

The Espalier, Time Importuned, Opus 7, Rainbow, Whether a Dove or Seagull, Boxwood, King Duffus, Twelve Poems, Lolly Willowes, Mr Fortune's Maggot, The True Heart, Summer Will Show, After the Death of Don Juan, The Corner that Held Them, The Flint Anchor, The Salutation, More Joy in Heaven, The Cat's Cradle Book, A Garland of Straw, The Museum of Cheats, Winter in the Air, A Spirit Rises, Sketches from Nature, A Stranger with a Bag, Swans on an Autumn River, Two Conversation Pieces, The Innocent and the Guilty, Kingdoms of Elfin, Scenes of Childhood, One Thing Leading to Another, The Music at Long Verney, Dorset Stories, Portrait of a Tortoise, Somerset, The Espalier, Time Importuned, Opus 7, Rainbow, Whether a Dove or Seagull, Boxwood, King Duffus, Twelve Poems, Lolly Willowes, Mr Fortune's Maggot, The True Heart, Summer Will Show, After the Death of Don Juan, The Corner that Held Them, The Flint Anchor, The Salutation, More Joy in Heaven, The Cat's Cradle Book, A Garland of Straw, The Museum of Cheats, Winter in the Air, A Spirit Rises, Sketches from Nature, A Stranger with a Bag, Swans on an Autumn River, Two Conversation Pieces, The Innocent and the Guilty, Kingdoms of Elfin, Scenes of Childhood, One Thing Leading to Another, The Music at Long Verney, Dorset Stories, Portrait of a Tortoise, Somerset, The Espalier, Time Importuned, Opus 7, Rainbow, Whether a Dove or Seagull, Boxwood, King Duffus, Twelve Poems, Lolly Willowes, Mr Fortune's Maggot, The True Heart, Summer Will Show, After the Death of Don Juan, The Corner that Held Them, The Flint Anchor, The Salutation, More Joy in Heaven, The Cat's Cradle Book, A Garland of Straw, The Museum of Cheats, Winter in the Air, A Spirit Rises, Sketches from Nature, A Stranger with a Bag, Swans on an Autumn River, Two Conversation Pieces, The Innocent and the Guilty, Kingdoms of Elfin, Scenes of Childhood, One Thing Leading to Another, The Music at Long Verney, Dorset Stories, Portrait of a Tortoise, Somerset, The Espalier, Time Importuned, Opus 7, Rainbow, Whether a Dove or Seagull, Boxwood, King Duffus, Twelve Poems, Lolly Willowes, Mr Fortune's Maggot, The True Heart, Summer Will Show, After the Death of Don Juan, The Corner that Held Them, The Flint Anchor, The Salutation, More Joy in Heaven, The Cat's Cradle Book, A Garland of Straw, The Museum of Cheats, Winter in the Air, A Spirit Rises, Sketches from Nature, A Stranger with a Bag, Swans on an Autumn River, Two Conversation Pieces, The Innocent and the Guilty, Kingdoms of Elfin, Scenes of Childhood, One Thing Leading to Another, The Music at Long Verney, Dorset Stories, Portrait of a Tortoise, Somerset, The Espalier, Time Importuned, Opus 7, Rainbow, Whether a Dove or Seagull, Boxwood, King Duffus, Twelve Poems, Lolly Willowes, Mr Fortune's Maggot, The True Heart, Summer Will Show, After the Death of Don Juan, The Corner that Held Them

The Sylvia Townsend Warner Society Newsletter Number Thirty-Four

Poems, The Flint Anchor, The Winter in the Air, A Spirit Rises, Sketches from Nature, The Flint Anchor, Stranger with a Bag, Swans on an Autumn River, Two Conversation Pieces, The Innocent and the Guilty, Kingdoms of Elfin, Scenes of Childhood, One Thing Leading to Another, The Music at Long Verney, Dorset Stories, Portrait of a Tortoise, Somerset, The Espalier, Time Importuned, Opus 7, Rainbow, Whether a Dove or Seagull, Boxwood, King Duffus, Twelve Poems, Lolly Willowes, Mr Fortune's Maggot, The True Heart, Summer Will Show, After the Death of Don Juan, The Corner that Held Them, The Flint Anchor, The Salutation, More Joy in Heaven, The Cat's Cradle Book, A Garland of Straw, The Museum of Cheats, Winter in the Air, A Spirit Rises, Sketches from Nature, A Stranger with a Bag, Swans on an Autumn River, Two Conversation Pieces, The Innocent and the Guilty, Kingdoms of Elfin, Scenes of Childhood, One Thing Leading to Another, The Music at Long Verney,

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The Society's website is at www.townsendwarner.com

NEWSLETTER NUMBER THIRTY-FOUR

The 2017 AGM * letters * poems * reviews
Virginia Woolf * Winifred Holtby * Ruth Draper * Ronald Blythe
Bea Howard* Jean Lucey Pratt * Stephen Tomlin * Katie Powys
The Spanish Civil War * Mary Jacobs Memorial Essay Prize

Thanks go to Page Nelson, Jennifer Nesbit, and Peter Swaab
for contributions to this issue.

