Foreword

Margaret Storm Jameson and Guy Chapman met in January 1924, and were married on 1st February 1926, at the Register Office in Chelsea. She was 35, and he was 36. Born in Whitby and educated at Leeds University and University College London, Jameson was making a name as a successful editor, and had published five novels. Chapman, a well-connected graduate of Christ Church Oxford, and an ex-officer, was one of many former soldiers trying to come to terms with a world very different from the one they had gone to fight for in 1914. He too was working in publishing, and was about to establish his own small firm. He was separated from a wife who despised and exploited him. Jameson, mother of an eight-year-old son, was also separated from a philandering husband, who was still demanding her emotional and financial support. Their coming together involved a long, messy struggle with personal insecurities, disabling feelings of moral duty and responsibility, and all the upheaval and humiliation attendant on the process of divorce in the 1920s.

The story of Margaret and Guy is at the centre of *Love in Winter* (1935). The novel is the second volume of the trilogy, *The Mirror in Darkness*, written at the start of the 1930s, as writers on the left banded together against the increasingly visible operations of fascism in Europe. The beating heart of the wintry world of post-war London is the love affair of the cousins Hervey Russell Vane and Nicholas Roxby, descendants of Mary Hansyke, head of one of the great shipbuilding firms who drove Britain's industrial economy at the end of the nineteenth century. Jameson had already drawn Mary's vanished world in the trilogy she published in the 1920s, *The Triumph of Time*. Hervey is writing the double of its first volume throughout the present text, and its successful completion, coinciding with her decision to move into a flat

with Nicholas on Primrose Hill, is one of the few moments of hope in a chronicle of missed opportunities and wrong choices.

Love in Winter, set at the mid-point between the Armistice and the General Strike, is the account of Britain's journey towards another disastrous war, the careerism and treachery of the leaders of the Left, and the greed and ambition of the owners of wealth and power. Like everything Jameson wrote, the strength of the work is in its grounding in the real: the people she knew, her personal experiences, and her acute understanding of the history she was living through. But the material is always presented at an angle, intensified, condensed, and transformed into new forms, which will speak to the imaginations of her readers. The novel returns obsessively to the theme of writing, and the importance of writing as a political intervention. At one level, Hervey, like her creator, feels herself succumbing to the demands of everyday living, selling her pen and her socialist ideals in order to survive. At a deeper level, this 'backslider' (Jameson's self-castigating term), finds salvation in her struggle to see straight, and to use words honestly, challenging a world of self-deception, self-interest, and debased rhetoric.

In a long series of interconnected novels written across twenty years, from *The Lovely Ship* (1927) to *The Black Laurel* (1947), Jameson undertook an epic investigation into the lives of men and women entangled in the webs of modern British history, shaped by the machinery of industry and the politics of empire. Her theme is twentieth-century Britain's painful crossing into modernity, forced out of the cocoon of Little England into the nightmare of the space outside, the unknown of Europe and the world beyond. Jameson draws a generic condition of fear and powerlessness, inhabited, shockingly, by real people.

> Hervey lifted her eyes and saw the face of a woman who was passing the door slowly, as if without any strength. She was young, not thirty, but her shoulders drooped,

> lines ran from the corner of her mouth, pulling it down, and her eyes stared round her without, it seemed, noticing anything. They met Hervey's; she received from them such a sensation of darkness and emptiness that she felt dizzy, as if, leaning from the edge of a cliff, she saw nothing beneath. All this passed into her mind in less than a moment, before the woman had moved out of sight; and now Hervey felt that Nicholas and she were not alone, each between walls, but were standing together in an open place under a vast sky, while men and women, as the sands of the sea for number, passed and repassed incessantly, so that she became afraid of losing herself in them. (p. 178)

This is the Baudelairean anguish generated by the collapse of the old world of humane values, and the confrontation with the frightening anonymity and uniformity of the crowds of the modern metropolis. And like Baudelaire, Jameson looks to the clear vision of the writer to bring into the terror some hope of redemption. Nicholas picks up a copy of T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*, left behind by Hervey's old socialist comrade, David Renn, and finds in its margins a pencilled quotation from Baudelaire's 'Invitation au voyage', the yearning for a dream world of another, gentler, kind of life and love (p. 231).

