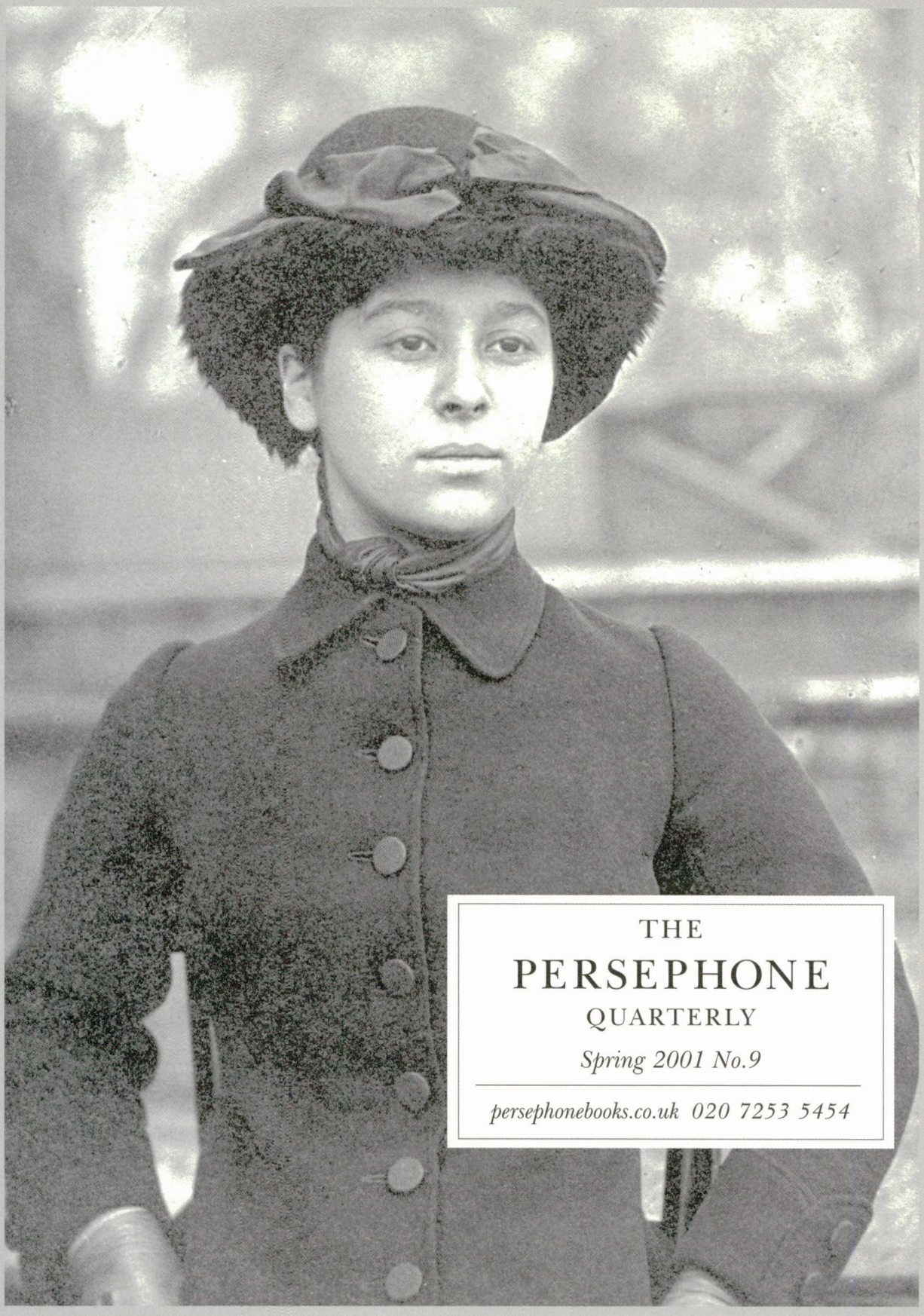

THE PERSEPHONE QUARTERLY

Spring 2001 No.9

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Our Spring 2001 Books

Amy Levy (1861-89), who wrote ***Reuben Sachs*** in 1888, is shown on the cover in a newly discovered photograph. She looks characterful and intriguing; as the *Cambridge Review* wrote in its review, 'Miss Levy's books. . . are always interesting. . . . The reader can never complain that the story is dull. It may irritate or annoy him; bore him, it certainly will not. . . .'

Reuben Sachs is indeed a very thought-provoking book. The story centres on the cruelty of the marriage market: Judith and Reuben love each other, but his political ambitions demand money, which she does not have. This would be a fairly standard late-Victorian theme if the novel (almost a novella, and originally published with the sub-title 'a sketch') were not imbued with feminist pleading: the focus of Amy Levy's satire was the emptiness of the lives led by women like Judith, condemned to do nothing all day except gossip, play cards and go shopping.

What is unusual as well is the setting, which is the Jewish community in Bayswater, portrayed with a sardonic gaze that shocked contemporary readers. Yet Amy Levy's theme was broader. As Julia Neuberger writes in her Preface: 'This is a novel about women, and Jewish women, about public life and Jewish public life, about families, and Jewish families, about snobbishness, and Jewish snobbishness.'