Subscriptions: If you haven't yet paid for 2016, please send
your dues to Jenny Wildblood

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The **Annual General Meeting** will be held in the library of the Dorset County Museum at 10.30am on Saturday, 6th May 2017, followed by lunch at a local restaurant. This will be followed by a walk in Warner country (or perhaps town!) and the day will finish with an evening meal. Please let Richard Searle know if you need a restaurant place booked at richardsearle486@btinternet.com or mobile 0771 285 7704.

There will be a lecture on the work of Sylvia Townsend Warner by Professor Maud Ellmann, University of Chicago, at University College London Institute of Advanced Studies on Thursday 22nd June 2017 at 6pm. The event is free but registration on Evenbrite will be required (not yet available). The lecture title is to be confirmed. The UCL Institute of Advanced Studies, Common Ground, Ground Floor, South Wing, Wilkins Building, UCL, Gower Street, London WC1E 6BT.

* * * * *

The Fall of France Seen Through Soviet Eyes is a pamphlet by Ilya Ehrenburg of 31 pages, undated but published about 1940 by Modern Books, London. Sylvia wrote the forward, which you will find in the Journal of 2009, along with the editor's biographical sketch of the 'famous novelist, Soviet citizen and very much citizen of the world'. The complete work has been digitized by the online periodical, revolutionarydemocracy.org (see archival material).

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Because the work of **George Townsend Warner** is no longer in copyright, much of it, including *On the Writing of English*, *Landmarks in English Industrial History*, and *Tillage, Trade and Invention: an Outline of Industrial History*, is on the Hathi Trust Digital Library, hathitrust.org

THE BLACKTHORN WINTER. By PHILIPPA POWYS. Smith. 1930. \$2.

There must have been other English families who love the English countryside as deeply as the Powyses, but they have not been writers. Llewellyn Powys writes of rivers and plains and hills as another might write of a beloved: holding his *Thirteen Worthies* in one's hand one holds English earth. John Cowper Powys sees behind the lovely surface of his Dorsetshire dark powers and forces not of good which draw him to it equally with its beauty. Theodore Powys, too, finds nature hard pressed by evil, but he is in revolt against it, loving in spite of, not because. Now comes Philippa Powys with her first novel and her added note, more simple and direct, of homage to sun and rain, to thicket and to highway. The country and the seasons of *The Blackthorn Winter* are characters in the tale and are intermingled in cause and effect as are the men and women. Nature and human nature are close kin here, one almost as sentient as the other, and one almost as inexpressive as the other. It is a simple story simply told. It might have been written, and how few novels are today of which this could be said, ten years ago, or twenty years ago, or fifty. It is told as stories have been told since the beginning without recourse to any fictional device. It is the story that must interest or nothing at all: there are no tricks to whip up the concern of jaded readers. And the emotions and passions are those that have moved man since he was man. Without implying any comparison between the work of Miss Powys and that of Thomas Hardy and Emily Bronte, which would be as ridiculous as ill-advised upon present evidence, one may say that few readers will follow the fortunes of the driven ones of *The Blackthorn Winter* without being reminded of *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* and her country, of *Wuthering Heights* and its people.

The Saturday Review October 11 1930

Philippa Powys is buried in St Nicholas Churchyard, Chaldon Herring.



Diary 12 January 1963

Another night of hideous frost.
Blinded windows, deathly silence;
and Alyse rang up to say that Katie
died at 10.30 last night.

A fire has gone out. I am glad for
her proud sake, but I shall miss her
irreparably. Who shall I find to speak
out loud & clear as she did?
Music, though.

In *The Element of Lavishness*, Michael Steinman gives us a truncated letter of 16 May 1948. Here is the middle part, about a story later collected in *Winter in the Air*. This is from a photocopy of the original letter provided by Mr. Steinman, as is the next.

[...a breath of old times.]

While I have you I will make the most of it. Here are two short stories, and I am sure you will do your best for them.

As for Under New Management ... [her ellipses] You are hardened to my ingratitude, so I daresay it won't be much of a surprise to you to hear that when I had read your letter, and considered it, and thought once again how patiently and skillfully you write that kind of letter, and how tiresome it must have been to write, and that anyhow you should not have been doing it, since you have better fish to fry, it came to me with the suddenness of an angel that the only way to overcome these difficulties of preparing enough, and yet not preparing too much, was to state quite plainly in a new first paragraph that during the last few months of her life Miss St. John lived cheek by jowl with a murderer.

Exhibit, that is to say, the bag with the cat couchant within it, and for the rest of the tale develop the contours of the cat. This will comply with Mr Ross's principles about unprepared surprises, and allow me to take out a lot of the niggling little preparations that now infest the narrative, getting in every one's way and doing no good there. Besides giving the story a circular construction which will be more solid and elegant.

And later on, when I feel stronger, and don't sicken at the sight of those old familiar features, I will hope to see how this works out.

