

The Loving Spirit (1931)

This was du Maurier's first novel, published 1931. Worked on it at Ferryside; inspired by a wrecked schooner, the *Jane Slade*, which she saw at Pont Creek, which led her to research local and Slade family history. And of course the figurehead famously was attached to the house at Ferryside. [Article about the history of the novel on the du Maurier website.](#)

The title is taken from a poem by Emily Bronte, 'Self-Interrogation'. Du Maurier was inspired by the Brontes (including in *Rebecca*), and indeed the novelist and critic Rebecca West, reviewing the novel in 1931, described it as 'a whopper of a romantic novel in the vein of Emily Brontë.'

- Does this poem shed any additional light on the novel?
- Do you agree with West's judgment?

There are many parallels to be drawn between *Wuthering Heights* and *The Loving Spirit*, including comparisons between Janet/Joseph and Cathy/Heathcliff.

- How much further can the parallels be drawn? (Hareton, etc).
 - "Heaven did not seem to be my home; and I broke my heart with weeping to come back to earth; and the angels were so angry that they flung me out into the middle of the heath on the top of Wuthering Heights; where I woke sobbing for joy."
 - "I wish I were a girl again, half-savage and hardy, and free."
 - "He's more myself than I am. Whatever our souls are made of, his and mine are the same."
 - Intergenerational, different sorts of love etc.
 - The moors in *WH* represented by the sea in *TLS*.

Du Maurier suggests in many of her novels that women are always less free than men (eg *Frenchman's Creek*). Mrs De Winter and Mary Yellan also express the desire to be a man for the freedom it affords them.

- How do you feel about the character of Janet? How much is she a woman of her time and how much a universal being? What does the novel say about the situation of women?
 - "She gave to both Thomas and Samuel her natural spontaneity of feeling and a great simplicity of heart; but the spirit of Janet was free and unfettered, waiting to rise from its self-enforced seclusion to mingle with intangible things, like the wind, the sea, and the skies, hand in hand with the one for whom she waited. Then she, too, would become part of these things forever, abstract and immortal."
 - "Though Thomas liked to think he had his own way over things, it was generally Janet who had the last say in the matter. She would fling a word at her husband and no more, and he would go off to his work with an uneasy feeling at the back of his mind that she had won. He called it 'giving in to Janie,' but it was more than that, it was unconscious subservience to a quieter but stronger personality than his own."
 - "Please God, make me a lad afore I'm grown".

Landscape and place – rooted in locality just as *WH* rooted in Yorkshire. Closes with Ferryside.

- The sea very important to the novel – what does it represent? What about the parts that aren't in Cornwall?

- How do you feel about Joseph and Christopher? And Thomas and Philip? The other women seem to be minor characters, eg Susan, Elizabeth, Annie, apart from Jennifer.
- Tone of the narrative shifts throughout. How do you feel about the ending? Satisfying or too conventionally romantic?

Self-Interrogation

The evening passes fast away,
'Tis almost time to rest;
What thoughts has left the vanished day,
What feelings, in thy breast?

'The vanished day? It leaves a sense
Of labour hardly done;
Of little, gained with vast expense, —
A sense of grief alone!

'Time stands before the door of Death,
Upbraiding bitterly;
And Conscience, with exhaustless breath,
Pours black reproach on me:

'And though I've said that Conscience lies,
And Time should Fate condemn;
Still, sad Repentance clouds my eyes,
And makes me yield to them!

'Then art thou glad to seek repose?
Art glad to leave the sea,
And anchor all thy weary woes
In calm Eternity?

'Nothing regrets to see thee go —
Not one voice sobs 'farewell,'
And where thy heart has suffered so,
Canst thou desire to dwell?'

'Alas! The countless links are strong
That bind us to our clay;
The loving spirit lingers long,
And would not pass away!

'And rest is sweet, when laurelled fame
Will crown the soldier's crest;
But, a brave heart, with a tarnished name,
Would rather fight than rest.'

'Well, thou hast fought for many a year,
Hast fought thy whole life through,
Hast humbled Falsehood, trampled Fear;
What is there left to do?'

'Tis true, this arm has hotly striven,
Has dared what few would dare;
Much have I done, and freely given,

But little learnt to bear!’

‘Look on the grave, where thou must sleep,
Thy last, and strongest foe;
It is endurance not to weep,
If that repose seem woe.

‘The long war closing in defeat,
Defeat serenely borne,
Thy midnight rest may still be sweet,
And break in glorious morn!’