Partly the inspiration was *Daniel Deronda*: in an article called 'The Jew in Fiction' Amy Levy had obliquely accused George Eliot of romanticising her Jewish characters, observing that no novelist had made a proper attempt to describe the modern Jew with 'his surprising virtues and no less surprising vices. . .' It was her description of the vices that irritated the *Cambridge Review* and, in particular, the Jewish press; its extreme reaction almost certainly contributed to her suicide a few months after the book appeared. But there were other reasons: a tendency to melancholy (she once wrote that 'I am standing as it were with my hand on the Colney Hatch door-knob', this being The Priory of its day); some weeks of deafness (which might have been a temporary tinnitus caused by strain); the fact that she did not have a G.H.Lewes to support her as did George Eliot.

But mainly she was isolated because she was a woman, denied male, intellectual friendship amidst a haze of cigar smoke and late-night talk. Instead, as she wrote in 'Ballad of Religion and Marriage':

Monogamous still at our post,
Reluctantly we undergo
Domestic round of boiled and roast,
Yet deem the whole proceding slow.
Daily the secret murmurs grow;
We are no more content to plod
Along the beaten paths - and so
Marriage must go the way of God.

Judith, of course, cannot reject the domestic round; she has no option other than to marry well.

Oscar Wilde wrote about *Reuben Sachs*: 'Its directness, its uncompromising truths, its depth of feeling, and above all, its absence of any single superfluous word, make it, in some sort, a classic. Like all her best work it is sad, but the sadness is by no means morbid. The strong undertone of moral

Cover: photograph of Amy Levy taken in the 1880s, reproduced by courtesy of Camellia Plc

earnestness, never preached, gives a stability and force to the vivid portraiture, and prevents the satiric touches from degenerating into mere malice. Truly, the book is an achievement.'

The second book we publish this spring is ***Family Roundabout*** by Richmal Crompton. She is famous for being the author of the *William* books: the creator of the pugnacious, lively anti-hero of 345 short stories for children, collected into thirty volumes from 1922-64.

Richmal Crompton, at the time she was writing Family Roundabout © *Richmal Ashbee*

Eleven year-old William Brown lives in an English village, spending most of his time with Henry, Douglas and Ginger and, more reluctantly, with Violet Elizabeth. This was an era when boys vanished after breakfast, reappeared for lunch, their aertex shirts and shorts grubby, their cheeks glowing, having amused themselves safely in the village and its surroundings.

Even though the *William* books sold over 8 million copies in her lifetime, Richmal Crompton once hinted that her 'Frankenstein monster' had ambushed the recognition she would have liked for her forty serious novels. Of these, *Family Roundabout,* which is perhaps the best, is in some respects the obverse of the William situation (just as Noel Streatfeild's *Saplings*, Persephone Book No.15, is a *Ballet Shoes* for grown-ups): instead of seeing William at loggerheads with adults, especially with his irritable father and long-suffering mother, we see the children from the point of view of their two mothers. A favourite theme of Richmal Crompton's was how families can both entrap and sustain (and she hints that happiness necessitates jumping or being pushed off the roundabout); another was adult refusal to treat children as younger equals, and the child's assumption that adults care only about appearances, manners and regular meals.

Family Roundabout centres on two matriarchs, around whom their two families spin. One is dreamy, laissez-faire, kindly and bookish, the other is controlling, managerial, efficient and energetic. 'Mrs Fowler's hands-off approach is on the face of it more appealing than Mrs Willoughby's repressive autocracy,' writes Juliet Aykroyd in her Preface, 'but in the end we are left pondering. What is a successful mother, or, come to that, a successful child?' The two women try hard, but inevitably the family roundabout goes on going round and round, the riders go up and down, and both must accept their children as they really are, rather than as they would like them to be; for all their efforts, whether misplaced or well-meaning, as it used to say above nursery doors – 'tout lasse, tout casse, tout passe'.

Greenery Street

Felicity goes to change her library books (perhaps at the Times Book Club) in a scene from Denis Mackail's 1925 novel, which we hope to reprint in the near future.

For real reading matter Mr. and Mrs. Foster turn – or, rather, Felicity turns, for this is necessarily her province – to the circulating library at Andrew Brown's. Twice, sometimes three times a week, she sets out with a bundle of books under her arm, goes up in one of Andrew Brown's lifts, presents herself at the desk which is labelled 'FAB to KYT', and smiles at the young lady who sits behind it. In Felicity's case the young lady always returns this smile, and the following dialogue then takes place:

Felicity: 'I've brought two books back, and here's my new list. Have you got the first volume of *Indiscreet Reminiscences* yet?'

Attendant: 'I'm afraid they're all out still. But can I give you the second?'

Felicity: 'No, thank you. We've had that. Oh – I say – have you got *Spate*? No? Well, have you got *That The Swine Did Eat*? Oh, aren't you taking it? I see. Well, have you got *The Gutter*? Oh, but I'm sure it's published. I saw a long review of it in – Oh, yes; perhaps it was an advertisement. Well, have you got *The Braxingfield Mystery*? My husband is *always* asking for it. Oh; I see. Well, have you got anything on my list? And nothing on the old list, either? Well, what *have* you got, then?'

