

ELIZABETH MYERS [1903- 1947]

ELIZABETH MYERS (LITTELTON POWYS'S SECOND WIFE)

[Bissell Gift]

Note: Books by EM in Bissell Gift are filed after Littleton Powys (L3) The rest of the material about her and her letters etc are in the archive box marked Elizabeth Myers.

Note: included in the above archive box is the **Gift of Timothy Rogers** because this material is almost totally connected with Elizabeth Myers.

A Well Full of Leaves. London: Chapman & Hall, 1943.

Dedicated to Arthur Waugh who died before publication.

Inscribed: To Mrs Waugh with love from Betty. August 23, 1943. [another copy]

A Well Full of Leaves. New York: William Morrow, 1944.

Inscribed: To dearest John with love from Elizabeth April, 1944.

A Well Full of Leaves. London : Penguin Books, 1947. No 626

Galaxy. A Table-Book of Prose Reflections for every day in the year. By Arthur Waugh, compiled by Elizabeth Myers. London: Todd Publishing Co., January, 1944.

Inscribed: To dearest Littleton with love from the compiler. January, 1944.

With loosely inserted note by Littleton.

The Basilisk of St. James's. London: Chapman & Hall, 1945.

Inscribed: To Theodore with much love from Elizabeth. January, 1945.

The Basilisk of St James's. London: Chapman & Hall, 1945

Inscribed: To dearest John with much love from your devoted Elizabeth. January, 1945. A dedication copy.

Mrs Christopher. London: Chapman & Hall, 1946.

Mrs Christopher. London: Chapman & Hall, 1946

Inscribed: To dear John with love from Elizabeth. 1946.

Good Beds - Men Only. London: Chapman & Hall, 1948

Inscribed: With much love to Theodore from Littleton and Elizabeth Sept.3, 1948. This is what Elizabeth, who 'Soared away' would have me do.

Good Beds - Men Only. London: Chapman & Hall, 1948

Inscribed: To John and Phyllis from Littleton and Elizabeth with much love. Sept 3, 1948.

Thirty Stories. Edited with an introduction by her husband, Littleton C. Powys.

London: Macdonald, 1954.

Inscribed: Catharine Philippa Powys with much love from her brother Littleton. May 17, 1954. West Pennard, Glastonbury, Somerset.

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Thirty Stories. Edited with an introduction by her husband, Littleton C. Powys.

London: Macdonald, 1954.

Inscribed: Littleton Powys to J.C. Powys, May 14th, 1954

(A gift to Mr Bissell from Phyllis Playter)

West Country Short Stories. Chosen with an Introduction by Lewis Wilshire.

London: Faber & Faber, 19449

Contains: "Invasion" by Eliz Myers

Inscribed: Littleton C. Powys For E. Myers, August, 1949.

NOTE: This is filed with Anthologies as it contains article by T.F. Powys also.

The Pleasure Ground. London: Macdonald, 1941. Contains: "Trimalchio's Banquet" by Elizabeth Myers.

Note: contains articles and stories by other members of the family including A. Gregory, Llewelyn, T.F. G Woolsey and Val Ackland.

Note: Filed with Anthologies.

BOOKS ABOUT ELIZABETH MYERS

Farjeon, Eleanor. *Elizabeth Myers*. Aylesford, St. Albert's Press, 1957. Has engraving of Elizabeth Myers by Edward Walters.

Farjeon, Eleanor, *Elizabeth Myers*. Aylesford, St. Albert's Press, 1957. Copy no 42 of 100 printed by hand August, 1957. Signed by the three contributors.

ELIZABETH MYERS - MISCELLANEOUS

Note: This section needs further work as a number of typescripts added subsequently.