At the same time I will remove the broken glass (though if you smash a window hard enough, glass falls on both sides), and see about shortening it. Some of the getting lost and the cow must stay in, though. She was a tough old vulture, and I doubt if the agreeable surprise of Dennis's arrest would have been enough to overtax her heart unless she had already been flustered and overheated. Few of us die as easily as authors suppose.

[Do you like having finished...]

* * * * *

The Lonely Traveller

As I walked by a barn where I was a stranger
I heard a soft lowing, and quiet chain's rattle,
And the air was all sad with the sweet smell of cattle
Breathing great peaceful sighs into their manger.

Stephen Tomlin, 1921

Maiden Newton.

Dorchester.

5. x. 1968.

Dear William – I am so very sorry you have been ill 'just, or almost, like last time' – and this time without the consolations of fever to muffle it. It is far worse to be ill in one's senses; no camels to watch, no impersonal voices making statements, no release from being calm and sensible. I hope at least that you complained; but I'm afraid you didn't. You can still complain retrospectively, but there isn't so much nourishment in it.

Thank you, we were lucky on our island. We had a small flood a week before the great one, and a considerable gale. But were drained and dry again before the real thing descended, and by some queer inverted Gideon's fleece of a chance stayed so.

Valentine was due for her check-up with the surgeon just then but as most of our route was under water she postponed it and ultimately we went up by train. Everything was still looking very sodden and penitential – except the dome of St Paul's, freed from its scaffolding, cleaned from head to foot and now additionally rinsed. Of course we went up with our hearts beating bravely in our boots but the surgeon said all was very well. So feeling like the dome of St Paul's we went off and had a celebratory lunch at the memorial tavern to Mr Thrale's brewery on Bankside. Kate must go there one day.

That was Friday. On Saturday we did some dreamlike packing, all the bulbs arrived and in a calm frenzy I got them all into their indoor and outdoor places and early on Sunday we set out for Wales.

Our aim was Snowdonia. Do you remember a piece of mine called *Wild Wales*? Except that far more people were talking Welsh it didn't seem to me that much was changed since that childish visit. The cattle were as small and as black, the hydrangeas as blue and abounding, the storms as sudden. What bowled me over, though, was something I hadn't seen then: the solemn feline charm of slate. Slate doorsteps, slate pavements, slab benches, as well as slate tiled walls, roofs and chimney pots: dark, sleek (rain oils it), solid, inexpressive, incontrovertible. And you want to stroke it. It is like looking at Paul Robeson's voice.

Here is the Beatrix Potter review; and may I some time have it back? We were away that issue and missed getting it. Pray enjoy the end.

As for the two cheques, I am in a state of graceful reeling. Grateful, not graceful. I am full of the luxuries and improvements they will bring. For instance, new curtain rods through out the house; a new surface to the drive; carefree revelling in grouse and partridge; a light in the larder and another over the front door which will save us an infinity of time, trouble and apologies when visitors break their legs in the dark winter night. And at least three deserving friends ornamented with week-end cheques for basking in deserving hotels. I assure you, I shall get a lot of fun out of those cheques before the Inland Revenue can get at them.

Now do take care of yourself and have a proper convalescent enjoying your three lovely women and seizing on very valetudinarian pretext. Treat yourself as if you were somebody else essentially dear to you. That's the secret.

My love Sylvia [signed]

On Sylvia Townsend Warner and Virginia Woolf

“What inspired and intrigued most about Sylvia was her way of talking. I had never heard anybody speak like her before. Some chance remark or an artfully-posed question by Tommy – who loved to argue with her – and Sylvia was off in a fantastic flight of her own. Poetic words, colourful phrases, an apt quotation, extraordinary similes poured forth from her in a way I did not meet again till I came to know, and dine with, Virginia Woolf. But where Sylvia kept her conversational flights of fancy more or less under control while the slightly malicious gleam in her eyes dared one to give her verbal battle, Virginia's flights of pure fantasy, soaring sky-high, as the light in her beautiful deep-set luminous eyes kindled and grew almost wild, silenced one to listen to her, entranced.”

This is from Bea Howard, lifetime friend of Sylvia, and may be found in the *PN Review*, 8:3, 1981 and also on the attractive and seemingly popular blog, stuckinabook.com, written by Simon Thomas. Other entries there concern *The Museum of Cheats*, *Summer Will Show*, *Opus 7*, *Time Importuned*, the reprint of Harmon's biography, and Tolhurst's *With the Hunted*. Members may also enjoy the podcasts *Tea or Books?*, hosted by Thomas, and *Backlisted*, hosted by John Mitchinson and Andy Miller. Episode #24 of the former features *Lolly Willowes*, and the 3 March 2016 edition of the latter is devoted to Warner worship. Use an internet search engine to locate the podcasts: the links are too cumbersome to include in full. Thanks go to member Jennifer Nesbit for the sighting.

