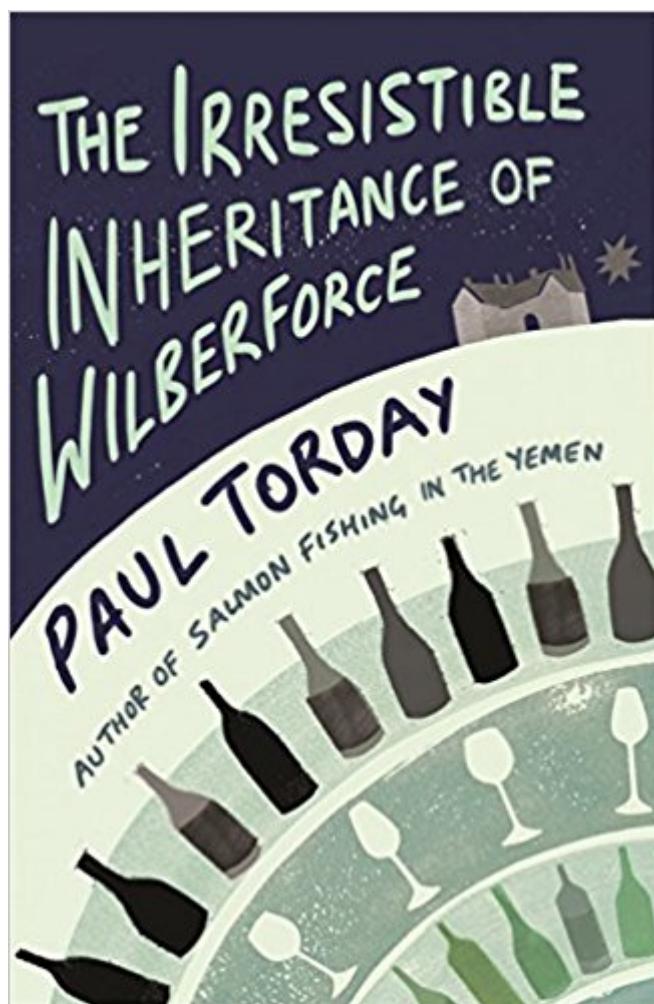


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# The Irresistible Inheritance Of Wilberforce: A Novel In Four Vintages



## Synopsis

'You really love me don't you?' she said. 'Of course I do.' 'It's hard to tell because you never talk much. You've never really had any fun in your life at all, have you?' 'No, but that's about to change.' Late one summer evening, Wilberforce - rich, young, work-obsessed and self-contained - makes an unexpected detour on the way home from the software company he owns and unwittingly takes the first step on a journey that will change his life. His uncharacteristically impulsive act leads him to the door of Caerlyon Hall, to the vast undercroft beneath it, and the domain of Francis Black, a place where wine, hospitality and affection flow freely. Through Francis, the eccentric and enigmatic owner of Caerlyon, Wilberforce is initiated into a life he could never have imagined: a life rich in the promise of friendship and adventure, where, through his new set of friends, with their shooting parties and stately homes, the possibility of finding acceptance, and even falling in love, seems finally to be within his reach. As his horizon broadens and his heart expands, Wilberforce becomes a willing pupil to Francis's master, and in the cellars of Caerlyon he nurtures a new-found passion for fine wine. But even the finest wine can leave a bitter aftertaste, and Wilberforce will learn that the undercroft holds some unpalatable secrets, and that passion comes at a price. Chronicling the vintage years of Wilberforce's life, *The Irresistible Inheritance of Wilberforce* is a dazzling, haunting story of obsession and addiction, of loyalty and betrayal.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"Torday tells the story in reverse, a familiar narrative device used effectively here" -- Shyamantha Asokan, THE BIG ISSUE "a heart-wrenching tale of alcoholism and a lonely man's search for

identity.. a mesmerising page-turner" -- Anthony Gardner, *Mail on Sunday*"a really good book by a really talented writer" -- A BOOK A WEEK BLOGSPOT"a well-told tale.. Torday wryly observes Wilberforce's descent" -- Paul Dunn, *THE TIMES*"grows more and more poignant as the novel progresses.. satisfactorily full-bodied and slips down a treat" -- Peter Parker, *SUNDAY TIMES*"marks him out as a writer of serious promise, whose achievements in this second novel hint at bigger, better works to come." -- Fiona McCann, *IRISH TIMES*"the pages practically turn themselves and the closing lines of the book, after such a heady brew, are so deliciously sobering" -- JOHN SELF ASYLUM BLOGSPOT"the whole book is delightfully written.. Paul Torday is a remarkably original novelist" -- David Sexton, *EVENING STANDARD*'What makes us want to find out about Wilberforce is Torday's wonderful prose - the same simple, clear writing that made *Salmon Fishing* so readable.'

