



Maurice Guest: Text Classics

Henry Handel Richardson

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A passionate and controversial novel, set in turn-of-the-century Europe.

Henry Handel Richardson's debut, published in London in 1908, is set in the music scene of Leipzig, a cosmopolitan centre for the arts drawing students from around the world. Among them is Maurice Guest, a young Englishman, who falls helplessly in love with an Australian woman, Louise Dufrayer. *Maurice Guest* is the story of this overwhelming passion.

The novel was deemed too controversial to be published as Richardson intended, and she was forced to cut twenty thousand words from the original manuscript and tone down its language.

Carmen Callil, in her introduction, writes: 'it remains a great novel, one that, once it grasps your imagination, is impossible to put down for more than a moment, leading every reader into a dreamtime remembrance of the terrible pain the human heart is heir to.'

Henry Handel Richardson was born in Melbourne in 1870. Richardson was sent to board at the Presbyterian Ladies College in 1883, an experience that provided material for her novel *The Getting of Wisdom*. In 1888, she travelled to Europe, married and settled in London. Richardson published her first novel, *Maurice Guest*, in 1908. She made her only journey back to Australia in 1912 to complete her research for the trilogy that would become *The Fortunes of Richard Mahony*. Her final novel *The Young Cosima* appeared in 1939.

Carmen Callil founded Virago Press in 1972 and later became managing director of Chatto & Windus and the Hogarth Press. Since 1995 she has worked as a writer and critic. She is the author of *Bad Faith: A Forgotten History of Family and Fatherland*, and co-author, with Colm Toibin, of *The Modern Library: The 200 Best Novels in English since 1950*.

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