Blogging has come along way since we told each other about our breakfast meals. For another intelligent writer who favors Sylvia, see katemacdonald.net

How (Not) to Become a 'Classic' Writer

Sylvia Townsend Warner has always been regarded as a writer who deserves to be better known. Back in 1983, the American poet-critic Richard Howard wrote: "She has no critical cachet whatever, this writer." In "How (Not) to Become a 'Classic' Writer," author and independent scholar Elizabeth Powers examines the trajectory of Warner's career alongside that of more and less well-known contemporaries: George Orwell, Rebecca West, Elizabeth Bowen, and Stella Gibbons, among others. An examination of Sylvia's essays, made possible by the publication in 2012 of the first collection of Warner's non-fiction writings, *With the Hunted: Selected Writings*, edited by Peter Tolhurst, allows a decisive comparison with Virginia Woolf's career. Among other things, it helps to have not only a room of one's own, but also a publishing company of one's own. A comparison of Warner's failure to consider her literary afterlife is placed alongside Woolf's more programmatic and cultivated nourishment of her literary reputation. (EP)

This essays appears in the October 2016 issue of *The Yale Review*.

Member Page Nelson sends us this affectionate appreciation by

Jean Lucey Pratt

Following very positive reviews of the book last summer in both the London Review of Books and the TLS, I bought a copy of Jean Pratt's published diary *A Notable Woman, the Romantic Journals of Jean Lucey Pratt* (Canongate, 2016) and began reading. Miss Pratt (1909-1986, singleton author, cat fancier and bookseller) is a fluent, engaging diarist and no time seemed to have passed before I encountered this entry on page 610: "14 June, 1956. Old Mrs W. came in the other day saying 'This is the first time you have disappointed me. Filth!' And she flung Sylvia Townsend Warner's new collection of stories *Winter in the Air* on my desk. I must have looked startled, for she added, 'I hope the author is not a friend of yours?' I should have known better than to suggest the book for her. I am enjoying it immensely. I discovered S.T.W a little while ago and my judgment seems for once sound. I am glad of this, that I can recognize a writer of quality."

Members of the Society may wish to refresh their acquaintance with *Winter in the Air* to see if they can find the fount of Mrs W.'s opprobrium. I never did grasp it, though "Idenborough", a tale that lucidly demonstrates the virtues of deception, is a prime suspect. All the stories measure out separations – of heart and hearth and expectation, in careful calibrations that Miss Pratt, herself subtle, would have appreciated. In a note, the diary's editor writes: "S.T.W. wasn't a friend but was born and grew up a few miles from Jean." (PN)

The Land Remembered

Ronald Blythe

From a land of fulmars, rowans, burns and tall whinstone cliffs comes a country year-book which combines good observation, good rural manners and good writing. *Sir John Craster's NATURALIST IN NORTHUMBERLAND* (Hale, 45s) will give a lot of pleasure to locals and foreigners alike. It is a skilful mixture of the contemplative and the active, the one stimulating the other. Such essays can be full of traps for the unwary, but here is an author who knows his way about in the region of his coastal fields and also of the imagination.

'Join the Army and See the World' declared the between-the-wars posters, luring many a lad from a depressed farm to a recruiting sergeant. What really happened when, half-starved and desperate, he took the king's shilling? *Spike Mays*, that remarkable new chronicler of the bad old village days, tells all in a tremendous book, *FALL OUT THE OFFICERS* (Eyre, 35s). The appearance of the immortal Colonel Wintle and the East Anglian farmboy's refusal to be down-hearted go little towards reconciling one to the brutal inanities of the old army game.

Allan Jobson's books are, like jackdaws' nests, full of bright borrowings. As with life itself, the valuables are tangled up with the tinsel, the useful with the obsolete. *SUFFOLK REMEMBERED* (Hale, 30s) is a tempting hoard of local gossip, saws, poetry, private notions and public facts, tales in and out of school, inventories and pictures. Nothing is too profound or too trivial for inclusion, provided it can claim intimacy with the chilly East Coast.

Richard Agnew's FROM A COUNTRYMAN'S DIARY (Countryman, 35s) is the view from the park, so to speak, the classic country scene apparently all untouched by mid-century changes. Beyond the park lie the streams and coverts. The talk in the country house would not have sounded unfamiliar to the youthful Siegfried Sassoon, though the philosophy is that of Whyte-Melville [*]. This sporting life is nicely written. It might be said to be a display of the old confidence – were it not for the fact that there is no display at all, merely an urbane statement concerning country pursuits.

Larded with legends such as 'If we're not a modest lot, it's because we haven't much to be modest about', *YORKSHIRE'S MINE* (Dent, 30s) is a braggart's guide to England's biggest county. It is topography written at the top of a patriot's voice. *Norrie Ward* is particularly good on transport and on the subtle liaisons between lonely dales and proliferating industries in this part of the world. A little more catching of native wood-notes wild and a little less trumpet-blowing would have improved the style.

In total contrast is *Maurice Wiggin's* A COTTAGE IDYLL (Nelson, 30s) which daringly takes the seemingly threadbare theme of retirement among the beams and roses, and refashions it into one of the freshest and most delightful country confessions I have read for many a long day. Can any new thing come out of Surrey? Certainly. It's all in the mind, as they say. And in the writing, of course.

