

# Je recherche des renseignements sur l'auteur britannique, Brenda Jagger, elle a notamment écrit *Les Chemins de Maison haute*, ou *La Chambre bleue*

Réponse apportée le **02/08/2010** par PARIS Bpi – Actualité, Art moderne, Art contemporain, Presse

Bonjour

J'ai interrogé la base « Contemporary Authors » à laquelle la Bibliothèque publique d'information est abonnée :

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Sujets : \* Écrivains–20e siècle–Dictionnaires

\* Biographies–Dictionnaires

Voici la notice concernant Brenda Jagger. Vous y trouverez après des renseignements sur sa vie et son oeuvre une bibliographie d'ouvrages ou d'articles à consulter pour approfondir le sujet :

« Brenda Jagger

1936-1986

Entry Updated : 10/08/2003

Place of Birth: Yorkshire, England

Award(s): Romantic Novelists Association major award, 1986.

Personal Information: Family: Born in 1936, in Yorkshire, England; died in 1986; married; children: three daughters.

Career: Novelist. Worked as a probation officer in the north of England.

WRITINGS BY THE AUTHOR:  
HISTORICAL ROMANCE NOVELS

Antonia, Hodder & Stoughton (London), 1978.

Daughter of Aphrodite, Constable (London), 1981.

Days of Grace, Collins (London), 1983, William Morrow (New York City), 1984.

A Winter's Child, Collins (London), 1984, William Morrow (New York City), 1984.

A Song Twice Over, Collins (London), 1985, William Morrow (New York City), 1985.

Distant Choices, Collins (London), 1986, William Morrow (New York City), 1986.

HISTORICAL ROMANCE NOVELS; « BARFORTH » TRILOGY

The Clouded Hills, Macdonald (London), 1980, published in the U.S. as Verity, Doubleday (New York, NY), 1980.

Flints and Roses, Macdonald (London), 1981, published as The Barforth Women, Doubleday (New York, NY), 1982.

The Sleeping Sword, Macdonald (London), 1982, published as An Independent Woman, New American Library (New York, NY), 1983.

## « Sidelights »

A prolific writer of historical romances, Brenda Jagger's novels span centuries—from ancient Rome to early twentieth-century Britain. Some of her novels are set in England during the Industrial Revolution (a period of social and economic change resulting from large-scale industrial production) and before the period of factory reforms. Reviewers have generally admired Jagger's attention to detail and her historical accuracy. Denise P. Donavin of Booklist praised Jagger's contribution to the genre, especially her keen portrayal of characters and her use of historical elements that « elevate her novel[s] far beyond the . . . realm of romantic fiction. » In *Twentieth Century Romance and Historical Writers*, Judith Rhodes observed that « the overall theme of a woman's freedom to choose her destiny » pervades Jagger's entire oeuvre. Rhodes added that though her heroines do not deviate from the typical romance novel characterizations, « what is unusual about Jagger's work is the interesting way in which she describes in some detail the socio-political structures of the period about which she writes. »

Two of Jagger's novels, *Antonia* and *Daughters of Aphrodite*, are set in ancient Rome. In *Antonia*, the heroine is an heiress whose money puts her in the midst of political scheming following Nero's death. *Daughters of Aphrodite* features Danae, a seductress from the ghetto of Subura, who rises to a position of power. Rhodes remarked that even the early characters of *Antonia* and *Danae* have qualities typical of Jagger's female protagonists: « tenacity, a strong sense of survival, and a capacity to develop and learn from . . . [their] experiences. » *The Clouded Hills*, *Flints and Roses*, and *The Sleeping Sword*, titles in Jagger's Barforth trilogy, chronicle the good and bad fortunes of the Barforth family, mill owners in nineteenth century England. The book also explores the impact of industrialization, Chartism (a movement of democratic social and political reform in England, 1838-1848), and the Reform Act of 1932 (a government act to

control factory conditions for working children in early industrial England) on the Barforth family.

The first novel in the series, *The Clouded Hills*, published as *Verity* in the United States, relates the story of Verity Barforth, who is an eyewitness to the murder of her father and brother by disgruntled hand weavers. Verity's grandfather, eager to increase the family's holdings, compels sixteen-year-old Verity to marry her cousin Joel. Through Verity, the novel examines the impact of class tensions in the midst of factory reform in England, and explores how women overcame the struggles they encountered during the nineteenth century. According to *Publishers Weekly* reviewer Barbara A. Bannon, « the plight of woman, victims of the double standard . . . moves the reader deeply. » A *Kirkus Reviews* critic called Verity « a sturdy, serviceable tale, » while *Library Journal's* Patricia Altner remarked « women of every age will find this book appealing. »

