

Introduction

When Rose Allatini (1890-1980) is remembered today it is as the author of the brave and ground-breaking novel *Despised and Rejected*, published in 1918. Its characters include homosexual conscientious objectors during the Great War, and it was the only novel to be prosecuted and banned under the Defence of the Realm Act as prejudicial to recruiting. But this was not Rose Allatini's only book; she was also, under several pseudonyms, the author of nearly forty other novels.

Reckoning that any book by the author of *Despised and Rejected* would turn out to be interesting, I read several of these novels a few years ago. They turned out to be enjoyable and varied – and often surprising. There is *I Was a Queen in Babylon* (1921), for example, a book about a wayward young woman who hears voices and is considered mad. Her family send her to a psychiatrist, and the book contains a funny and rather penetrating critique of Freudian therapy. Then there are the novels that Rose Allatini published during the Second World War; these deal with Austrian refugees in London, and are a minor but significant contribution to the literature of the Holocaust. Back then I considered writing about her work, but felt unsure of my qualifications to do so. I was not particularly familiar with the European Jewish background that is important to many of the novels, and I found it difficult to sympathise with some of the Theosophical beliefs to which she became attached.

In 2018 I was very pleased to see the announcement that a new edition of *Despised and Rejected* would be published by Persephone Books, to mark the centenary of the novel's prosecution. This was a most welcome event, since Persephone is a widely-respected publishing house which specialises in reprinting neglected twentieth-

century novelists (mostly female); its books reach a wide and discriminating readership. Persephone editions contain introductions or afterwords, generally useful ones, designed to place the work in its historical, literary or social context. Jonathan Cutbill's afterword to *Despised and Rejected*, however, was a disappointment because of its account of Rose Allatini's other writings, dismissing them as 'romances' of the type typically published by Mills and Boon. (This afterword, I soon realised, was essentially the same as the introduction with which Mr Cutbill had prefaced his 1984 edition of the novel.) Having read several of these novels, I knew that Mr Cutbill's dismissal was misleading. But I also knew that, probably because of that 1984 introduction, this assessment had become the received wisdom about Rose Allatini's other novels. Angela K. Smith, for example, in her introduction to a 2011 library edition of *Despised and Rejected*, writes that:

Allatini had established herself as a writer of romance by the time the war broke out, publishing initially with Mills and Boon in 1914. Her later publishing also seems to fit into this genre, making *Despised and Rejected* a bit of an anomaly.¹

That 'seems' suggests that Professor Smith has taken Mr Cutbill's word for it. She is also following him in assuming that the Mills and Boon firm of the early twentieth-century was a romance-only publishing house, as it is in the twenty-first. Another critic who has commented notably on Rose Allatini, Gay Wachman in her *Lesbian Empire* (2001), writes of Rose Allatini's later writings 'Those I have read, published between 1918 and 1973, are heterosexual romances.'² I wonder which of the novels she had read; few of them fit the description, unless one dismisses all books without a homosexual element as merely 'heterosexual romances'.

'Romance', of course, is a flexible term; I have seen it applied to, among others, *Wuthering Heights*, or the novels of Walter Scott. But it and 'romantic fiction' are these days terms often used by males to

disparage and stigmatise books that women enjoy, and also by some highly educated women to distance themselves from the preferred reading-matter of their less sophisticated sisters. Most of Rose Allatini's novels could be called 'romances', in that they contain at least one heterosexual love-plot, but then so do most novels in most countries in most periods of the history of the genre. That term 'romance', however, especially when associated, with the 'Mills and Boon' brand, implies a particular kind of female wish-fulfillment fantasy, in which a heroine goes through difficult travails but steadfastly maintains a commitment to conventional sexual morality, before finding a happy ending in the arms of a strong and protective (and preferably wealthy) man.