-- Susan Elderkin, *FINANCIAL TIMES*'he has a good feeling for character and a sly sense of humour' -- David Robson, *SUNDAY TELEGRAPH*

Paul Torday was born in 1946 and read English Literature at Pembroke College, Oxford. He burst on to the literary scene in 2006 with his first novel, *Salmon Fishing in the Yemen*, an immediate bestseller that has been sold in 19 countries. He is married with two sons by a previous marriage and has two stepsons and lives close to the River North Tyne.

Paul Torday writes such intriguing stories. I love them. Sadly I don't like the stories to finish. I could just read on and on but all good things must come to an end. Highly recommended this book. Now I'm off to buy another of his stories.

Intriguing but not too exiting and leaves a couple of things unanswered

I enjoyed this portrait of a life gone wrong. I found the portrayal of the characters gripping at first and the book kept me interested, but the "backwards" style of story telling means there are few surprises towards the end of the book, but a sense of sadness for what could have been a more positive life.

A beautifully told story of Wilberforce's inheritance of an extensive wine cellar, and his growing obsession with the wine in it. A bittersweet tale of loneliness, self-delusion, addiction and friendship. Well worth a read.

As a wine connoisseur, I was very interested to read this well-researched account of how

Wilberforce became obsessed with the subject until it dominated his life. I look forward to reading another of Paul Tordy's books, having enjoyed 'Salmon Fishing in the Yemen', the first of his books which I read.

Great read

The Irresistible Inheritance of Wilberforce is the second novel by British author, Paul Torday. When Torday introduces his narrator, Wilberforce, it is 2006 and he is an enthusiastic wine drinker who owns an estate called Caerlyon Hall, the subterranean undercroft full of wine located under the Hall, and a flat in Half Moon Street, Mayfair. It soon becomes apparent, however, that Wilberforce is a virtually penniless alcoholic, a delusional widower who has alienated all his friends, squandered a fortune and is at death's door. How Wilberforce has managed to progress to this state from being a teetotal computer nerd who owned a multi-million pound software company is gradually revealed, but in reverse, in four parts: 2006, 2004, 2003 and 2002. Torday emphasises significant incidents (and his narrator's perception of them) with repetition of certain phrases and the retelling (with subtle differences) of certain events in each of the four parts. While it may be a dark and tragic tale, Torday manages to inject plenty of humour, and readers may well find themselves laughing out loud, at least in 2006. Torday's characters are well developed and often familiar: the socially inept computer programmer; the hedonistic heir to the title; the well-meaning doctor; the asset-rich, cash-poor gentry; the diplomatically fawning bank manager. Eck Chetwode-Talbot's name may ring a bell for readers of Salmon Fishing and both Eck and Ed Simmonds reappear in later Torday books, something that will appeal to fans. Although the outcome is evident from the beginning, it is a measure of Torday's literary talent that the reader is still eager to discover the who, how and why of it. At the same time, the reader is left a mystery to speculate upon (is Wilberforce's father among the characters?) Torday's portrayal of an alcoholic's behaviour and addictive personality (the denials, the rationalisations, the blame shifting, the physical and mental symptoms) is excellent and obviously well-researched. This is a brilliant offering by Torday and fans will be eager to read his next book, *The Girl On The Landing*.

Wilberforce enters a wine cellar looking to buy wine and meets the owner Francis Black and two friends sitting drinking. He is invited to join them in having a glass. Over the next few weeks he

becomes very good friends with all of them and starts mixing in the social circles. Francis Black owns 100,000 bottle of red wine and when he finds he is dying he offers Wilberforce all the wine for 1 pound on the condition he buys the building above the cellar "the undercroft" only for the amount of the mortgage owing. Francis has noone to leave it to and during their short friendship he has taught Wilberforce all about how to taste wine. Wilberforce agonises over the purchase, as he would have to sell his successful business to be able to do it. But he then could do consulting from home. The story is told backwards. From the stage where Wilberforce drinks 5 to 6 bottles of high quality wine a day, refuses to sell any of the wine off to pay some of his huge debts. His obsession to keep the wine and tasting (note the word tasting not drinking) becomes more important than his marriage and everything else. I listened to this on audio. Every now and then you can hear the gurgle of the wine being poured into a glass. The telling of it in sections working backwards in time was an interesting way of story telling and I felt it didn't detract the story at all. I really enjoyed the story, it was a little sad at times but overall I highly recommend it. A story with a totally different angle. I will be reading more of his works.

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