In a series of letters to an American nephew *Ralph Whitlock* tells, in *A FAMILY AND A VILLAGE* (Baker, 42s), of the centuries-old connection between the family and Pitton, Wiltshire. Once again the reader is reminded of how recent is the ease we now all take for granted in the village. Only yesterday, as it were, the rural people were locked in a system of endless tasks and hardships from which death alone could release them. As the author points out, most Americans are descended from such villagers, whether their home was in Kerry, Tuscany, the Urals or a chalky valley not far from Stonehenge.

Sweets have a habit of going to the sweet in legends. Beauty weds beauty, the good get the goods. There is a moral somewhere. In *FOLK TALES FROM MOOR AND MOUNTAIN* (Kaye, 21s) Winifred Finlay retells some cautionary and romantic stories in which human problems are solved by fairy agency. The narrative is satisfyingly traditional, and one succumbs to the ancient technique with contentment.

The Countryman Spring 1970

*George John Whyte-Melville (19 June 1821 – 5 December 1878) was a Scottish novelist much preoccupied with field sports, and also a poet.

An Enquiry into the Decay in the Uses of Poetry

first appeared in *Time and Tide* on 29 April 1927, but is re-printed in Peter Tolhurst's indispensable collection of Sylvia's non-fiction, *With the Hunted*.

The novelist and journalist Winifred Holtby (1898-1935) was quick to reply.

May 6th, 1927

Sir, – The great admiration I hold for Miss Sylvia Townsend Warner cannot destroy the indignation with which I read her article upon the *Decay in the Uses of Poetry*, a righteous indignation which survived the pernicious temptations of her charming style. She would have us believe that the best expectation of a poet in these decadent days is merely to be published and read in books and magazines. She passes over with the briefest mention the commercial uses of poetry. She cites only Messrs. Kipling and C.E. Montague as decorators of their prose by choice selection of verse, omitting poet-novelists who, like Stella Benson, generously throw in five-shillings-worth poetry with a seven-and-six-penny novel; and she finds in the departure of the ode a signal for that autumn of song, by which our leaves of poetry decay.

Sir, I beg the courtesy of your columns in which to refute this undeserved discouragement of aspiring poets. Since the days of the Medici, Commerce and Poetry have shared a comely partnership, but never until to-day has the advantage lain so certainly with the poet. That immortal couplet,

"They come as a boon and a blessing to men,

The Pickwick, the Owl and the Waverley pen,"

begat a fair progeny which to-day is filling the earth with profitable song. We smoke Abdullah Cigarettes at the bidding of a triolet; we quaff our ale, lured to the flagon by a song; *lingerie* has inspired lyrics; and when the hoardings, magazines, and posteriors of buses have been exhausted as pages for the writing of the muse, the development of sky-writing will assuredly raise Pegasus to his accustomed element.

Where Commerce ceases, Correspondence offers her welcome to the poet. Has Miss Townsend Warner never received a picture postcard inviting her in lilting couplets to come to Brighton? Has she, but I cannot believe this, never received a Valentine, deliciously flattering in ballad metre? Or does she think the austerities of a new church calendar will banish the Saint his votive poem? Yet even the word Calendar suggests another use for poetry which has not decayed. Does she not know the Verse for Every Day? Has she never been asked to contribute a few chosen lines to a friend's Autograph Album? Or does she spurn these simple, homely uses of the muse?

I must implore the author of *Espaliers* not to discourage those who, young and ardent are now seeking to follow her example, even should they never exceed her skill. – Yours, etc.,

Winifred Holtby

117, Wymering Mansions, Elgin Avenue, W.9.

Authors Take Sides on the Spanish Civil War

Left Review, London, 1937

The question to the Writers and Poets of England, Scotland, Ireland and Wales: "Are you for, or against, the legal Government and the People of Republican Spain? Are you for, or against, Franco and Fascism?"

Among the 126 authors favoring Republican Spain, Valentine replied that "Fascism is symptomatic of the sick man's will to self-destruction: artists live to resist this will, they express the fight of the living people for life, against death. I stand with the People and Government of Spain. Against Fascism always. Against confused thinking and cowardice. For the artist's most important qualities of reason and tenacious courage."

Llewelyn Powys wrote "I am unequivocally in favour of the legal Spanish Government and opposed to Fascism and any other form of Government that seeks by means of coercion to impose its arbitrary will upon its own or other peoples."

And from Sylvia – "I am for the people of Spain, and for their Government, chosen by them and true to them. And I am against Fascism, because Fascism is based upon mistrust of human potentialities. Its tyranny is an expression of envy, its terrorism is an expression of fear."

There were 16 neutral answers, including those of Norman Douglas, T.S. Eliot, and Vita Sackville-West. Ezra Pound wrote "Questionnaire an escape mechanism for young fools who are too cowardly to think; too lazy to investigate the nature of money, its mode of issue, the control of such issue by the Banque de France and the stank of England. You are all had. Spain is an emotional luxury to a gang of dilettantes."