This is precisely the kind of fiction that Rose Allatini satirised in her first book, *...Happy Ever After* (1914). In the course of this, Olive Dalcroze, the novel's novelist heroine, finds her way towards an emphatically unromantic ending, but not before she has issued a manifesto on behalf of her author:

I'll never go into the sevenpenny editions, because *Hilary*, bless his heart, wasn't written with an eye to please the British Public. The young person who enters the library and vaguely demands 'something to read' won't like my book, because the heroine neither dies in the snow on Christmas Eve nor marries the eldest son of a peer [...] and to cap it all, my hero ends badly – no, they don't marry – so you see that in the eyes of the young person I am wholly and completely damned.³

Olive, who we can assume to be voicing Rose Allatini's own opinions, sums up her ambition succinctly: 'I want to be a woman writer, not a lady novelist,'⁴ and insists that the book be published under the gender-unspecific name 'O. Dalcroze' rather than the obviously feminine 'Olive'. (*...Happy Ever After* was published as by 'R. Allatini'.)

It is true that some of her novels were marketed as romantic fiction (*Music in the Woods* of 1952, for example, is listed by its publisher among the 'Dakers 8/6 Romances') and she may well have

tried to make some of her work conform to the generic patterns that publishers are fond of, but this monograph will show, I hope, that throughout her career she was a writer with serious concerns and a questing intelligence, and with something to say. When her novels followed generic patterns, it was more often to subvert than to exploit them.

But what irritated me even more than Mr Cutbill's lumping together of all Rose Allatini's work under the label 'romantic fiction', and the implication that none of her other novels were original, thoughtful or courageous, was his assertion that she spent the last decades of her life with Melanie Mills, 'happily living together in E.F. Benson and Radclyffe Hall's Rye, and making a living writing for the heterosexual market.'⁵

The implication here is that Rose Allatini was a Lesbian cynically writing heterosexual pot-boilers to make money. During the Second World War, Rose Allatini did indeed leave the air-raids of London to live with Melanie Mills and her mother near (but not in) Rye, but after the war she returned to London while Mills stayed in Sussex (though the two women did take holidays in Switzerland together every year, during which Rose Allatini would write the first drafts of her novels). Mr Cutbill has perhaps not read many of Rose Allatini's later books. He refers vaguely only to 'their titles suggesting romantic fiction.'⁶ But the books written during the Second World War are about Jewish refugees and their reactions to the Holocaust, and the Holocaust's aftermath is also a theme in some of her postwar novels, though increasingly these become meditations on Theosophical ideas: studies of spiritual healing, and of people whose lives are haunted by forces that they do not understand. These are not cynically commercial potboilers; on the contrary, some could be faulted for being too obviously earnest; and they were not, unfortunately, profitable. Her son, Desmond Scott, describes her last years, living frugally alone in an antiquated flat in West London: 'The income from her books was

minimal, and her lifestyle was not lavish'.⁷ He suggests that her last publisher, Robert Hale, continued to publish her books as an act of kindness, and 'made little or no money from her.'⁸ The story of Rose Allatini's writing career is very different from the narrative that Jonathan Cutbill suggests, and I think it is a far more interesting one, since it is the story of a woman of considerable honesty and integrity.

The Persephone edition of *Despised and Rejected* is the first that is likely to reach a wide and general audience. (The first edition, in 1918, was prosecuted and most copies were destroyed; two later ones were published by small gay presses; a fourth was part of a very expensive collection of First World War literature, destined to be found only in a few university libraries.) So, feeling that the introduction does her a disservice, I have dug out my old notes on Rose Allatini's novels, and have set about reading as many as I can of her books and doing some elementary biographical research. This monograph will, I hope, provide a rather more accurate account of the full scope of Rose Allatini's writing, and give some context to readers interested in developing their knowledge of her writing. I am still conscious of my shortcomings as a commentator on her work – but since nobody else seems to be doing the job, here is my offering. I set myself six months to do the work; it has taken more than a year, but that is the way these things go. I do not suggest that this book is in any way a complete account of Rose Allatini's literary career – I am sure that there is more to be discovered.

The book is organised into chapters based on Rose Allatini's pseudonyms. Her first novels appeared under the (deliberately gender-unspecific) name, R. Allatini. For the controversial *Despised and Rejected* she was advised not to use her own name, so she became A. T. Fitzroy. There were two more novels as R. Allatini before she married the composer Cyril Scott. A book of stories appeared under the name Mrs Cyril Scott, and she also co-wrote a play as R.L. Scott. In 1934 she became Lucian Wainwright for three novels, and in 1941, after her

separation from Cyril Scott, she started a new literary life as Eunice Buckley, under which name she produced thirty novels, continuing to write almost up until her death in 1980, at the age of ninety. Readers will notice that I refer to her as 'Rose Allatini' throughout, even though no book was ever published under that name during her lifetime. This is for the sake of consistency, and because it helps me to suggest that her writing, though scattered over seven decades and several pseudonyms, does form a coherent and unified (though uneven) body of work.