The second book of the series, *Flints and Roses*, published in the United States as *The Barforth Women*, continues the Barforth family saga in Victorian England. The story focuses on Verity's sons, Blaize and Nicholas, and their cousins—Faith, Prudence, and Celia. With Faith as its narrator, the story examines the role of women during the Victorian era amid mounting class tensions among a growing middle class and the landed gentry. Writing in *Library Journal*, Judith Nixon called *The Barforth Women* « absorbing, » and Denise P. Donavin in *Booklist* found the « engrossing historical romance » to be « well-crafted. » The novel's greatest accomplishment, according to a *Publisher Weekly* reviewer, « is that the women are even more interesting than the men, » and in spite of being viewed as no more than « chattels in the eyes of the law, » they are still « powerful. »

Third in this trilogy is the novel *The Sleeping Sword*, published in the United States as *An Independent Woman*. The

Sleeping Sword features Grace Agbrigg who takes a husband as required by her position in life, but flouting tradition, divorces her husband to become the sole divorcee in her Yorkshire home of Cullingford. As in other titles in this series, the novel focuses on factory conditions for the working class and problems facing the poor which, according to Rhodes, is « an integral part of the action. » In each of the Barforth trilogy novels, commented Rhodes, « the restrictions of the conventions of Victorian England are skillfully drawn, » and as the drama unfolds « rebellion . . . becomes inevitable » among the willful female characters.

Days of Grace, set in Paris and London in the early twentieth century, chronicles the life of Olivia Heron, the female heir to a deteriorating family estate. Returning from Paris to claim her inheritance, Olivia takes on the responsibility of overseeing the family and its estate. The novel follows her family as they live out their lives. Barbara A. Bannon, a Publishers Weekly reviewer, applauded Jagger's « interesting and believably drawn » characters. As in other Jagger novels, the role of women in society is further explored. Writing in Publishers Weekly, Bannon found Days of Grace « a strong British tale that crosses the ocean well. » « For those who wished Upstairs, Downstairs would never end, » wrote Eden Ross Lipson in the New York Times Book Review, « Days of Grace is a very satisfactory substitute. »

A Winter's Child features heroine Claire Swanfield who has married hastily and gone to France to nurse the wounded during World War I. Widowed, she returns home to West Yorkshire in 1919 and becomes involved in the lives of the family she never knew. According to a Publishers Weekly reviewer, A Winter's Child describes « with infinite slowness » the particulars of Claire Swanfield's life. Library Journal's Maria A. Perez-Stable commented that A Winter's Child « offers . . . complex and memorable characters in . . . a satisfying tale. »

Jagger's final novels, A Song Twice Over and Distant Choices,

are set in nineteenth-century Yorkshire, England. *A Song Twice Over* explores the plight of working class women through the character of Cara Adeane, a dressmaker who has sole support of her son. In the *Times Literary Supplement*, D. J. Enright praised Jagger's understanding of the « social and economic realities » in England during this time, but faulted the « painfully slow tempo. » Kathy Piehl in *Library Journal* applauded the characters as « rich and varied, » but found the female characters « more fully realized » than the men.

Jagger's final novel, *Distant Choices*, examines the sometimes pretentious upper class of the Victorian era. The story features two characters, Matthew Sangway and Evangeline Slade, who have a daughter out of wedlock. As members of the upper class they follow the approved route, and marry for money not love. Years pass, and Matthew, recently widowed and with a legitimate daughter, can finally follow his heart and marry Evangeline. The story explores the relationship between the two daughters as their lives unfold. *British Book News* reviewer Adele Ward called *Distant Choices* a « highly readable saga » that is « written with the easy confidence of experience. » Rhodes, in her essay for *Twentieth-Century Romance Writers*, commented, « Jagger's powerful writing brings to life the often agonizing and painful choices inflicted upon Victorian women from all social backgrounds, and offers a picture of their emotional plight. »

#### FURTHER READINGS ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

##### BOOKS

Vasudevan, Aruna, editor, *Twentieth-Century Romance and Historical Writers*, third edition, St. James Press (London), 1994.

##### PERIODICALS

*Booklist*, March 1, 1982, p. 848; April 1, 1985, p. 1100;  
*British Book News*, October 86, p. 569.

Kirkus Reviews, May 15, 1980, p. 668.

Library Journal, July 1980, p. 1540; February 1, 1982, pp. 272-273; December 15, 1983, p. 2344; March 1, 1985, pp. 102-103; March 15, 1986, p. 78.

New York Times Book Review. January 1, 1984, p. 20.

Publishers Weekly, May 9, 1980, p. 52; December 11, 1981, p. 51; November 25, 1983, pp. 56-57; January 25, 1985, p. 85.

Times Literary Supplement, May 9, 1986, p. 498.\* »

J'espère avoir pu vous aider,  
Cordialement,

Eurêkoi – Bpi (Bibliothèque publique d'information)