Of the five supporters of Franco, which included Evelyn Waugh, Arthur Machen answered that "Mr. Arthur Machen presents his compliments and begs to inform that he is, and always has been, entirely for General Franco."

The entire issue may be seen in PDF online at
<http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/netzquelle/a-37891.pdf>

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On May 21, 1926, Ruth Draper wrote Harriet Marple that she had "read *Lady into Fox* and hated it; *Lolly Willowes*, beautifully done but too clever for pure enjoyment – I sometimes think I have no imagination – strange stories bother me so – I like real tales!..." (*The Letters of Ruth Draper*, Southern Illinois University)

Two Poems

Peter Swaab sends us these poems published in *The Bryanston Miscellany*, Victor Bonham-Carter, editor, Bryanston School, 1958. Both are collected in *New Collected Poems* and *Journey from Winter*, respectively, with slight variations. Sylvia's poem lacks the title, Miranda is named instead of Dorinda, and has 'On rolled the world' instead of 'Round went the world'. Valentine's poem, not a new poem for the *Miscellany*, as it was written between 1947 and 1955, is titled simply *The Rose*. Downflows and withindoors are sic.

on p 27 a poem signed by Sylvia Townsend Warner

Recollection

In the high field, watching the sun go down,
Dorinda said, 'I like to stand like this
And feel that I am sticking out into space.'
Round went the world, and presently she walked on --
A moving turret among stationary towers,
Pylons, trees of secular growth and pyramids.

on p 47 a poem signed by Valentine Ackland

The Rose That Never Killed

Now, when the rain downflows
And wasting autumn teems
Fierce-falling tears upon the silent hill;
Now the slain summer lies here spoiled and still,
See how withindoors we have brought the rose,
The rose that never killed --
She only, of all the world, her task fulfilled;
The old men's vision and the young men's dreams.

In the April 1959 issue of *The Private Library* there is an advertisement for the *Miscellany* reading "...a fine ten-guinea subscription book, in limited edition... contains thirty articles by well-known writers. The proceeds will be devoted to the building of a science block at Bryanston School". The school, founded in 1928 and existing still, is near Blandford Forum, Dorset. Sylvia evidently knew the school, for in a letter of 24.i.1962 to David Garnett she writes "I saw Amaryllis [his daughter] at the Bryanston play this last summer. In some of her movements she reminded me of you. She has an excellent stage presence. I hope she will go on and be a glory to the name of Garnett as well as the apple of your eye..."

Underlying Morality

New Writing III: Spring 1937. Edited by John Lehmann. Lawrence & Wishart: 6s

Review by Sylvia Townsend Warner

This third volume of *New Writing* is dedicated to the memory of Ralph Fox. It is good to find that it is so closely in keeping with his outlook on literature, his insistence that the cultural heritage is a useful, not an ornamental, possession, a weapon in the hand, not a ring on it.

For the stories and poems and articles in *New Writing*, extricating themselves from the slough of Art for Art's sake, have gone back to the better foundation of Art for Man's sake, to a time when people wrote to express their convictions rather than their feelings. The last story in this volume, Panteleimon Tchikvadze's *Road to Affluence*, might almost have been written by the authoress of *The Shepherd of Salisbury Plain* (who herself, through some unrecorded contact, must have learned so much from the author of *Candide*). Solid, with its affable feeling towards human nature and its foursquare moral, it employs all the methods of the best tract writers. The difference is that the method (which was always pretty good) is now attached to the right moral.

Traditional, too, in the best sense, is G.T. Garrett's *First Hunger March*. It is an account of men in earnest and a practical joke. The narrative, dry, detailed, and with that art-concealing artfulness which one sees on the serious blank faces of proletarian humorists, joins on without a hitch to the narrative style of Defoe (another tract writer). And whether Garrett is conscious of Defoe (or even whether Defoe was conscious of Defoe) does not appear to be of much importance. The one and the other are exponents of that admirable tradition of a straightforward story with good sense and good feeling behind it – an underlying morality, in fact, a serious outlook upon mankind.

Indeed, to readers who do not like underlying morality, this book will be torment. I do not see where they will be able to repose themselves, unless it be on Yuri Olyesha's *Love*, a story which makes no appeal whatsoever to the moral sense, and whose appearance in this volume is agreeable but slightly embarrassing, like the appearance of a Bird of Paradise on a battlefield. Obviously, our world in prospect will include a great many Birds of Paradise and no battlefield; but with the world as it is, stories with an underlying morality, a resolute understanding and intolerance of social conditions, are likely to be the best stories. *New Writing III*, accepting this necessity for underlying morality, contains, as one might expect, a great deal of very good writing. And it contains one masterpiece, Jean Giono's *The Corn Dies*, a story with the rhythm and strong lyrical colour of a Van Gogh canvas.

Another thing about *New Writing III* calls, finally, for praise: the very high standard of translation. Even the poems give every appearance of having been translated by human beings, instead of the usual trained monkeys with dictionaries.

Left Review II-6 July 1937

They Might Be Us

Virgin Soil Upturned: Mikhail Sholokhov. Putnam, pp. —. 73. 6d.