This book is intended as a critical survey of Rose Allatini's fiction, but I have inevitably found myself straying into questions of biography, so that I can indicate some of the pressures that brought the books into being. Some chapters contain lengthy digressions, for example on Theosophy, and on the career and beliefs of her husband Cyril Scott, because these subjects shaped her thinking and her attitudes. I am well aware that there are large gaps in my knowledge of her biography. Other researchers may know of resources that I have not looked at. If so, please tell me about your discoveries – if enough significant new material emerges, I might well incorporate it into a second edition.

The emphasis of the present work may seem oddly balanced to some. The longest chapter is on *Despised and Rejected*, not because I consider it to be her best novel, but because of its historical significance as a book dealing frankly with the then taboo subject of homosexuality, and because the circumstances surrounding its prosecution interestingly illuminate the state of Britain towards the end of the Great War. I also wanted to give a reading of it as a novel, rather than as a piece of propaganda (and a reading that made sense of it in the context of her other work, not treating it as an anomaly). On the other hand, I deal fairly skimpily with many of the later novels; this is partly because, although I have enjoyed reading most of them, I find them less interesting than the earlier work, but also because there is a fair

amount of repetition in their themes and tropes; had I dealt with each of the late books in detail, this monograph would have become both unwieldy and rather repetitive.

I should like to thank Desmond Scott, Rose Allatini's son, for answering my questions, and for generously giving me permission to quote from the novels. I should stress that any opinions aired in this monograph are entirely my own, and should not be attributed to him. I have benefited greatly from the volume which he edited with Lewis Foreman and Leslie De'Ath, *The Cyril Scott Companion: Unity in Diversity* (Woodbridge: the Boydell Press, 2018). I owe a debt to Val Hewson, for her enterprise and efficiency in discovering contemporary newspaper articles relating to Rose Allatini, Cyril Scott and 'Tiziana'. I must also thank Anna Murdoch of Reading University for drawing my attention to the Allen and Unwin archive there, and allowing me to quote from her own research discoveries. Much of the research for this monograph was conducted while I was a Visiting Research Fellow at Sheffield Hallam University, and I should like to thank Professor Chris Hopkins and members of the *Popular Fiction 1900-1950* study group at Sheffield Hallam for their encouragement of this project. Some of the material about the earlier Eunice Buckley novels was incorporated in a paper given at a conference on *Writers and Intellectuals on Europe* at Northumbria University in November 2018. Some sections of the book had their origins in posts on my blog, *Great War Fiction*, and some of the material on Blue Danube appeared in a post on the *Reading 1900-1950* website. The British Library, both in London and at Boston Spa, has been most efficient in providing copies of the rarest of the Allatini novels (and I really should also thank Abebooks, Ebay and other Internet services for directing me towards affordable copies of the rest). I should like to thank Jane Potter, with whom I first discussed Rose Allatini, a long while ago; and, of course, I should like to thank my wife Marion for putting up with me while I have been writing this, for helping me to find census returns and other documents on

Ancestry.co.uk, and for accompanying me uncomplainingly on a long trek around West London, peering inquisitively at the houses where Rose Allatini lived at various times during her life.

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- ¹ Angela K. Smith, 'Introduction' to Rose Allatini, *Despised and Rejected* (Volume IV of *British Literature of World War I*) (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2011), x.
- ² Gay Wachman, *Lesbian Empire: Radical Crosswriting in the Twenties* (New Brunswick, Rutgers University Press, 2001), 204 (note 47) .
- ³ R. Allatini, ...*Happy Ever After* (London: Mills and Boon, 1914), 168-9.
⁴..*Happy Ever After* , 169.
- ⁵ Jonathan Cutbill, 'Afterword' to Rose Allatini, *Despised and Rejected* (London: Persephone Books, 1918), 356.
- ⁶ 'Afterword', 356.
- ⁷ Desmond Scott, 'Rose Allatini': Theme and Variations', in *The Cyril Scott Companion: Unity in Diversity* (edited by Desmond Scott, Lewis Foreman and Leslie De'Ath), (Woodbridge: the Boydell Press, 2018), 97.
- ⁸ 'Rose Allatini: Theme and Variations', 98.