In *The Mirror in Darkness*, Jameson's writing is a unique blend of documentary realism and the techniques and themes of early modernism. The metropolis is the key, the formative site of twentieth-century lives. The London of 1924 is not just the landscape of human action but a living creature. To Sally Rigden, the young working-class wife fresh from the country, it is a monster, 'growling in her ears like a wild beast' (p. 380). Jameson sketches the streetscape in its changing moods and moments, and maps the spaces given over to the poor, the wealthy, and the aspiring middle classes, and the contrasting lives that can be lived

there. The centre of London, with its shops, businesses, and press and publishing houses, is the place where Hervey feels most passionate and free, and where she has a real chance to grasp at success and fame. London south of the river is a place of shrinking villages and vanishing community, disappearing under the streets of cheap houses newly-built to accommodate the men and women woken by the war to an indignant sense of their right to decent living. One of them is home to Sally Rigden and her husband Frank, ex-soldier, trade-unionist, and socialist dreamer. This is their first experience of such comfort and security, and somehow both know that it won't last. The lease of such as the Rigdens is always determined by decisions made at Hervey's end of town. The bus driver who carries Frank past the glittering shops of Piccadilly, through Trafalgar Square and its church, the offices of the shipping companies, and the great administrative buildings of the State, into the poverty of Deptford High Street, registers the contrasts, and his own place in this pecking order. But such bitter knowledge is only a 'half-formed thought' (p. 376). To help that thought turn into action should be the job of London's writers. But London's atmosphere clouds their vision and turns their energies inward. As the October fog eddies into her employer's salon, Hervey fantasises the transformation of this room full of fashionable writers into some kind of underwater kingdom, or an aquarium, filled with grotesque and dangerous creatures, 'like the tank of electric eels at the Zoo' (p. 260).

London is a site constructed by economic and political forces, the place where all the networks of power meet and merge. Hervey stands at its edge, the immature and self-centred observer, only one step removed from the mass of her wilfully blind contemporaries, forcing herself to see more clearly. Around her, the forces coalesce that will shortly overwhelm all their lives. Jameson writes about the hard politics of a harsh era, and how they operate. '[War] is the *lingua franca* of a generation' (p. 124), but the survivors of war use the common language very

differently, as they plan the directions in which the post-war world will go. Nicholas, the officer whose wartime concern for his men is now pulling him inexorably to socialism, and William Gary, the mine-owner quietly extending his empire into iron and steel, shipbuilding, and transport ('the scaffolding for a world', p. 198), are former brothers-in-arms. They quarrel over a coal strike in Gary's mines in Lanarkshire, and Gary's refusal to make concessions to the miners. Their eventual split is inevitable. The Economic Council that he is rapidly building, a magnet for all those afraid of losing their power and their money, will offer the workers material security; Nicholas, he broods, wants to give them ideas, of freedom and responsibility. Another former soldier, Louis Earlham, now the MP for Deptford, a gifted speaker and writer, terrified of falling back into the poverty of the East End where he was born, is easily recruited to Gary's side. Poverty, Jameson knows, is the great driver of choices. Earlham will shortly block the publication of an article by Renn revealing Gary's fraudulent takeover of a shipping firm. Published, it could have led to the exposure of the rottenness of Gary's growing empire, and prevented the proto-fascist Council from coming to power. Julian Swan, invalided out of the war after eight months (a traffic accident), is appointed Director of the Economic Council. He takes on as his subordinate Tim Hunt. Hunt sold arms before the war and after it served in Ireland in the Black and Tans. He is a rapist, who beats and kills his wife. The war that should have made a new world for the workers has simply handed power to William Gary over the rulers of the old: Thomas Harben, industrialist arriviste, owner of coalfields and ironworks in Yorkshire and Scotland; his wife Lucy, of old landed gentry, who married Thomas for his money; Marcel Cohen, another arriviste, a newspaper magnate, who prints the Zinoviev letter that brings down the Labour government. Julian Swan climbs to the top of St Paul's and looks out over London, raising his arm like his hero, Mussolini: 'What a city to sack!' (p. 129).

Only dimly aware of the monstrous forces gathering, the couples in this novel live and love, and do the best they can to be kind, understanding and supporting, and truthful to one another and to themselves. Love and marriage are also a form of war. In her first marriage, Hervey has lost self-confidence and the ability to trust people. She has kept her kindness, even for those who have damaged her, but she has acquired a layer of protective scepticism: 'I am thirty, and I have learned that nothing lasts' (p. 150). She can be cold and tough. But she has also learned resilience, and how to fight for what matters. To win and keep Nicholas, she will do whatever it takes: 'She had no shame and no pride' (p. 140).

The novel ends on the cliff edge. For the moment, almost everyone seems happy, couples united, and home safe. Gary has been abandoned by his friend Nicholas and by his secretary, Renn, who by one of the ironies of history has been flying round Europe, helping build Gary's business networks. Not all is as it should be. The activist Henry Smith, who has been working in the slums of Barcelona and Hamburg, joins with David Renn across the café table in Deptford to tell their old friend Louis Earlham that he is letting in fascism. Hervey, like Earlham, is taking money from Cohen's paper. Her culpability is far less than his, but her sense of guilt far greater.

In this wintry world, no-one can be pure, and everything must be paid for. The next volume of the trilogy, *None Turn Back*, where the battle-lines are drawn between workers and capital, in the tragic defeat of the General Strike, presents the bill.

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