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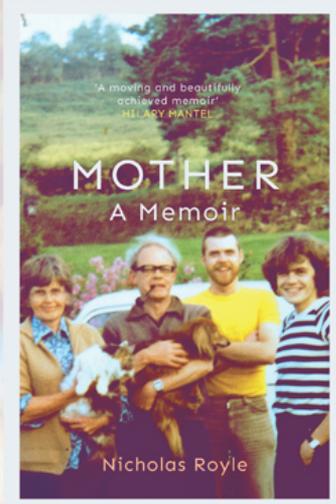
ME



Stories for new ways of seeing

## What's that you say, a new book to devour?

**Issue No.4:** Nicholas Royle's *Mother: A Memoir* hits the (virtual) shelves • read an extract right here, right now • Elleke Boehmer on stargazing and coping without libraries • and a murmuration of reviews...



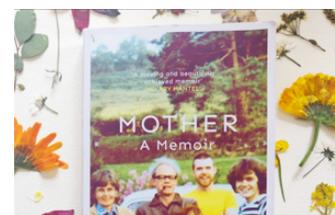
'A moving and beautifully achieved memoir, and a testament to the writer's skill and generosity of spirit.'

Hilary Mantel

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## Mother is here

Nicholas Royle's latest book, *Mother: A Memoir*, is officially out today. Last night, we were delighted to celebrate the launch with Nick's nearest and dearest gathered together, virtually, of course.



In conversation with Radio Reverb's fabulous book-talk host Anna Burt, Nick spoke of how the book has "come at an uncanny time" and of its "unprecedented relevance" – for the book's themes of nursing, and what it is to be a 'nurse', of family, and of loss have struck a chord with everyone at this time. In a moving conversation, Nick and Anna discussed why he chose to write this memoir when he did, the impact of his brother's death, and how writing a memoir forced him to "expose myself in a way that's very different from a novel." Between readings from the book, Nick also spoke of his use of language, and of how his lack of commas reflects his mother's voice – "her discourse was without commas," Nick said, and "it was a challenging way of going about the [portrayal] of her speech." He also tried to write the book without adverbs, and you'll see that within these pages the word 'perhaps' is never used. A joy to observe, as much as it must have been a challenge to write!



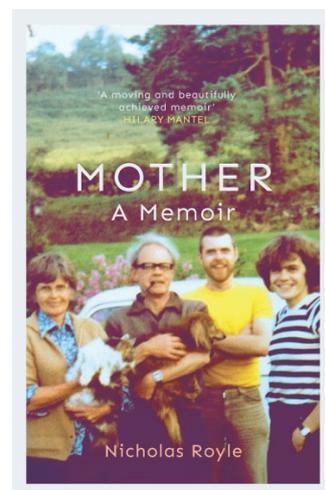
We have reported the Zoom spamming which occurred during the chat and are taking necessary precautions to make sure this isn't repeated in future events. A huge thank you to the 100+ friends, family and reviewers who attended the online launch. If you haven't bought your copy of ***Mother: A Memoir*** already, head over to our website where you can enjoy **25% off**, plus free UK p&p, using the code: MYREADATHOME **BUY MOTHER: A MEMOIR**

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## From *Mother: A Memoir*

'I have lost plenty of people. Every loss is a lessening. Every loss makes one more aware of how much there is to lose. But the death of my mother was something else. I don't know when she died. She had dementia. For ten years she was among us in the midst of life cut off. An island going down under rising sea-levels. A skyscraper collapsing in a decade-long earthquake. A sunset sleepier than a druid's daydream. It began in her mid-sixties. It was over before her seventy-fifth birthday. It wasn't like an island or a skyscraper or a sunset. These similes are to no purpose. Nothing captures the pace of her descent into where she went.'

**READ THE FIRST CHAPTER HERE**



## The week in reviews

### *The Wolf of Baghdad*

by Carol Isaacs

'...testament to the power that Iraqi roots can still possess across a seemingly definitive distance ... [a] skilful and saddening book.' —Mardean Isaac, *Tablet magazine*

### *The Heartsick Diaspora*

by Elaine Chiew

'From the moment you pick up *The Heartsick Diaspora* by Elaine Chiew, and read the evocative title, it becomes impossible to resist its charms ... a wholly striking and important debut.'