Chapter One

R. Allatini

To begin to understand Rose Allatini, one needs to know something about the family with whom she had a deep but sometimes difficult relationship.

The Allatinis were wealthy, cosmopolitan and Jewish. They had extensive interests in the Eastern parts of Europe, and had been doing business in London since at least the 1860s, arranging the export of Macedonian grain and tobacco to England, and also grain from the Ukraine. By the 1870s a branch of the family, headed by Lazaro Allatini, was based at Holland Park Avenue, a select and expensive street in Kensington. Married to an Italian, and with strong commercial, social and philanthropic links to Italy, Lazaro was in 1893 elected President of the Italian Chamber in London and in 1901 he was appointed Italy's Consul-General in London. Lazaro's brother Robert, born in Thessaloniki in 1856, was a prosperous tobacco trader. He married Bronislava Rappaport von Porada, born in Cracow, a city now in Poland, but at that time within the Austro-Hungarian empire. Their daughter Rose was born in 1890, in Vienna, the city that would inspire much of her best fiction.

The 1891 census shows Robert's family living at 18, Holland

Park. This huge detached house, resplendent in white stucco, is in one of the most select and expensive parts of London. (Today such a house might sell for tens of millions of pounds; in the 1890s, London house prices were less ridiculous, but it was still a very expensive house indeed.)

Robert Allatini was an Anglophile, and we can get an insight into his desire that his daughter should be seen as British by looking at the census forms that he filled in at 18, Holland Park once every ten years between 1891 and 1911. In the 1891 census he reported her accurately as being born in Vienna; in 1901 she is listed as having been born in Italy; in 1911 her birthplace is presented as London. (Additionally, in 1901, her mother's birthplace has shifted from Poland to Italy, and it stays there in 1911.) In presenting his family to the world, as represented by the officialdom of the census, Robert Allatini is presumably showing a desire to distance it, and Rose especially, from the taint of foreignness. This was, after all, a period of growing tension between Britain and the alliance of Central Powers. Perhaps the Allatinis are also distancing themselves from their Jewish heritage; Rose Allatini seems to have been brought up without any strong sense of a Jewish religious identity.

Rose Allatini and her younger sister were mostly educated at home by an Austrian governess, though at some time in her teenage years Rose was sent away to an English boarding-school.¹ Several such schools appear in her books, and they are always unsatisfactory - for example, St Ethelburga's in *Girl of Good Family*

¹ The Allatini's Austrian governess, Amelia Hillebrand, offers another example of how self-presentation to census-takers could be inconsistent over time. In the 1901 census, Frau Hillebrand is listed as being thirty-three years of age; ten years later, she had apparently only reached the age of forty.

(1935), St Hilary's in *Rhapsody for Strings* (1945) and St Dominic's in *You've Got to Have Gold* (1972). Such schools are consistently presented as anti-educational; in *Requiem* (1919) someone comments about the unsophisticated English girl, Anne: 'I suppose boarding school has thoroughly put her off books for the time, but I suppose she'll come back to them.'¹ In *For Benefits Received* (1960) a sophisticated Frenchwoman speaks with distaste of 'English girls' schools where [...] they taught you nothing except hockey which made your feet too big.'²

Rose Allatini's most extended picture of a boarding school is in the 'Daughters of Gentlemen' chapter of *Rhapsody for Strings* (1945) a gloriously scornful caricature of a school that takes in pupils of various nationalities and does its best to educate them to be dull, unthinking and conventional (but very keen on sport). Mariska, the novel's schoolgirl heroine, sees that beneath the 'purring benevolence' of the headmistress's 'mellifluous' public manner:

[T]here was often a rasping note beneath the purr, and a calculating coldness and hardness in the bright little rolling blue eyes which [...] created such a spurious impression of kindness and geniality in one who was pre-eminently a shrewd businesswoman³