[The Attendant, who has been waiting for this moment, dives under the desk and fetches up about half a dozen novels, which she offers for Felicity's inspection.]

Attendant: 'Here are some of the latest, Mrs. Foster.'

[Felicity looks at the backs of these works, and fails to recognise either their titles or their authors.]

Felicity (*politely, but disparagingly*): 'I don't think I –'

Attendant (*briskly*): '*Prendergast's Property* – that's a very pretty story.'

Felicity (*doubtfully*): 'Oh. . . I never seem to like books where the people are called "Prendergast."'

Attendant: 'Well, what about *The Transept*? It's going very well, you know.'

Felicity (*suspiciously*): 'Is it religious?'

Attendant (*surprisingly*): 'Oh, no. It's about Rhodesia.'

Felicity (*with conviction*): 'I always hate that.'

[By this time, however, a small queue has formed behind her, which has the effect of weakening her critical judgment. The attendant realises this, and goes quickly ahead.]

Attendant: "I think you'd like this, Mrs. Foster. *Illumination*.'

[Felicity picks up *Illumination* and opens it. Nice short paragraphs, anyhow; and quite large print.]

Felicity: 'All right. That'll do for one.' [The queue shows fresh signs of impatience.] 'And – oh, very well. I'll take *The Transept* for the other. Perhaps my husband will like it.'

Attendant (*more briskly than ever*): 'Oh, he's sure to, Mrs. Foster.'

Felicity: 'Well, thank you very much. Good morning.'

[Exit]

The 1950s Times Book Club

Janet Phipps (née Maeser), a Persephone reader from Ipswich, writes: 'The Times Book Club and circulating library fronted onto Wigmore Street. It was an impressive building with big windows and an important entrance for its customers, with a large staircase leading up to the library on the first floor. Round the corner the staff entered a small and rather dark doorway. Here we clocked on, using a machine like those used at most factories, at the beginning of the day. We had to be on the library floor by 8.55 and were not allowed to leave until after 5.30, or until the last customer had left. But I always felt so proud to enter the building, with its important lift (and lift-man) and huge basement filled with stacks of all the old books which had been in the library since it had opened, where a copy of every book was kept.

The library had two types of customer, guaranteed and non-guaranteed. When I arrived early in the 1950s, the guaranteed customers paid £3.7s.6d for a year's subscription and the non-guaranteed paid £2 a year (which was the same as my weekly salary). Guaranteed customers could take out a book the day it was published [the non-guaranteed customers could not get any books until they were at least six months old].

A new biography or novel reviewed in the Sunday papers (presumably *The Sunday Times*!) was immediately demanded by customers on Monday morning. This would mean that Charlie, who had worked at the Times forever and knew every book that had come into the library and who had a very colourful turn of phrase, would have piles of the books in his stock cupboard at the back of the library. If he ran out we would have to whistle on the pipe (rather like that used on boats) to the real stock room on the second floor. With a customer determined to get the latest book standing by your side you would then have to persuade whoever answered the whistle that this particular customer was good enough to receive one of the few copies left upstairs. It was impossible to say the old cow will take her subscription to Harrods if she does not get the book, but we had various ways of getting this message up to the unconcerned stock room personnel.

The customers were divided according to the subscription they paid, and the guaranteed customers had eight desks at their disposal, with a librarian and a junior to each desk. These librarians were the most experienced (they had been there since the year dot) or they were ex-debs (who swore very expertly in beautiful accents and modulated voices). The non-guaranteed customers had ten desks between them, and as I ended up running one of these at the age of 17 (and with a distinctive north London accent), you can see that there was a sort of class distinction! We also had postal customers who sent lists, or trusted us to choose books, as well as customers who had their books delivered by van.

I was 15 when I began at the library. Miss Greenwood ran it with a rod of iron – she was quite small with grey hair pulled into a bun, rather like a headmistress; I had only been there a few days when her voice was heard behind me: 'Maeser, the girls (even our middle-aged librarians were known as girls) at the Times do not go bare-legged, please put on some stockings.' So out of

my £2 I had to buy stockings and a suspender belt and wear them the next day and from then onwards. The way we dressed meant that when the beatnik look came in, two of our best members of staff (one in the library and one in the bookshop) were sacked for coming to work in flat-heeled shoes, dirndle skirts, black sweaters and much black eyeliner.

I began as Greenwood's (we were all known by our surnames) junior. Even at that age I was rather bolshie (the name for any trouble-maker at that time) and my face, when she said I was to dust her desk, must have been a picture. I lasted one week with her and was transferred to the subscription desk. Mrs. Ward - middle-aged and very glamorous - ran it with efficiency and kindness, and her assistant Pam Brown was lovely. I sorted all the post - mostly the order cards sent in by the customers - and delivered these about the library. My knowledge of the alphabet quickly became very good, as a card from Mr. Smith delivered to the desk which began SUT was not accepted and the recipient would shout (in from of customers and staff) 'this isn't mine', even if the correct desk was only four feet away. My embarrassment would be huge and I made very few mistakes.

