**"Mary Hamilton" in *A Room of One's Own***

In her highly influential text [*A Room of One's Own*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/A_Room_of_One%27s_Own), author [Virginia Woolf](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Virginia_Woolf) alludes to the characters in the ballad. She refers by name to Mary Beton, Mary Seton, and Mary Carmichael as recurrent personae, leaving only Mary Hamilton, the narrator of the ballad, unmentioned. Mary Beton plays the prominent role in Woolf's extended essay, as she serves as the speaker.

According to her narrator in *A Room of One's Own*, "'I' is only a convenient term for somebody who has no real being." A few sentences later, the narrator returns to the concept of identity and subjectivity and invokes the subjects of the ballad for the first time: "Here then was I (call me Mary Beton, Mary Seton, Mary Carmichael or by any name you please – it is not a matter of importance)..." [[7]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mary_Hamilton#cite_note-7)

Mary Beton serves as the narrator throughout *A Room of One's Own*. The six chapters of the essay follow Mary Beton's walks through Oxbridge grounds and London streets, and her mental explorations of the history of women and fiction. The name reappears in the character of the narrator's aunt, who serves as both the namesake and benefactor of Mary Beton.[[8]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mary_Hamilton#cite_note-8) Woolf is able to detach herself from the narrative voice of the essay through the use of Beton.

Mary Seton is a friend of Mary Beton at the fictitious Fernham College (modelled after Cambridge's [Newnham](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Newnham_College) and [Girton Colleges](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Girton_College)). It is partially through her conversations with Seton that Beton raises questions about the relationship between financial wealth and the opportunities for female education. Speaking of Mary Seton's mother, the narrator states, "If she had left two or three hundred thousand pounds to Fernham, we could have been sitting at our ease tonight and the subject of our talk might have been archaeology, botany, anthropology, physics, the nature of the atom, mathematics, astronomy, relativity, geography."[[9]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mary_Hamilton#cite_note-9)

Mary Carmichael plays the role of a fictitious author referenced by the narrator in *A Room of One's Own*.[[10]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mary_Hamilton#cite_note-10) Her fabricated novel, *Life's Adventure*, allows Woolf to introduce the concept of female relationships. Mary Carmichael may also evoke the idea of the real author and birth-control activist [Marie Carmichael](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Marie_Carmichael&action=edit&redlink=1) (pseudonym for [Marie Stopes](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marie_Stopes)) and her novel *Love's Creation*.