Equally despised is Miss Carfax, a sporty teacher with a 'brusque ungracious manner' and a 'slouching masculine walk'; many of the English girls are 'actually "gone on" her, as the phrase went, trembling deliciously under the lash of her sarcastic tongue.'⁴ Miss Carfax takes her literature classes 'with one eye on the clock, ruthlessly cutting short the lesson in the middle of a passage from *Paradise Lost* or a scene from *Hamlet* because it happened to be time

for hockey practice, which was regarded almost as a religious obligation by those who approached the game in the proper spirit and knew what it was all about, but as a veritable penance by the uninitiated'.⁵ The German students are 'forever questioning "what we then here are really being taught"'.⁶

Rose Allatini's greatest scorn is reserved for the school's attempts to teach music and dancing. For poor Mrs Williams, the music teacher, piano practice is all about the drudgery of scales, and learning a 'piece' like 'Chaminade's *Automne* or some harmless little *Berceuse*'⁷ that will count as a suitably charming accomplishment for a young lady. She is 'astounded and a trifle pained at the spectacle of girls who dashed to the piano whenever they had a spare moment, and played for the sheer joy of playing, without so much as waiting to be taught what to play and how to play it'.⁸ In this novel, the foreign students are considerably more sophisticated than the earnest but limited women who are paid to teach them, and it is in the dancing class that this becomes most apparent. Miss Benson, the dancing teacher, sees the waltz as essentially a matter of counting in threes, and views Mariska's improvisations of whirling and reversing with extreme displeasure: she takes no heed of students' protestations that this is how the waltz is danced in Vienna and Budapest.

The description of St Hilary's is an exuberant caricature (and probably revenge for remembered indignities). We need not take it as the unvarnished truth about Rose Allatini's schooldays, but it does suggest that her school experience was key to her perception of the English as unsophisticated and philistine when judged against the culture and panache of Vienna.

Visits to her Viennese relatives were crucial events in Rose Allatini's young life. Memories of the city, and of her extended family there are central to many of her best novels: *...Happy Ever After* (1914) *Girl of Good Family* (1935), *Blue Danube* (1943) and *Diamonds in the Family* (1968). Through this sequence of books we see her perspective on the city, and on her Viennese family, develop, as her thinking about them is changed by historical circumstances. What never changes, however, is her love of the music that she associates with the city; this includes the serious romanticism of Beethoven, Mendelssohn and Brahms, the light, brilliant and witty tunes of operetta, and the catchy and joyful music of the gypsies. There are few Allatini novels where music does not play a crucial part.

The entry for 'Eunice Buckley' in the *The Authors' and Writers' Who's Who*⁹ states that she had at one time studied music in Vienna. How serious these studies were, and to what level they went, is unclear. I have come across no references to Rose Allatini playing any instrument, and the *Daily Mail* account of her wedding to Cyril Scott says that she 'neither plays nor sings',¹⁰ so that was at least the story she was telling to reporters at that time. Possibly she was like the character Mark in *For Benefits Received* (1960), who wanted desperately to be a virtuoso violinist, but on being told he would never be more than an adequate player, gave up the violin and turned his ambitions towards acting. A recurring character in her later novels is the violinist or pianist who suffers injuries that prevent him from continuing his musical career. Paul Langebach in *The Consuming Fire* (1962), for example, Bruno in *The Flaming Sword* (1968) or Nikos in *Work of Art* (1978). Sometimes these thwarted musicians become writers, as a sort of second-best way of expressing themselves. In her first novel, however, Rose

Allatini selected as her heroine a young woman for whom a career as a novelist was her profoundest wish.

...Happy Ever After (1914)

...Happy Ever After, by 'R. Allatini' is a first novel that gives clear pointers towards what is to come in the future. Olive Dalcroze is the first of the 'odd one out' Allatini heroines. She belongs, like many of these, to a large cosmopolitan family whose members 'were scattered all over Europe'.¹¹ (In this novel the family is not specifically labeled Jewish, though an astute reader might pick up clues to the cultural background.) Her branch of the family lives in London (though the father is South American and the mother German) and the other children of the marriage are 'remarkably English in looks, temperament and manner.'¹² Olive alone has a 'sallow complexion and darker colouring' that points to her international parentage. She is not a beauty, or considered exceptional. The story begins with some amateur dramatics, and Olive is not the star playing the glamorously tragic Mary, Queen of Scots, but is hardly more than an onlooker. Rose Allatini is preparing readers' expectations for a Cinderella story, or one where an ugly duckling grows into an elegant swan.