Soon I was taking the shillings, which had to be paid for books taken over and above the subscription, and writing the titles of the books on the customers' cards. In this way I learnt to speak to these very rich and revered people and learn that they were the same as everyone else - some nice, some not so nice, some kind and some extremely self-centred. I was then moved to the A to BRO desk and worked with Miss Clift (known to customers and staff alike as Cliffy). She was very attractive and wore the most beautiful and brightly coloured clothes (the 1950s were not grey - which we hardly wore at all - but brightly coloured, and of course we wore gloves, scarves and shoes to match as well as a smart handbag). She was much loved by her customers, who included Sir Thomas Beecham (he came in regularly for his wife's novels), Nigel Balchin and Michael Ayrton, and many others. One of our postal customers was Max Beerbohm - I wish I had kept his order and return cards as they used to have comments on the books as well as little drawings. We never realised that these might one day be quite valuable.

Eventually I was given a desk of my own - WR to Z. Unfortunately, the salary for a 17 year-old was only 3 guineas a week and as I had to travel by bus and tube to get to work this really was not enough; 5 shillings also had to be given to my mother for my keep, and being out all day we had to buy coffee, tea and lunch (although we did have a subsidised canteen). The experienced librarians received the sum of £4 10s a week and I could see that, much as I loved the library, I would have to move on.

I have had many interesting jobs since and have certainly earned a larger salary, but the experience I had between the age of 15 and 17 was just the best that could be - I would not have missed it for the world. Before I left, however, I did spend three months at the Derry & Toms branch of the Times Library. I was completely in charge, had an assistant who came in so that I could lunch - which I did in Kensington Gardens - and saw this branch close down.

Some years later I returned to the Times Bookshop and the library had closed. Miss Greenwood (now much less frightening, in fact rather small and sad) was in charge of the second-hand book department and things were not looking good; eventually it closed.

The Home-Maker (No. 7)

The film director Kevin Brownlow wrote to tell us that he had managed to see 'one of the rarest of all silent films - ***The Home-Maker***, directed by King Baggot, starring Clive Brook and Alice Joyce. . . a most successful film . . . the only part of the book to which it fails to do justice is the long sequence with the egg-whisk [the great scene in which Stephen's father surreptitiously watches him learning how to use one]. . . I was also very impressed by the book itself. It may have been written in the the 1920s, but one recognises with delight that the writer knows us inside out - and tells us about ourselves and our family with quite extraordinary insight.'

One of our readers, Rosemary Hall, wrote: 'It is not about gender roles at all but about the consumer society. It uses the (then) revolutionary idea of a couple swapping roles to reveal how, deep-down, the role of the 'home-maker' is undervalued because it has no monetary value and is merely concerned with the nurturing of human beings. . . As a single working woman, who never had any interest in bringing up children, I found the book surprising and loved the way the changing point of view made you question. You started by thinking the store manager was right, and then you saw how he had dismissed Lester on inadequate evidence. . . .The egg-whisk scene - wonderful!'

Alice Joyce in the film, which was: 'Far ahead of its time. . . The masses couldn't quite buy that any self-respecting woman would forsake her familial duties for a successful career, and vice versa for the gentleman' (Classic Images, Nov. 2000).

Our Readers Write

In sending you an order for another three of your beautiful books, I just want to say how much I enjoyed Dorothy Whipple's ***They Knew Mr. Knight***. The characterisation of this brilliant novel was percipient, and the sense of impending doom from the moment Thomas Blake gets involved with Mr. Knight creates a continuous atmosphere of tension.' TW, Mansfield

'I'm loving ***Mr. Knight*** - a marvellous story - very gripped though only a third of the way through! A brilliant piece of writing. . .' AP, Aberporth

'Last week I read ***Miss Pettigrew*** and ***Mr. Knight***. What a contrast, although I loved them both. . . I was so glad Miss Pettigrew's fairy tale had a happy ending. . . ***Mr. Knight*** just confirmed my feelings about Dorothy Whipple's writing, after enjoying ***Someone at a Distance***. The moral complexity of the story was startling. The small steps by which almost the whole family became entangled in Mr Knight's web were beautifully described. I really thought Celia was going to stay true to her initial distrust of him, but as soon as she looked at that house. . .' LB, Victoria

'I read one page of ***Miss Pettigrew*** before going to bed, could not sleep for excitement, got up at three and read the whole book, laughing so much at the point where Miss Pettigrew, soaring to the heights, says "Have a spot", that my husband came to see what I was doing.' JB, Clackmannan

'***Fidelity*** is a revelation. As soon as I got to the last page I began re-reading - it forces one to go back and check out the significant moments in case one has missed something vital. There is so much in the novel that is not explained, the reader's imagination has to fill in the gaps. . . As soon as I have finished ***Good Evening, Mrs. Craven*** I will be sending for fresh supplies. . . With many thanks for hours of reading pleasure.' DD, Chester

