ac.uk](mailto:berlin@wolfson.ox.ac.uk)

## Virginia Woolf's Genius

Contribution to 'Books of the Year', on Virginia Woolf, *A Writer's Diary*, ed. Leonard Woolf (London, 1953: Hogarth Press), *Sunday Times*, 20 December 1953, 6



VIRGINIA WOOLF'S *A Writer's Diary* seems to me to be a work of the highest imaginative genius, with powers of perception and description unexampled in our time.

## VIRGINIA WOOLF'S GENIUS

One of his biographers reports that Nijinsky once said that the only difference between himself and other dancers lay in the fact that when he leapt in the air he did not come down immediately – as most people tended to do – but lingered in the air for an instant before descending; it was very simple – he could not see why others could not, if they wished, do the same. This capacity to leave the ground (not necessarily without much labour and even torment) seems to me a description of genius of a certain kind that, of all English writers of this century, Mrs Woolf alone possessed.

I can think of no recent work – not even E. M. Forster's *The Hill of Devi* (Arnold) – worthy to stand beside it.

*Copyright Isaiah Berlin 1953*

**Posted in Isaiah Berlin Online 8 March 2022**