- 1) Typescript reports to publisher on writers' mss from 27.4.43 to 26.3.46 plus 22 'blurbs' and other repos.
- 2) Typescript: "How to Write a Short Story"
- 3) Oct - Dec. 1944 *The Adelphi*. "Love".
- 4) 3 May, 1946. *John O' London's Weekly*. "The Honourable". Short story.
- 5) Spring, 1952 *The West Country Magazine*. "To Elizabeth Myers" - a poem by Sarah Jackson.
- 6) June 25, 1954 *T.L.S.* Review of *Thirty Stories*. Ed by L.C.P.
- 7) Spring, 1957. *Aylesford Review*. E. Myers Memorial number. 2 copies

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[Timothy Rogers Gift]

Note: In December, 2000 Timothy Rogers gave the Collection a corpus of material belonging to, or relating to Elizabeth Myers. Since most of the gift concerns Elizabeth Myers, everything relating to her that is not books is all together in one archive box.

LETTERS from or about

Originals and copies of two letters from E Myers to T Rogers, Sept. 28 1945; Oct. 16 1945.

One holograph postcard from E Myers to Timothy Rogers, Arizona, Feb. 13 1947.

One letter from Lucy Penny to Timothy Rogers, Oct. 9 1978.

Correspondence from T Rogers to Morine Krissdottir about gift.

Reviews and obituaries of Elizabeth Myers.

Two obituaries of Eleanor Farjeon.

BOOKS

Farjeon, Eleanor. *Pannychis*. Shaftesbury, High House Press, 1933.

Poe, Edgar Allan. *Poems*. London, Routledge, 1887. E M's copy.

Farjeon, Eleanor. *Elizabeth Myers*. Aylesford, St Albert's Press, 1957

SCRAPBOOKS

NEWSPAPER CUTTINGS BOOK.

References of Powys/general literary interest

1 TFP, Llewelyn. Photo of TFP with 'Susie'.

2 Gauguin the painter by HL Morrow.

3 - 5 Chekhov.

8 'Synge and the Playboy' by Lennox Robinson.

10 Robert Morley as Dumas.

11 'New Powys Era'.

12 'Lawrence of Arabia as His Friends Saw Him'

13 Pushkin. Arnold Bennett.

14 'A Writer's Childhood' (Mary Butts) by Hugh Ross Williamson.

15 - 16 Modigliani.

18 'Frank Harris's "Oscar Wilde"' by Coulson Kernahan.

19 'In Hazard' by Richard Hughes.

20 LH Myers obit.

21 'The Walt Whitman Legend' by John Brophy.

23 'The Perfect Child Grows up'. With 2 photos.

Enc. 'A Pantheist' (Llewelyn) by Edwin Muir.

25 'The Powys Brothers of Shirley' by Rosemary Meynell.

26 - 27 Cuttings from Littleton's visit to Swansea, May 1945.

28- 29 Littleton's broadcasts.

30 - 46 Reviews of 'A Well Full of Leaves'.

47 - 48 'A Way of Life' by E Myers, *John o'London's Weekly*, April 7, 1944.

49 - 53 Reviews of 'A Well Full of Leaves'.

54 - 67 Reviews of 'The Basilisk of St James's'.

69 - 80 Reviews of 'Mrs Christopher'.

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- 83 – 84 MS note on EM by Littleton.
- 85 ‘Sang and Soared Away’. Tribute to EM by Littleton.
- 86 – 89 Obituaries of EM.
- 90 – 92 Assorted EM material.
- 93 – 102 Reviews of ‘Good Beds – Men Only’.
- 103 – 114 Reviews of ‘The Letters of Elizabeth Myers’.
- 116 (enc.) Published letter from EM. Short story, ‘Admittance One Shilling’ by Myra Reeves.
Translation from Italian of EM’s short Story ‘Il Cuore Placato’ and the original.
- 117 – 125 Reviews of ‘The Letters of Elizabeth Myers’.
- 127 Review of ‘Admittance One Shilling’.
- 129 -136 Reviews of ‘Thirty Stories’ by EM.
- 137 – 138 Reviews of Littleton Powys’s ‘The Powys Family’.
- 139 – 142 Obituaries of TFP.
- 144 ‘The Man in the Corner’ (JCP) by James Hanley.