'I have just read ***Saplings*** into the night and particularly enjoyed it and became involved with it. I felt it ended too abruptly, however - I keep wondering what happened to the children. What a gift Noel Streatfeild had for understanding them. I have also loved ***Fidelity*** - both these I found absolutely compulsive reading.' SG, Broadwell

'I must tell you how thrilled I was to hear of your enterprise on R4. I couldn't wait to receive the Catalogue and nearly wept to find my favourite author, Dorothy Whipple, featured so prominently. ***High Wages*** [which we publish in 2002] is my favourite book of all time and I read it once a year - as you say, the storyline may be simple but her characters are real people and her readers care what happens to them. . . I have now read ***Marjory Fleming*** and felt quite affected by this tale of an extraordinary child rescued by the saintly Isa from a mother so out of sympathy with her daughter it made one wince.' VC, Redhill

'Thank you so much for introducing me to ***Marjory Fleming***. It is a most unusual and fascinating book, with a kind of dual identity which must be almost unique. I found it a marvellous evocation of childhood, and difficult to put down.' HM, Minehead

'Just a line to say how much I enjoyed ***Marjory Fleming***. I had never heard of her and am so pleased to have made her acquaintance. The author seems to have total recall as to how the young feel. I loved the book and the endpapers are beautiful.' AM, Belfast

From Some Recent Reviews

At the end of 2000 ***Miss Pettigrew Lives for a Day*** received an avalanche of reviews. 'Why,' asked the *Guardian*, 'has it taken more than half a century for this wonderful flight of humour to be rediscovered? Probably because it is high entertainment, not serious social comment or great literature. . . a period piece with the original illustrations, Miss Pettigrew's blossoming is a delight to observe.'

'"This," thought Miss Pettigrew, "is *Life*. I have never lived before"' quoted the *Independent on Sunday*, which praised Winifred Watson for conjuring up all the glamour of an era and added: 'It is thanks to Persephone Books with their series of elegantly produced reissues that we can enjoy such forgotten treasures.' The *Daily Mail* also praised 'a small publisher which specialises in long-neglected but often charming fiction' and liked the book's message - 'that everyone, no matter how poor or prim or neglected, has a second chance to blossom in the world.' *The Times* and the *Daily Express* ran long interviews with Winifred Watson, and Maureen Lipman in Books of the Year in the *Guardian* wrote: 'Perhaps the most pleasure has come from Persephone's enchanting reprints, particularly ***Miss Pettigrew Lives for a Day***, a fairy story set in 1930s London; and ***Consider the Years***, Virginia Graham's funny, stoic and dashing poetry.

This was reviewed by *Time Out*: 'You can't, we know, judge a book by its cover, but when you come across a book of poems as beautifully presented as ***Consider the Years*** you have an object of desire as well as a piece of reading matter. Printed on high-quality paper, with discreet end covers and colourful inside papers, there is even a matching bookmark. Thankfully [these] light, deft, funny poems. . . are no disappointment. . . . and have a charm and wit that is irresistible - if you haven't come across Virginia Graham, think Hilaire Belloc meets an English Ogden Nash by way of Noel Coward. . . .'

In Books of the Year Katharine Whitehorn in the *Observer* chose Dorothy Canfield Fisher's ***The Home-Maker***, while Dame Muriel Spark in the *Sunday Telegraph* wrote: 'The late Isobel English was an exceptionally talented young novelist of the mid-Fifties. I am delighted to see a reprint of ***Every Eye***, one of her most successful and sensitively written books, a romantic yet non-sentimental story of a young woman's intricate relationships of family and love, intensely evocative of the period, remarkable in its observation of place and character.' Also in Books of the Year in the *Sunday Telegraph* Helen Osborne announced good news for Dorothy Whipple fans: 'Persephone Books has just published another of her long-out-of-print novels, ***They Knew Mr. Knight***. A real treat from 1934.'

The Tablet reviewer was 'stunned' by Noel Streatfeild's ***Saplings*** - 'The author's central purpose, to show the destructive effects of war on a happy enough middle-class family, is executed with astonishing subtlety' - and the *Mail on Sunday* called the short stories in Mollie Panter-Downes's ***Good Evening, Mrs Craven:*** 'Dramatic, comic and poignant evocations of the women who did not fight but lived through the war as intensely as those who did.' Finally, the *Guardian* chose us as one of five **Small Presses of the Year** (the others were Eland, Redstone, Prospect and Pushkin).

Open Book: Book of the Year

At the end of the year Charlie Lee-Potter of Radio 4 chose, as one of her two books of the year, Elizabeth Berridge's ***Tell it to a Stranger.*** 'The stories are sharp and they're sparse. . . the book is very much of its time, it does just tell you everything you need to know about life in the 1940s.' Her guest, Suzi Feay, Literary Editor of the *Independent on Sunday*, agreed: 'She's very very concentrated, very very crisp, she just comes out and declarative sentences pile on top of declarative sentences and some of her sentences could just be a short story in themselves, I mean she will just write one line about somebody and it's so perfect.'