—Lunate Fiction

### *Mother: A Memoir*

by Nicholas Royle

'[A] deeply reflective memoir.' —Sheena Joughin, *The Times Literary Supplement*

'A strikingly beautiful collage of the many moments that made a mother and son's "hearts knock together".' —Hephzibah Anderson, *The Observer*

'Nicholas Royle captures the spirit of post-war parenting.' —Deirdre Falvey, *The Irish Times*

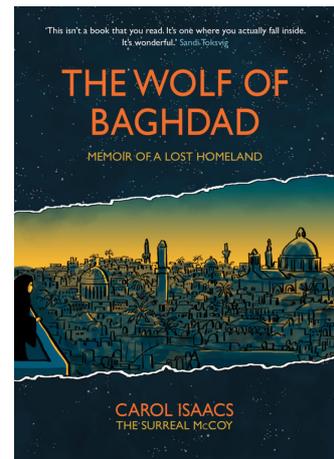
'Nick Royle's lyrical and affecting memoir is a triumph of clarity and perspective, and a fervent celebration of a life.' —Mark Reynolds, *Bookanista*

'...a good one to savour ... this book is brilliant.' —*The Worm Hole*

'...a very special book ... It will not only leave you understanding the deep emotional connections that the most seemingly inconsequential moments can mean to others, but also give you a renewed passion to ensure you tell those closest to you how much you love them. Especially in these testing and emotional times.'

—*Years of Reading Selfishly*

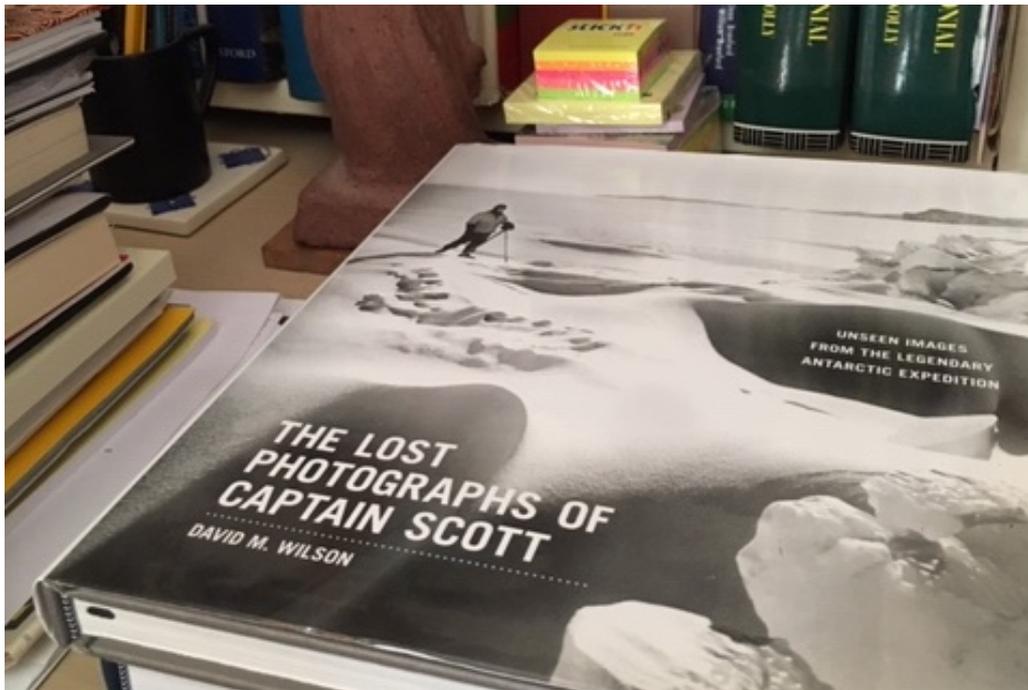
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## My bookish life... Elleke Boehmer

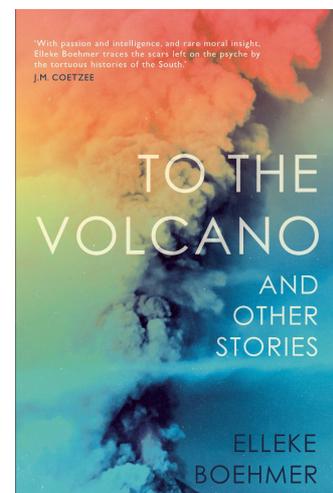
Now more than ever it feels important to talk to each other, to meet new people, to learn new things. And so we're asking our writerly and bookish friends to talk to us, sharing a little insight into their daily lives...