SCRAPBOOK

Front cover missing. Containing many prints, some loosely inserted.

FOLDER

Containing five prints of paintings.

BIRTH CERTIFICATE

For Elizabeth Myers. Born September 23, 1912. Registered in Manchester, January 29, 1913.

WEDDING CERTIFICATE

For Littleton Powys and Elizabeth Myers, October 7 1943. At St Mary’s Chapel, Hampstead.

ROGERS, Timothy

- 1 Three letters from Frank Warren.
 - 2 Holograph reference by Littleton Powys, 1952.
 - 3 MS adjudication by JCP of Rogers’ poem, ‘Home’.
 - 4 R A Atthill and G M H Raper. Writings selected by Timothy Rogers.
- Letter from Woodrow Wyatt, June 23, 1947.

PRIZE CERTIFICATES

Four *Bookman* prize competition certificates won by E. Myers, May, July, August and October, 1931.

WRITINGS

- 1 MS short story ‘The Plea’. With envelope.
- 2 Printed short story ‘The Second Sight’. *Listener*, Aug. 29 1946.
- 3 Printed review of *The Little Locksmith*, (Hathaway), *John o’London*, April 7, 1944.
- 4 Printed short story ‘The Dissatisfied Client’. *Adelphi*, Jan-Mar 1945.
- 5 Printed review of *All Hallows Eve* (Williams) and *The Only Door Out* (Wilkes). *Adelphi*, April-June 1945.
- 6 *Galaxy*, chosen and arranged by Myers, Jan. 1944.

MYERS, Elizabeth (mother of Elizabeth Myers: ‘Mother o’ Pearl’)

LETTERS TO AND FROM

Letters from Eleanor FARJEON, May 1955 – Feb. 1965.

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Letters from John HARRIS, Nove 16, 1955, Dec. 2 1955 and n.d. [1955]

With copy of part of a letter from John Harris in Littleton's hand.

Three letters from Oliver HOLT, Sept. 20, 27 and 29 1955, concerning the death of Littleton Powys.

Letters from:

John Cowper POWYS, July 23, 1958. With envelope.

T F POWYS, May 25 1947

Lucy POWYS, Dec. 14 1960 and Feb. 24 1964. With envelope.

Louis WILKINSON, Feb. 10 1944

Letter to Brocard SEWELL, May 17 1956. With envelope.

Letter from Brocard SEWELL, Jan 28, 1951.

Five letters from Ruth TOMALIN, Feb 14 1961, Aug 14 1961, June 27, Feb. 11, and June 16.

Letters from Myfanwy WESTROPE, 1962-1971, with typescript poems by Mrs Westrope.

Letters from:

Violet BURNAGE, Aug. 24, 1961

CHAPMAN & HALL, Dec. 6, 1963 [postmark]

MIDDLESEX HOSPITAL, April 27 and June 4, 1962.

SHEED & WARD, March 18 and 24, 1959.

Letters from:

Richard CHURCH, Oct. 22 1956. With envelope.

Howard SPRING, Dec. 11 1951 and March 26 1952.

Letters from:

'Annie'. Three letters of 1947.

'Christopher' (grandson), Aug. 6 1952.

'John' n.d.

'Sylvia', postmarked July 29 1964.

Correspondence between Mrs Myers and various animal welfare concerns.

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[Gift of Francis Feather]

BOOKS BY

A Well Full of Leaves. London: Chapman & Hall Ltd., 1943.

Inscribed: 'to my dear Gertrude & Katie with love from Elizabeth.'

A Well Full of Leaves. New York: William Morrow & Co, 1944. Inscribed: 'to Reginald Addyes-Scott'.

A Well Full of Leaves. Penguin Books, 1947 [p.b.].

A Well Full of Leaves. Facsimile of No 1 by Cedric Chivers, Bath, 1967.

The Basilisk of St James. London: Chapman & Hall Ltd., 1945 [Inscribed]. Second Copy.