CL-P continued, 'I think we should give some credit too to the publishers of this book - and one doesn't normally want to do that'; what Persephone does 'is bring back to the reader stories that have long gone, sort of fallen between the cracks in the floorboards and produced them in these beautiful editions.' She then asked the writer Iain Sinclair whether he admired them. 'Yes,' he replied, 'it's very attractive to me to have a book that is properly treated as an object, that is a joy to handle, and I love this whole business of diving back into the past to dig up writers who slipped through the cracks. . . this seems to me an excellent series in that they all have a particular identity.'

Our Summer 2001 Books

Persephone Book No. 25 will be ***The Montana Stories*** by Katherine Mansfield; written in Switzer-land in the last months of her life, they have never before been published in a single volume.

It was eighty years ago, in July 1921, that she came to Montana, to the Chalet des Sapins, where, in a room looking south down to Sierre and across the valley to the mountains opposite, she lay in bed or on the balcony and wrote better and more creatively than at any time of her life.

Although is unlikely that Katherine Mansfield would have chosen her work to be presented chronologically, collecting famous stories, and fragments, in one volume, and linking them with a commentary that quotes from her letters and journals, gives a new and poignantly interesting insight into her mind. Also we are publishing for the first time the drawings that accompanied five of the stories when they appeared in *The Sphere.*

Our second summer book is by Susan Glaspell, the author of *Fidelity,* Persephone Book No.4. ***Brook Evans*** begins simply enough, with a young couple who believe that their love can overcome all obstacles. This gripping novel highlights with sensitivity and sadness how wrong that assumption can be, and traces the lasting effects of their love over three generations; the reader is left wondering whether renouncing love out of obedience to society is in the end more dangerous than following one's heart's desires. *Brook Evans* was chosen by Victor Gollancz as the very first title for his new imprint, launched in 1928; he told Susan Glaspell, 'I would sooner have *Brook Evans* than any of the other publications which I have in mind.'

'A Different World'

Jim Barnett held the apartment door open with his feet while he took the key out of the lock and dropped it into his pocket. Then he stepped inside and let the door slam behind him. 'Hi!' he said. 'Anybody home?' There was no answer, and in a way he hadn't expected any; from where he stood in the little entrance hall he could see into the living room, with its white painted walls and carefully placed furniture and the chill end-of-the-afternoon light coming in from the two windows, and the very air of the place seemed empty. It was Della's day off, he remembered; probably Helen had Jamie out in the Park, or somewhere. Jim was a young man, under thirty, with a bony, brown, handsome face, dark eyes, and a wide mouth beneath a small black moustache. He had on a grey overcoat and a carelessly crumpled felt hat, and he had a brown paper parcel, wrapped tightly enough to define the shape of two bottles, under his arm.

He put the parcel down on the telephone table in the hall and walked into the living room. The doors of both bedrooms were standing open and – not that he expected to find any notes propped on dressing tables or anything; that would have been silly – he walked past each and looked in. His and Helen's was neat as usual, the bed made up, his pyjamas put away, the counterpane drawn into place. Jamie's was the customary jumble: toys, picture books, games and fragments of games overflowing the big catchall box in the corner; a scooter propped against a chair; and, spread out on the play table, a half-dozen cardboard rectangles of the kind they used to keep shirts in shape, all of these now covered with scrawls of coloured crayon. He stood looking at it a moment. 'A different world,' he said, for some reason aloud. 'Well, the laundry came anyway, I see.' He turned back to the living room.

With no one in it and no noise or voices stirring, it looked bare. The morning's *Times* lay folded on one end of the sofa, and bunched on the seat of the easy chair in the window corner were three or four pairs of silk stockings rolled up in balls. Helen's wooden workbasket, that was shaped like a Shaker cradle and that she'd had for God knows how many years – long before she'd had him, anyway – was standing on the floor beside the chair. He picked up one of the stocking balls and looked at it. It was rolled so that all you saw was the hem, doubled back in a kind of bag in which the rest of the stocking lay bunched, and the top of the bag was loose and wrinkly; he couldn't help thinking how hum-drum and unattractive the thing looked compared to the way a stocking looked on a woman's leg.

If Helen ever really left, he thought, it wouldn't be without her workbasket. He tossed the ball back onto the chair, aiming for the others in the group and overshooting a little. He went to the hall and, taking off his overcoat and hat, hung them in the closet, then walked into the kitchen, picking up the parcel and unwrapping it as he went. It contained two bottles of rye. He opened one, got some ice from the refrigerator and the bottle of Italian vermouth from the liquor shelf, and mixed himself a Manhattan. Then he went into the living room and, pushing the stockings to one side, sat down in the easy chair. He had hardly settled himself there before he heard the scrape of a key in the lock. It was Helen and Jamie; he could hear Jamie's high,

excited voice saying something and Helen replying, laughing, as she opened the door. Then they both came in.

They came in in a kind of tangle, Helen pulling at Jamie's toboggan cap and he squealing and trying to get past her, and at first they didn't notice the man in the chair. Then he said, 'Well, what ho!' and they both turned around.

'Oh, look, Mummy, look! Daddy's home!' Jamie shouted, and ran over to him. He was about five, with his mother's pale skin and bright-blue eyes, and he was holding something small and red in his hand and waving it. 'Daddy, look!' he said, but the man didn't pay much attention. He put his hand on the boy's head and rubbed it absently. He was looking at Helen. 'Sure, kiddo,' he said. 'Sure, sure.'