Review by Sylvia Townsend Warner

A FAVOURITE method of counter Soviet propaganda is the trick of saying: "But surely you don't believe all those fairy-tale statistics, those accounts of everything working so perfectly? Now if they would admit to a failure every now and then, I might believe in Communism." Sholokhov's novel, *Virgin Soil Upturned*, can certainly not be dismissed as a fairy tale. *The Saturday Review* can even recommend it as comfortable reading for British Fascists.

"This is the story of the attempt to 'collectivise' the Don Cossacks, and here again the artist in Sholokhov triumphs over the Soviet propagandist, for not only are we presented with a wonderfully sympathetic picture of the Cossack's love for their land and their fierce determination to acquire it for themselves, but the absurdities of the whole Soviet mechanising system and the stupidities of its officials are relentlessly exposed with an audacity that is almost incredible."

But though British Fascism makes this gallant attempt to grasp the nettle unstung by standing on its head to do so, the civilised reader will recognise in *Virgin Soil Upturned* neither direct propaganda nor exposure, but merely the look of truth. Those who know anything of agriculture know that in any country and under any conditions a harvest is tantamount to a warfare. We have not yet tamed nature, as we have cows, to stand still and be milked. *Virgin Soil Upturned* recounts the sowing not only of a grain harvest but of a social harvest, the sowing of the idea of collectivisation in the soil, so rich to produce at once both wheat and tares, of the rustic mind; it tells of a struggle against sabotage, misrepresentation, White intrigue, as well as against such usual adversaries as weather and weevil.

This book is remarkable on many counts; for richness of material, for vitality, and for its objectivity. But *Virgin Soil Upturned* is remarkable most of all for its understanding of the rural mind. Sholokhov's peasants are portrayed, not from the viewpoint of Tolstoi who, whether describing the peasant as clod-hopper or Holy One, never casts off the land-capitalist fallacy that the peasant is a separate being – a species, but as workers peculiarly affected by peculiar conditions, weathered, as it were by a trade at once arduous and subtle, and emotionally subject to the stimulus inherent in the primitive business of getting food from earth. Whether the workers in *Virgin Soil Upturned* rage against the collective farm or for it, their profoundest passion is still that impulse to tend the feeding earth, to sow and to reap; ultimately, they are for or against collectivisation as they consider it an abettor or an impediment to this; and the directing and harnessing of this passion to the service of the collective is the basic theme of the whole book.

One interesting result of Sholokhov's understanding of the peasant mind is that his peasants surpass nationality. Readers of Russian fiction who have learned to dread the moujik as a high-tide bore need have no dread of him in *Virgin Soil Upturned*. Other

readers, not so sophisticated, though in fiction with a rural theme quite as critical – agricultural workers who have read this book, have agreed in this one comment: "The people are so life-like. They might be us, here."

The Labour Monthly January 1936

Mikhail Aleksandrovich Sholokhov (May 24, 1905 – February 21, 1984) was a Soviet/Russian novelist and winner of the 1965 Nobel Prize in Literature. He is known for writing about life and fate of Don Cossacks during the Russian Revolution, the civil war and the period of collectivization, primarily the famous *And Quiet Flows the Don*.

Mary Jacobs Memorial Essay Prize

The Sylvia Townsend Warner Society invites essays on any aspect of the life and work of Sylvia Townsend Warner

Aim: to encourage further study of the writings of Sylvia Townsend Warner, in honour of the distinguished work of Dr Mary Jacobs.

The Award: the prize for the winning essay will be £500, publication in the Society's *Journal* and one year's free membership in the Society.

Procedure: Essays should not be more than 6000 words.

Entries should preferably be submitted in electronic form, or else in hard copy, and should be submitted in two parts – 1) the essay without any identifying details, and 2) a separate document with author's name, essay title and email and postal address. Entries should be sent to the Editor of the Society's *Journal* at p.swaab@ucl.ac.uk

The deadline for entries is 31 May 2017.

The winner will be notified by the Chairman of the Society in September 2017.

The winning essay will be published in the 2017 *Journal* at the end of the year.

Terms and Conditions: The competition is open to all, with the exception of the officers of the Society.

The judges' decision will be final and no correspondence will be entered into.

The Committee reserves the right not to award the Prize if entries are deemed not to merit the award.

Essays entered must not have been published elsewhere or have publication pending.

The Society will not contribute towards any expenses incurred by entrants to the competition.

In Spring 1947 *The Countryman* published Sylvia's poem *Saint David's Country*.
Below, it differs from the following version from the *New Collected Poems*.

Some Joneses, Prices, Morgans, all in black,
Troop to the chapel of Llangibby Fach –
A parallelogram of yellow suet
That's finished off with a small vinegar cruet.

And other blackened Morgans, Joneses, Prices,
Preferring litanies and such devices,
Attend Saint Dogmell's church of the same parish
Whose Gothic is both reach-me-down and garish.