Mrs Christopher. London: Chapman & Hall, 1946. (2 copies)

La Signora Christopher. Torino: Frassinelli Tipografo Editore, 1949. Inscribed in Italian from Littleton to Gertrude.

Good Beds - Men Only. London: Chapman & Hall, 1948.

The Letters of Elizabeth Myers. London: Chapman & Hall, 1951 [ed. by Littleton Powys. Inscription].

Thirty Stories. London: Macdonald, 1954 [ed. by Littleton Powys].

TYPESCRIPTS AND MANUSCRIPTS

Reviews of 'A Well Full of Leaves'

Letters re 'Mrs Christopher' from Reginald Addyes-Scott

Sundry press cuttings

Correspondence with L.H. Myers and Mrs Myers

a) 14 letters

b) 6 letters

c) 3 letters

Correspondence with Countess Hermynia Zur Muhlen

20 holograph letters and 2 cards

3 pp manuscript of an unpublished article –“Communism – the Religion of the Godless.”

manuscript of short story "A Day at the Seaside".

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BOOKS ABOUT

Farjeon, Eleanor, *Elizabeth Myers*. Aylesford: St Albert's Press, 1957 [The editor's copy with a loose engraving of E. Myers reproduced in the frontispiece. No 1 of 100 copies with two letters to editor(?)].

As above, but card cover. No. 43 of 100 copies.

Waugh, Arthur, *Galaxy: A Table-book of prose reflections for every day of the year*. Chosen and arranged by E. Myers. London: Todd Publishing Co., 1944.

NOTE: Below is a brief biography/bibliography by the bookseller, Richard Sims, to augment the Powys Collection.

Over sixty years have passed since she departed from this world, but the novelist and short-story writer Elizabeth Myers is an author whose writings still resonate to this day. Throughout her all too brief writing career, tragically cut short on May 24, 1947 when she died at the age of 34, Myers penned dozens of short stories which she contributed to various newspapers, journals and magazines. Many of her stories were collected in book form in various collections which include *The Donkey and the Stars and Other Short Stories* (1943) and *Good Beds -- Men Only* (1948). In the 1940s her stories found a new outlet when several were broadcast on BBC radio. A substantial number of Myers' personal letters to friends and family were assembled by her husband Littleton Powys (1874-1955) in the posthumous collection *The Letters of Elizabeth Myers* (1951). Her letters are an essential read for those wishing to gain a deeper understanding and insight into the life of this extraordinary writer. Myers was clearly a compulsive letter-writer and formed several long-standing friendships through the medium of correspondence. Perhaps the greatest success of her literary career came with the publication and subsequent critical acclaim and notoriety of the three excellent novels she had published in her lifetime. Each of her novels, from *A Well Full of Leaves* (1943), *The Basilisk of St. James's* (1945), to her last, *Mrs. Christopher* (1946), was very different from the others. *A Well Full of Leaves* gained a certain notoriety. This remarkable novel deals for the most part with the relationship between an abusive mother and her children. *The Basilisk of St. James's* was about Jonathan Swift. On the surface, *Mrs. Christopher* is a murder mystery, no doubt influenced by her own love of this genre of literature. But as the story progresses, it develops into more than just a crime story. A film adaptation of the novel was released to cinemas in 1951 under the title *Blackmailed*. Her novels remain outstanding works, providing a lasting testament to her wide thematic range and narrative skills. These books also serve as a poignant indication of what other fine novels may have followed had she lived longer.