Helen hadn't moved. 'Jamie!' she said sharply, and stopped, and then for a second she didn't say anything. She had on her black caracul jacket and the little black matching fur hat, and her cheeks were flushed and fresh-looking from the cold air outside. She wasn't laughing now. Her face had gone set and expressionless, and after that first quick glance of surprise she hadn't really looked at him at all. 'Well,' she said finally. 'You're home early.'

He took a sip from his glass, his eyes watching her over the rim. 'You don't seem too pleased,' he said.

'About what?'

Jamie was leaning over the side of the chair, pulling at his father's sleeve. 'Daddy, look,' he kept saying. Jim stiffened his arm and held him away. 'Just a minute, kid. Don't spill my drink now,' he said. 'About my being home, of course.'

'Should I be?' she said coolly. She hung her things in the closet and shut the door. 'Jamie. Better take off your snow suit now. Before you get hot.'

'But Daddy hasn't looked yet.'

Helen sighed. 'It's that little dump truck he lost the other day in the Park. Another boy found it and gave it to him. You might look at it.'

Jim looked at it and then at the boy. Jamie was staring up at him with that clear, intent gaze a child's eyes can assume. 'It was Stevie Albright that found it,' he explained. He had captured his father's attention at last and he didn't want to relinquish it, but he felt the pull of his mother's command, too, and it made him talk faster and faster, his eyes wide and his voice excited. 'He found it in the sand pile where I losted it and he took it home and his mummy told him it was mine, so he brought it right back and he gave it to me. Today.'

'Well, well,' the man said.

Helen was standing by the couch. 'Jamie. Come,' she said.

This time he obeyed. He went over to the couch and climbed on it, dangling his legs so she could pull off his galoshes. 'It was Stevie Albright, Mummy,' he repeated.

'I know,' she said. He sat fingering the loose stuff of her dress at the shoulder and looking past her at his father. 'Wasn't Stevie nice to find my truck for me, Daddy?' he demanded.

'He sure was, kid.'

'I'll have to give *him* something next time, I guess.'

'I suppose you will.' The man got up and walked over to where Helen was kneeling in front of the couch. She didn't look around. 'I got some rye,' he said. 'Would you like a drink?'

'Not just now, thanks.'

He stood looking down at her. 'You still sore

about last night?' he asked.

'How did you think I would feel?'

A sort of stubborn look came over his face, but he kept his voice even. 'Because that's why I came home. I thought maybe the way we were talking last night – I mean I got to thinking about it. I really do feel lousy about the whole business, Helen. I wanted you to know that.'

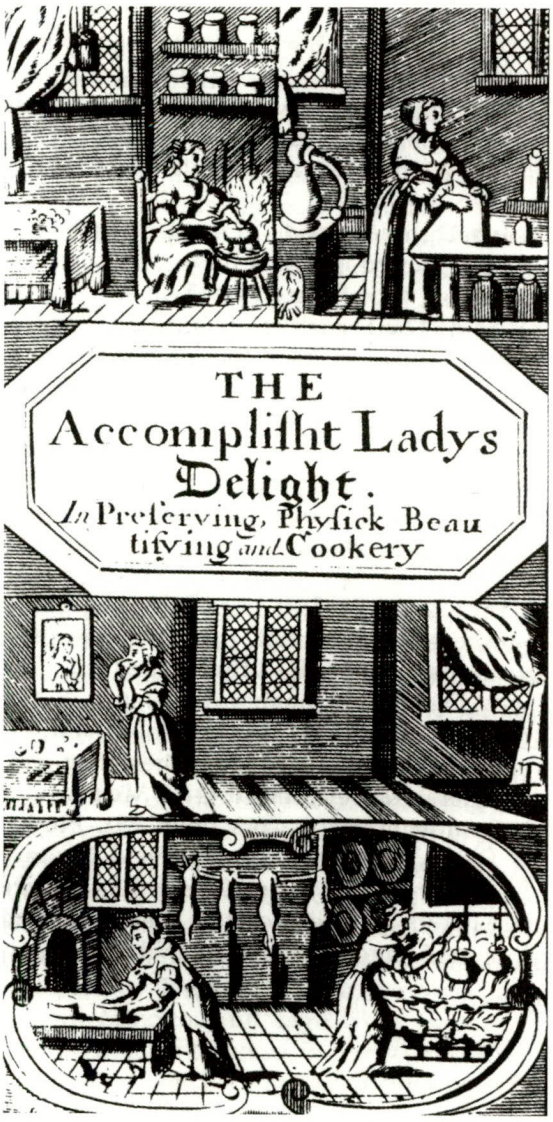
'Look,' she said. 'Let's just not talk now, shall we? While someone's here?'

Jim glanced at Jamie, and Jamie smiled. But his father's glance went right back to his mother's head again. His mother had her head bent down. 'I just wanted to say I was sorry, that's all,' his father said. 'There's no harm in anyone hearing that.'

