

HUMANITIES INSTITUTE
Stuart Blackburn, Ph.D.

RUTH PRAWER JHABVALA

Born 1927 Cologne, Germany
Died 2013 New York City, USA

Life

Ruth Praver Jhabvala was born in Germany to a Jewish family. Her father, Marcus, was a lawyer who came from Poland and moved to Germany to avoid military conscription in World War I. Her mother, Eleanor, was the daughter of the leader of a major synagogue in Cologne. Her father had leftist sympathies and was arrested during the 1930s. When he was released, he took the family away from Nazi Germany and found refuge in England in 1939. Her older brother became a professor of German at the University of Oxford. Having lived through the Blitz in London in the second world war, Ruth Praver became a British citizen in 1948. The following year, her father committed suicide when he learned that forty relatives had died in the Holocaust. She went to Queen Mary College, in London, and earned an MA in English literature in 1951, the same year that she moved to India with her husband, Cyrus Jhabvala, who was an architect. Jhabvala spent the next 25 years in India, having three daughters and writing fiction. She was catapulted into the limelight when her novel *Heat and Dust* won the Booker Prize in 1975 and was subsequently turned into a popular film. She was never entirely at home in India, however, nor were her fictional heroines, and she moved to New York, where she lived until her death at age 86. During that time, she continued to write fiction but earned more money and fame as a scriptwriter. Several of her scripts were made into films by the Merchant-Ivory production team and became box-office hits. She became a US citizen in 1986.

Achievement After winning the Booker Prize in 1975, Jhabvala won the Neil Gunn Prize in 1979, a MacArthur Fellowship in 1984 and several awards for her screenplays from the Writers Guild of America, the London Circle Film Society, BAFTA Committee in London and the Academy Award in Los Angeles. In 2003, she won the O'Henry prize for a short story ('Refuge in London').

Select list of works

Novels

To whom She Will (1955)
The Nature of Passion (1956)
The Householder (1960)
A Stronger Climate (1968)
Heat and Dust (1975)
Poet and Dancer (1993)
Shards of Memory (1995)

Short story collections

Out of India (2000)
A Lovesong for India (2013)