It is made clear that Olive is individual, something of an outsider. She is described as having 'a distorted point of view', and living in 'a world of intense childish joys and equally intense childish sorrows, a world populated by all manner of weird little goblins and fancies.'¹³ Her imaginative vitality and her sense of herself as somehow not like the others foster early ambitions of being a writer:

Olive, pencil in hand, gazed directly out to sea and occasionally scribbled something on to a slip of note-paper inside a well-worn copy of *Jane Eyre*.¹⁴

Jane Eyre, of course, is the classic novel in which a girl marked out as different comes through punishing trials and temptations, to finish finally married to the man whom she passionately adores. ...*Happy Ever After* is a novel deeply enmeshed in that romantic fantasy, but it will finally reject it, or at least concede that it is not a practical possibility in life.

Olive is sent to relatives in Vienna (who are sophisticated and well-intentioned, but controlling) in the hope that she will find a husband who suits both herself and her family's sense of what is appropriate:

'I'm to have a real live *parti* served up to me on a silver salver,' she grumbled, 'and they all look at me as though I were the Derby favourite and they expected me to win the cup – it *is* rotten.'¹⁵

Later, when they feel she has shown herself as a failure in the race to catch a husband, she will find an outlet for her feelings in writing, which her family will patronise: 'Let the poor child play with a bit of paper and a pen if it amuses her.'¹⁶ They do not realise how intensely Olive feels the joy of novel writing, or the sense of empowerment that it offers her:

It was wonderful to make these puppets of the imagination act, speak, laugh, suffer at her bidding; wonderful to trace the intricate workings of their brains; wonderful to capture each fleeting mood, sensation and impression and make it live – wonderful, above all things, that triumphant glowing consciousness within her, 'I can write – I can – I can –'¹⁷

Olive's emotional life becomes difficult. She is wounded in love when the rather glamorous man she is attracted to runs away with somebody else, and she is made uneasy by the way that her young female relatives easily settle for family-approved practical marriages with men of settled social status but little allure. Olive sets herself to write *Hilary*, a novel that tells the truth about love, in what she sees as an act of resistance against romantic fantasies. She explains her ambition to Isolde, the only one of her relatives who feels sympathy with her:

I'll never be 'our popular lady novelist', photographed for the benefit of readers of *Home Tattle*. I'll never go into the sevenpenny editions, because *Hilary*, bless his heart, wasn't written with an eye to please the British Public. The young person who enters the library and vaguely demands 'something to read' won't like my book, because the heroine neither dies in the snow on Christmas Eve nor marries the eldest son of a peer [...] and to cap it all, my hero ends badly – no, they don't marry – so you see that in the eyes of the young person I am wholly and completely damned.¹⁸

This manifesto of a speech explains what the yet unwritten novels of R. Allatini, A.T. Fitzroy, Mrs Cyril Scott, Lucian Wainwright and Eunice Buckley will be aiming for. She sums up her ambition succinctly:

'No, Isolde, I want to be a woman writer, not a lady novelist.'¹⁹

She affirms this commitment by the way that she signs her name at the bottom of the manuscript. There is no 'Olive', but a non-gendered 'O. Dalcroze', which she writes 'with what was meant to be a bold masculine flourish, but was in reality rather a feeble

nervous wiggle'.²⁰ (As the novel will go on to show, Olive cannot quite live up to the boldness of her imagination). The alert reader will take the hint that the 'R. Allatini' on the title page of *...Happy Ever After* is precisely such a statement of intent.

When the manuscript is typed, she shows it to the family, with predictable results:

'But it isn't a nice book,' wailed Mrs Dalcroze.²¹

Olive hopes for a better reaction from Bertie, the brother whom she has always adored; but he is worried: 'If I met a fellow's sister who had written a book like that...'²² Olive understands what he is saying:

'Then,' Olive's lips were dry, her voice husky, 'you seriously mean that no man would look at me if...'²³

She resolves: 'I'll risk it all the same,' but holds back from sending the manuscript to a publisher. She meets Roger, a charming but conventional young man, with whom she feels an affinity. Their relationship develops until finally she decides that she must show him the book that is an indication of her deepest nature. He takes it away to read, and never returns.