And all the blackbirds into the mountain are flown
Where the wind preaches from a pulpit of stone:
A vexed doctrine, full of contention and cavil,
But in such Welsh spoken as none can rival.

Some Joneses, Prices, Morgans, wearing black,
Troop to the chapel of Llangibby fach –
A parallelogram of yellow suet
That's finished off with a small vinegar cruet.

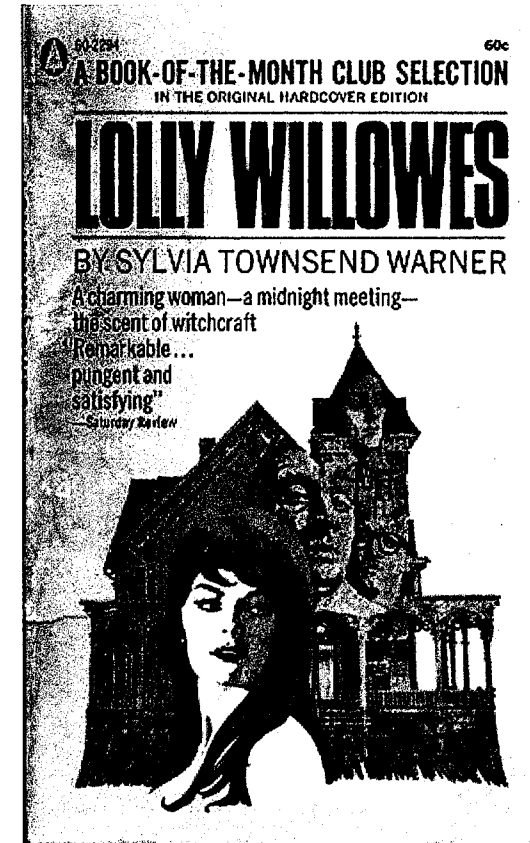
And other blackened Morgans, Joneses, Prices,
Preferring litanies and such devices,
Attend St Dogwell's church of the same parish
Whose gothic is both reach-me-down and garish.

The Celt who like a saint adores, an angel sings,
Has no more architecture than a pig has wings.

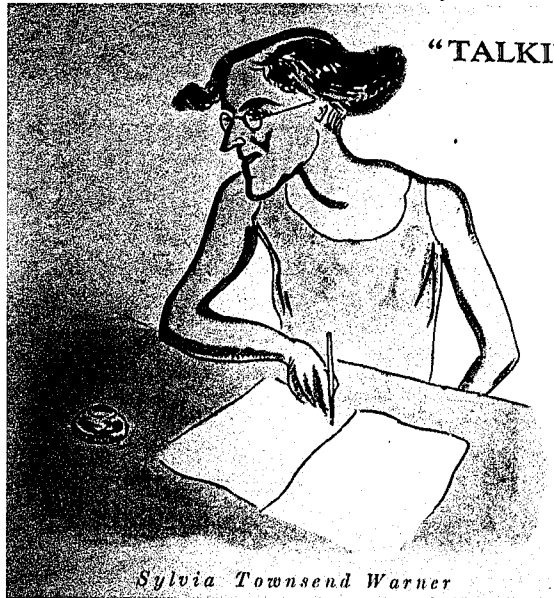
But on the bar of the Cross Keys
A cat licks up the cider lees
Whose bulk is vaulted, vast, and grave
As any echoing Norman nave,

Whose soaring tail, whose rounded apse,
Whose rose-windowed flamboyant chaps,
The Great Original proclaims
Of Chartres and Westminster and Rheims.

And him the week-day Prices, Morgans, Joneses,
Stroke with admiring hands and praise with moanses.



They don't print them like they used to. Also undated and by that same most democratic of presses, the Popular Library, is a paperback of *The Corner that Held Them*. Its cover isn't at this spirited level but the copy is juicier: "A major novel....As moving as *The Nun's Story*...A brilliant novel of God, the Flesh and the Devil...Oby was far from the largest or richest convent in England, but, from the rumors that had reached the bishop's ear, it was certainly the most unusual. Strange things had always happened at Oby, but, as the years swept by, the things grew stranger and the rumors grew more damning."



From *Eve* 12 January 1927

Corrections

Though the poem *Early Spring* in Newsletter 32 is by E.K. Robertson Scott, the editor of the *The Countryman* is of course J.W. Robertson Scott. E.K. must be Elspet Keith, a writer and oriental scholar, whom he married in 1906. (cf. 2008 Journal)

Anita Brookner erred twice in her review of the Warner/Maxwell letters in Newsletter 33. Sylvia submitted her first story to *The New Yorker* in 1935, not 1938, and Katherine S. White, not William Maxwell, was her first editor.

Though surely it did no one harm to read in Newsletter 33 the excerpts from Peter Scupham's article on Sylvia's poetry, the full text of *Shelf Lives 11* is reprinted in the 2003 Journal (insert chagrin emoji).

Future newsletters may be dedicated to 1) Valentine, 2) the first year of correspondence between Sylvia and *The New Yorker*. Your thoughts on this are appreciated. And as always, contributions, suggestions and corrections are most welcome.