



Letter to my Readers

Clare Morgan

DEAR READER,

I address you as one, rather than many, because for me you are my ‘ideal reader’. You’re the person I have in mind when I write. I don’t know what you look like, or how old you are. You think and you feel, you breathe and you read, none of these in any particular order. You’re not urban, but then again, you’re not rural either. You’re an explorer of sorts, not afraid to traverse uncharted territories. You’re open-minded, fair and inclusive. You’re not readily shockable. You hate bullying and the general belittlement of people. You’re not afraid to get your feet wet or your hands dirty. You once let a dove go free from a cage. I don’t know what country that was in, or in what time frame. You’re everywhere and nowhere. Like W. B. Yeats’s ‘Fisherman’, in his poem of that name, you’re ‘[the one] who does not exist,/ [the one] who is but a dream’.

I don’t envisage you at all as being gendered, but nor do I view you as genderless. You encompass all, across the spectrum. An animus, a spirit, a way of thinking. Are you moral? Perhaps not. Are you good? Unlikely. You’re all-seeing, all-forgiving, and as eclectic in your tastes as is humanly – or indeed inhumanly – possible. If somebody gave you a book token as a gift, you wouldn’t know immediately I was the one you wanted to spend it on. No. You’d enter a bookshop (independent, old-fashioned, with somewhere to sit in a tucked-away corner) and a telepathic connexion would be set up between you and my book. It would lure you; draw you.



Round the corner of a stack, towards the back, probably behind a pile of browsed items waiting to be re-shelved — you'd catch sight of me. The unassuming spine would attract you; the air of gravitas; the muted colours of the dust jacket, aesthetically pleasing. You'll be so taken you have no choice but to sit down immediately and begin reading. I can see how wholly engrossed you are. No hurry, no quick-fix, no need for signposts or explanation. You're happy to see the story emerge from the four corners and gather itself there as you turn the pages: line by line, syllable by syllable. My own particular version of 'once upon a time'.

I met you somewhere very long ago, but neither of us remembers quite where or when. I hope that one day we can be re-acquainted, or acquainted properly. Be friends, even. Enjoy a drink and an exchange of views in a leisurely way under an awning. The day will be sunny. We're by the sea, probably. We both need that distance to give us perspective. 'I liked your last book', you'll say to me then. 'And I think your next will be even better.' You'll get up. We'll shake hands. I'll watch your footsteps dent the sand as you walk away. They'll fill up quickly. When you're out of sight I'll sit back down in the shadow of the awning, pick up my pen.