Other romantic texts are important to this novel – fairy tales and the story of Paolo and Francesca, for instance – but *Jane Eyre* seems to be the model that Allatini is both adapting and reacting against. The first man that Olive falls in love with is Derek, not unlike Brontë's Rochester, in that he is charismatic and a philanderer. He has no time for social orthodoxies and speaks with a sort of Wildean decadent bravado: 'Why tell a truth when a lie is so much more picturesque? [...] I have no principles whatsoever – merely an artistic conscience.'²⁴ Roger, the second man to whom she is attracted, can be seen as standing in for Brontë's St John

Rivers at least insofar as he is kind, pleasant and decent, though unexciting and unimaginative. He is incapable of sympathising with the Olive who wrote the novel.

In *Jane Eyre* the heroine is united with her romantic hero again, in a finale of gloriously satisfying melodrama. ...*Happy Ever After*, however, refuses the imaginary 'young person' the delight of that expected romantic conclusion. When Olive meets swaggering Derek again, it is a downbeat chance encounter, in which she tells him how she has made her choice not to act the part of a heroine of romance. Her German relatives, anxious to think that she is missing all her chances and becoming an old maid, have lined up a *parti* for her, Hermann, a plump little soap manufacturer. At first she is disgusted by the thought, but finally decides that she will marry him, but it will be on her own terms.

Henceforth there would be many locked doors within her heart [...] Hermann would only be permitted to enter into one room, a pleasant, comfortable living-room.²⁵

Explaining this to Derek, she says:

'No, I shan't be unhappy. I've buried my heart too deep for that... I've nothing to give the man I'm marrying, and he doesn't even know it – anyway, I'll play the game. Goodbye.'²⁶

This ending is not what Olive had wished for herself, and not what the 'young reader' that Olive sarcastically imagined would have wanted for her. Such a conclusion, is a deliberate slap at romance conventions.

...*Happy Ever After* was published in 1914 by Mills and Boon. The subsequent reputation of this publishing house, as exclusively a conduit for romantic fiction, is one of the factors that has

encouraged critics like Jonathan Cutbill and Angela K. Smith (and Wikipedia too, until I altered the entry) to assume that this and Rose Allatini's later novels must belong to the romance genre. In fact, the firm, founded in 1908 by Gerald Mills and Charles Boon, both of whom had previously worked for the established firm of Methuen, began as a general publisher. In 1910, a writer in the *Sphere* praised the range of their early output:

At first I thought they were only going to tackle fiction. This would have distressed me greatly as any publisher can issue fiction, but not every publisher can judiciously select books of another character. Such a book as Mr E.S. Graw's *The Court of William III* is the kind of book that really fills a gap [...] This firm also has an eye on the kind of book which is said to make publishers rich in an unostentatious manner – *The Poultry-keeper's Companion*, for example, and even *The Aviator's Companion*.²⁷

The firm was particularly attentive to building up a varied fiction list. It offered generous terms to writers who had already made a reputation (E.F. Benson, H de Vere Stacpoole, William Le Queux, P.G. Wodehouse and Hugh Walpole were among those who published at least one novel with the firm before 1914). The firm's greatest coup was to sign up the American novelist Jack London on an exclusive contract. London's tales of grim men fighting savage nature or suffering in political dystopias are about as different as books can be from what is today normally thought of as typical Mills and Boon material.

The firm hunted for new writers among the previously unpublished. In 1913 Charles Boon told the *Daily Citizen* that the previous year the firm had reviewed 1,000 unsolicited manuscripts

of novels, 75% of them from women, and 95% from unknown authors. Only six of these had been selected for publication.²⁸ Joseph McAleer's excellent history of the Mills and Boon publishing house suggests that the usual advance to a first novelist was no more than £25.