Born in Manchester on December 23, 1912, both parents of Irish descent, Myers succeeded academically despite numerous hardships during her childhood involving the realities of living in tough economic conditions and an -- at times -- unhappy home life. Like many authors she found an escape from daily life in books. From an early age she was an avid reader (and later became a regular cinema-goer) and was soon inspired to begin scribbling down her own stories. Although she was forced to leave the Notre Dame Convent High School at the

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age of fourteen, Myers moved to London with her mother and younger sister in the early 1930s. Eventually settling in a flat in Hampstead, she worked as a secretary in Fleet Street for a period and gained a circle of good friends in literary circles. Among these were the author Eleanor Farjeon (who was later to edit a commemorative pamphlet dedicated to Myers in 1957), whom she met in 1940, and George Earle. These contacts and the encouragement she received from those editors and publishers, including her close friend Arthur Waugh (the father of novelists Alec and Evelyn Waugh), who recognized her imaginative talents and literary potential enabled her to finally get her first novel published and sell more of her short stories. Myers' writing career had already begun, on part-time-only basis, when she made her first professional sale, a short story called "Gypsy Prayer", to *The Countryman* magazine. She was just 19 years old at the time, but despite successfully submitting several short stories to the newspapers and magazines *The Daily Mail*, the *London Evening News*, the *Birmingham Weekly Post*, *Columba*, *John O'London's Weekly*, *Catholic World*, *Scottish Country Life* and *The Missionary* (this last an American magazine) in the 1930s, it was not until 1942 that her first collection of short stories, the slim volume *Lost in London and Other Short Stories*, was published. Further collections followed, with more of her stories appearing in the *Evening News*.

It would appear that Elizabeth Myers was a truly individual, intelligent, creative and emotionally-gifted person, much-loved and cherished by those fortunate enough to have known her. In the autumn of 1943 Myers found happiness when she married the author Littleton Powys, with whom it was obvious to both friends and family she had found a soul-mate. After their marriage, the couple (she was his second wife) settled at his home in Sherborne, Dorset. Unfortunately, Myers had been plagued by ill health for many years, but her spirit and enthusiasm for life were said to be unflagging. This quality certainly comes across in her stories. The gritty realism that pervades much of her literary output is neatly offset by a spiritual warmth, refreshing optimism and an almost child-like sense of wonder. These aspects go some way towards explaining the essential appeal of her work. Myers' unique prose style is characterized by its direct, simple approach. A typical Myers story will also contain deft characterizations, realistic dialogue and vivid settings that brim with authentic local detail. Many of her stories are set in London; the various locales, which she knew intimately, are described in such classic tales as "The Donkey and the Stars" (1936) and "The Threshold" (1945). There is also a vein of mysticism running through her work. Much of this is connected with her Catholic upbringing and -- what some considered to be -- her unorthodox religious views. She had a profound interest in spiritualism and the childhood tales Myers' great-aunt used to relate to her about her native Ireland provided the source material and inspiration for several whimsical short stories set in Ireland. Among these is the peculiar fantasy story "Woman in the Moon," first published in the *London Evening News* in 1936. Although Elizabeth acknowledged her Irish roots in these tales (many of which have a somewhat "faerie" quality to them) she never actually visited her family's country of origin.

Given my penchant for discovering short fiction in old newspapers during visits to the British Library (incidentally, this is a hugely neglected area of research), I was pleased to unearth a number of her stories in newspapers dating from the 1930s and '40s. The results of my endeavours in this form of literary archaeology are included in the bibliography of her works that I have provided below. Without

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doubt there are other unjustly-overlooked stories by Elizabeth Myers buried in the pages of various periodicals, in addition to those I have already tracked down. Hopefully I will be able to dig out more lost gems in the future. As a gifted storyteller, Myers' remarkable talent is beyond question. Her love of humanity shines through in her novels and short stories. It is a delight to read them today and find that they are still relevant, insightful and inspiring. Although she died at a young age, Myers left us a legacy of outstanding writings that I trust will continue to be discovered by new generations of discerning readers for years to come.

Various short stories by Elizabeth Myers were aired on BBC Radio in the 1940s. Specific dates of broadcast are not known.

In the final months of her life, Myers travelled to the United States and spent half a year in Arizona with her husband Littleton Powys. During this period she is known to have worked on what would have been her fourth published novel, *The Governor*. Sadly, it was never finished. Nor was she able to realize her plans to write a series of short stories inspired by her visit to America. Elizabeth Myers died soon after her return to England.