This week acclaimed author Elleke Boehmer is under the lockdown microscope. Her second collection of short stories, *To The Volcano*, tracks lives across continents from the perspective of the southern hemisphere – its light, its seas, its sensibilities.

### ***Have you formed a new routine?***

In these extraordinary times I've found it helpful to keep my writing routines as consistent as possible with how I proceeded before lockdown. I am though on a very nice research and writing grant, extending across the whole of 2020, and so my days were already committed to reading and writing, mainly at home. If anything, that everyone else is also now working from home means that I feel both more and less sequestered. More, because it's so quiet out there. Less, because I have this rather companionable sense day by day of everyone in my street, in my town, sitting at home, side by side, in rows upon rows of rooms, tapping away. Or 'just reading'. Amazing how 'just reading' has got a whole new lease on life for so many of us.



### ***How have your days changed?***

The main changes I am experiencing have to do with two of my favourite places being closed due to the lockdown, the first is libraries, the second is the swimming pool. Almost hourly I think, ah, I need to look x or y up, but of course I can't, or not easily. This information is in books, often quite old and obscure books, for example, about 16th-century map-making, and many of these are not available online (thank goodness, I would normally have said). My exercise routine has changed, and is now more time-consuming, or just different, as I usually went for a daily swim in my local pool. Now I take long walks instead. With *queuing*, *food-shopping* is obviously also different.

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***What are you looking forward to?***

Every day I look forward to the brightness of the stars and planets at night. Venus is amazing at the moment. I have a thing for stars, but usually northern hemisphere skies are obscured by light and other pollution. Now, the stars are very clear, they feel close. I'm also looking forward to seeing friends in real time and space again, going to the pub, hanging out, those kind of huggy, comfortable people-being-together things.

***Are you writing, and managing to stay creative?***

Yes, ish, though the news round is very distracting. Those numbers of people who are unwell, the daily count of those who have died, needlessly in many cases, etc. I feel encouraged in my work though by how something I was already writing about, remote connection between people in distant places, has become all of a sudden very relevant and resonant.

***Do you have any advice for anyone feeling creatively squashed right now, and what's helping you get back in the zone?***

My first advice would be to create news free hours: try to be very disciplined about sticking to them. And keep routines as much the same with what you did before as possible. I've found that helpful. Enjoy the sunshine that thank goodness has been plentiful over the UK in the past weeks. Imagine if it was raining!

***What are your small daily comforts?***

Park walks, reading in the sunshine, stargazing.

***How are you keeping in touch with others?***

Loads of texts and WhatsApps flying around between family and friends. Weekly zoom meetings within particular groups. If anything, I'm more connected with some distant friends right now. As I was saying.

**BUY TO THE VOLCANO**

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**If you work with books, in any way – editor, blogger, bookshop worker, reviewer – and would like to feature in our new 'My bookish life' series, we'd love to hear from you.**

**EMAIL US NOW**

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## **Before you go...**

Elaine Chiew, author of *The Heartsick Diaspora*, has been talking at the virtual University of Brighton Careers in Creative Writing Conference this week. She is also judging this month's Lunate Flash Prize, with an appropriate theme of 'home'. **ENTER HERE**

'Marbles', an extract from Nicholas Royle's *Mother: A Memoir*, is currently featured over on the Bookanista website. [READ HERE](#)

Find Zita Holbourne, a contributor to *New Daughters of Africa* (ed. Margaret Busby), in a new exhibition celebrating Women Activists of East London – now online, the gallery takes a multi-media tour of 150 years of women's history. [VISIT HERE](#)

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