Reviewers seem to have realised that ...*Happy Ever After* was a first novel, and were generally kind. Though some followed customary form and referred to the author as Mr Allatini, most must have guessed that this was a young woman's book. The writer of a short review in the *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, for example, draws attention to the book's immaturity while offering some praise:

Happy Ever After is essentially a story for girls, and one cannot help feeling that it gives a very true and real description of some people's ideas as to girls. According to them, for a girl, marriage should be the be-all and end-all, absolutely essential if she is to live 'happy ever after.' The character study of Olive, the poor creature whose friends try to 'get her off,' as we vulgarly say, is very good, and forms an interesting feature of the novel.²⁹

Allatini has used the tropes of romantic fiction to create an anti-romantic fable showing some of the obstacles faced by a young 'woman writer'. Within the book there is of course a dialectic between the romantic and the anti-romantic. Romantic fiction remains the yardstick against which the heroine and perhaps her author, measure life, and Olive's tragedy is that life fails to live up to the standards of romance.

The book was published early in 1914, and history would add an unpleasant extra twist to the heroine's unromantic fate of

marrying a German soap manufacturer. After August of that year, the position of an Englishwoman in Germany would not be a comfortable one. But equally, her author, a young woman with strong emotional attachments to family in Austria, would not be entirely happy in Britain during the First World War.

Payment (1915)

In *Girl of Good Family* (published in 1933 under the pseudonym 'Lucian Wainwright' and her most directly autobiographical work) Rose Allatini described the effect of the outbreak of war in August 1914 on the Montadores, a cosmopolitan Jewish family very similar to her own; they were thrown into:

a stage of psychological turmoil unknown to families of pure British extraction, but probably common to numerous others resident in England, yet possessed of international ramifications, international sympathies [...] Gone completely now, that sense of stability and security which had once impelled the Montadores and those countless other Jewish families to strike their roots in the wholesome soil of England, spread their branches in its calm, orderly protective and protected atmosphere.³⁰

For the Allatinis, as for the fictional Montadores, foreign cousins who had been their friends were suddenly supposed to be enemies; a line of trenches across Western Europe cut the family in half; and in England those who seemed foreign could now face 'hysteria and suspicion and a multitude of other petty uglinesses'.

Rose Allatini would over the four years of the war write three novels that found different ways of expressing her unease

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- ¹ R. Allatini, *Requiem* (London: Martin Secker, 1919), 30.
- ² Eunice Buckley, *For Benefits Received* (London: Robert Hale, 1960), 40.
- ³ Eunice Buckley, *Rhapsody for Strings* (London: Andrew Dakers, 1945), 37.
- ⁴ *Rhapsody for Strings*, 38.
- ⁵ *Rhapsody for Strings*, 38.
- ⁶ *Rhapsody for Strings*, 49.
- ⁷ *Rhapsody for Strings*, 50.
- ⁸ *Rhapsody for Strings*, 50.
- ⁹ The claim is cited in Jean Overton Fuller, *Cyril Scott and a Hidden School: Towards the Peeling of an Onion*, (Theosophical History Occasional Papers: Volume VII) (Fullerton, California: Theosophical History, 1998). It is also made in the author biography on the back of the dust-jacket of *For Benefits Received* (1960)
- ¹⁰ *Daily Mail* (Friday, May 6, 1921), 5.
- ¹¹ R. Allatini, ...*Happy Ever After* (London: Mills and Boon, 1914), 6.
- ¹² ...*Happy Ever After*, 6.
- ¹³ ..*Happy Ever After* , 10.
- ¹⁴ ..*Happy Ever After* , 22.
- ¹⁵ ...*Happy Ever After*, 134.
- ¹⁶ ..*Happy Ever After* , 161.
- ¹⁷ ..*Happy Ever After* , 160.
- ¹⁸ ..*Happy Ever After* , 168-9.
- ¹⁹ ..*Happy Ever After* , 169.
- ²⁰ ..*Happy Ever After* , 170.
- ²¹ ..*Happy Ever After* , 173.
- ²² ..*Happy Ever After* , 184.
- ²³ ..*Happy Ever After* , 184.
- ²⁴ ..*Happy Ever After* , 44.
- ²⁵ ..*Happy Ever After* , 310.
- ²⁶ *Happy Ever After* , 322.
- ²⁷ Quoted in Joseph McAleer, *Passion's Fortune: The Story of Mills and Boon* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 23.
- ²⁸ *Passion's Fortune*, 28.
- ²⁹ *Sheffield Daily Telegraph Literary Supplement* (May 7, 1914), 4.
- ³⁰ Lucian Wainwright, *Girl of Good Family*, (London: Martin Secker, 1935), 186.