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Jacobs, Mary Elizabeth

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University of Plymouth

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**GENDER, GENRE AND POLITICS IN THE LITERARY WORK OF
SYLVIA TOWNSEND WARNER**

by

MARY ELIZABETH JACOBS

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Abstract

This thesis brings together a collection of works, all of which explore ways in which the prolific twentieth-century writer, Sylvia Townsend Warner, engaged with politics. A committed communist from the 1930s onwards, Warner was also a feminist writer and the works discussed here examine the interface between the politics of gender and the politics of the left. The sexual politics of Warner's private life with her long-term partner, Valentine Ackland, also inform her writings, often providing a homosexual undercurrent that offers multiple possible readings. Warner worked in a range of genres over a writing career that spanned five decades. The essays collected here, examine her poetry, short-stories, novels, journalism and life writing to determine the extent to which political activism lay at the core of Warner's life. While scholars have long identified the political engagement of Warner's writings from the 1930s onwards, 'Sylvia Townsend Warner and the Politics of the English Pastoral 1925-1934' argues that Warner was an established political commentator in the 1920s, using the genre of the Pastoral as a means to critique rural politics. 'The Politics of Disclosure and the Fable' explores Warner's communist and feminist activism of the 1930s by tracing her use of fable and allegory in her novels of this period, and her involvement in the Spanish Civil War. And 'Nefarious Activities', uses recently revealed MI5 documents that detail the surveillance of Warner and Ackland from 1935-1955; evidence indicating the seriousness of Warner's political works and the perceived threat that she may have posed to the establishment. While this threat was imaginary, it is testimony to the subversive nature of Warner's writing throughout her career. Together, these essays present a valuable overview of the importance of politics and gender in all aspects of Warner's literary work.

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