



**Ash before Oak**

Original title:

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Genre: Novel

Pages: 536 pages



**Jeremy Cooper**

## *Ash before Oak*

Ash before Oak is a novel in the form of a fictional journal written by a solitary man on a secluded Somerset estate. Ostensibly a nature diary, chronicling the narrator's interest in the local flora and fauna and the passing of the seasons, Ash before Oak is also the story of a breakdown told slantwise, and of the narrator's subsequent recovery through his reengagement with the world around him. Written in prose that is as precise as it is beautiful, winner of the 2018 Fitzcarraldo Editions Novel Prize, Jeremy Cooper's first novel in over a decade is a stunning investigation of the fragility, beauty and strangeness of life.

Read more: <https://fitzcarraldoeditions.com/books/ash-before-oak/>

*'[W]hat Cooper offers, very boldly and successfully, is a broad narrative arc of collapse and tentative recovery, in which a struggle for meaning and purpose in life assumes a desperate intensity.... Because of the narrator's inability to describe his anguish, what's mostly written here is not his pain, but his clinging to life: the beauty caught and traced, with great skill, in trying to overcome suffering. In its journal form, Ash before Oak salvages detritus, the unremarkable mess, banality and repetition of the everyday, just as the narrator works on restoring his dilapidated buildings in Somerset. And in a larger way, too, with admirable wisdom and precision, it salvages, from agonizing, ruinous thoughts and experiences, something transcendent, of lasting value.'*

Jerome Boyd Maunsell, Times Literary Supplement

*'Low-key and understated, this beautiful book ... is a civilised and melancholy document that slowly progresses towards a sense of enduring, going onwards, and even new life. It feels like a healing experience.'*

Phil Baker, The Sunday Times

### **Jeremy Cooper**

Jeremy Cooper is a writer and art historian, author of five previous novels and several works of non-fiction, including the standard work on nineteenth century furniture, studies of young British artists in the 1990s, and, in 2019, the British Museum's catalogue of artists' postcards. Early on he appeared in the first twenty-four of BBC's Antiques Roadshow and, in 2018, won the first Fitzcarraldo Editions Novel Prize for *Ash before Oak*.