

NORMAN THE YOUNGER (Vol. 5, Issues 1 and 2, pp. 1-2)

David Boyd

Recently, I was more than delighted to buy, for the princely sum of 75 pence on Ebay (the postage was £2 though), one of NN's earliest published books.

This is a rather fragile and distressed paperback dating to 1942, when Norman was just 28 and striving to establish his literary reputation.

It is an Anthology of Religious Verse published by Penguin Books under their 'Pelican Books' imprint, and, despite its condition, is at least complete and just about readable.

It's fascinating stuff, both as a piece of history and as an insight into NN's earlier life.

In his characteristically pithy Introduction, NN observes that '...many of the literary reviews will not touch religion with a barge-pole.'

The mention in the blurb on the back cover of NN in 1939 having delivered a lecture to the Student Christian Movement Conference on Morals and the Modern Novel must have been a precursor to his publishing his first full book of literary criticism, in the form of *Man and Literature* (1943).

Just a year later (1944) Faber published *Five Rivers*, his first book of poetry.

The connection with student Christianity probably dated back to NN's involvement with Bessie Satterthwaite, a fellow Millomite and a devout Christian.

Around this time, though, NN embarked upon a new relationship, with a schoolteacher from London / Kent, Enrica Garnier, who undertook the thankless task of typing-up NN's manuscripts and to whom *Five Rivers* is dedicated.

Enrica's school was evacuated to Pontesbury in Shropshire after suffering heavy wartime bombing, and Enrica herself became acting headmistress of the evacuees.

It has been a truly fascinating privilege to have had some mail and even telephone discussions with a number of these wartime evacuees, some of whom remember NN visiting and all of whom recall Enrica with very great affection and respect: they are a formidable bunch of ladies, even in their old age!

'September in Shropshire', in NN's *Collected Poems* celebrates this part of NN's early life, although the relationship with Enrica seems to have fizzled-out, and, very sadly, she never embarked on another, and died a spinster, a few years after NN's death.

Some images of this interesting little paperback I hope exemplify some of this.

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NB: The images accompanying this article have been redacted (Jan. 2019)