'I suppose not. There's no harm in anyone hearing anything, I guess.'

Suddenly his father's face got dark red. 'Well, you'd rather hear about things like that than not be told anything, wouldn't you?' he demanded. 'God almighty! That's what we always agreed on anyway, isn't it? And then when I do tell you—'

'Please, for God's *sake*!' she cut in. 'I said not *talk* about it.' She pulled off Jamie's ski pants and then gave him a pat as he slid off the couch. 'Jamie, run into your room and play there, will you?' she said. Then she turned to face his father. 'And it's not what *I* hear that bothers me,' she went on. Her face had got white and her lips tight. 'It's what everybody else will hear. If you'd done it with some stranger, some woman you were never going to see again. But doing it with a woman we both know, and in such a way – so you'd disgrace me and her and everybody, as well as yourself. No. This time it's really too much. This is really the end.'



Frontispiece to The Accomplisht Lady's Delight (1677)

Jamie stood watching them both. He could tell by his father's expression that he was really angry, and though he couldn't see his mother's face now, he could tell by her voice that something was wrong with her too; her voice was so high and uneven that it sounded almost as if she were crying, and at the thought of that, though he had no idea what could be troubling her, such a feeling of insecurity and dread went through him that for a

moment he wanted to cry too. 'Mummy,' he started to say, but as soon as he spoke she turned on him, and he saw at least that she wasn't crying, her eyes were bright and hard. 'Jamie,' she said, in a strange, tense voice that he'd never heard her use before, 'I told you to go into your room.' His father didn't say anything; he just turned abruptly away and walked over to look out of the window.

'Can I take my truck too?' Jamie said.

'Yes, of course you can,' she said, and gave him a little push towards the door. As Jamie walked away he heard his father start back toward his mother. 'Now, listen,' his father said, but then they both went into the other bedroom, and when they got there they shut the door. He could still hear them talking, but he couldn't make out the words, and anyway he was forgetting about all that now; there was so much here that was interesting. He liked his room and everything in it, and the way things were scattered around represented no disorder to his mind; if you wanted something you picked it up, and if you tired of it you put it down, and if they all got mixed up, as they did in the box in the corner, it only meant more surprises later when you started digging among them. In that way every toy was almost a new toy every time you found it.

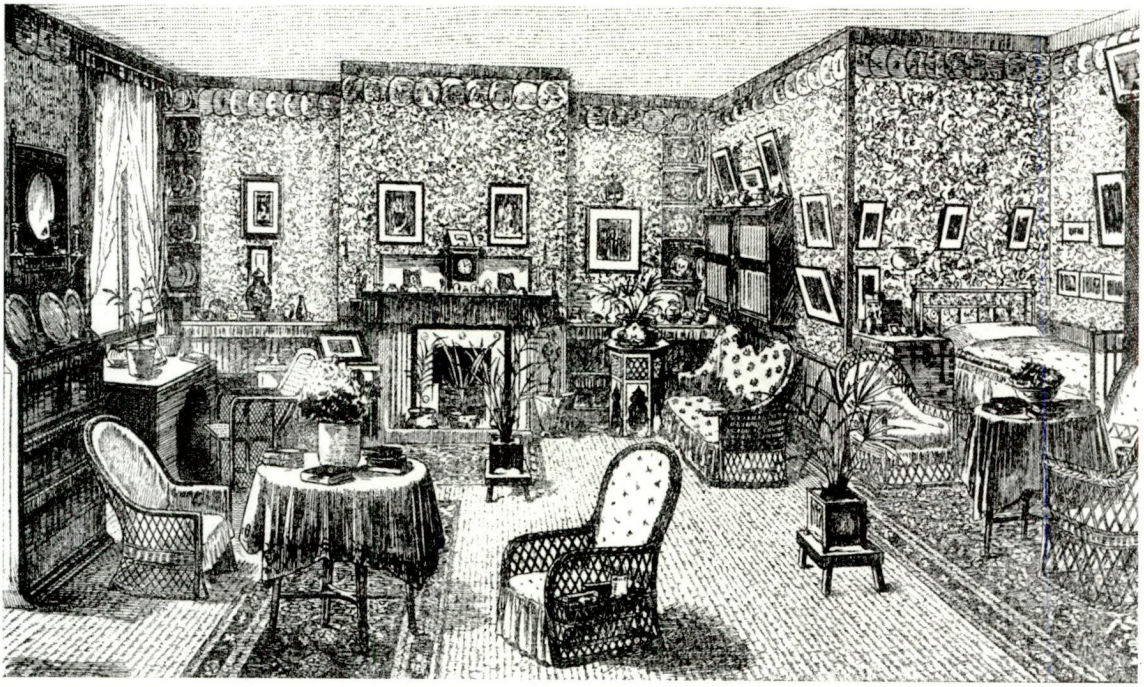
But now he wanted to do something with the dump truck, and after he had looked around for a moment he went over to the play table and pushed the shirt boards off onto the floor. This made the table a clean, level place where anything might happen, and he began pushing the dump truck tentatively around its edge. Gradually ideas occurred to him. It was a policeman's car that he was driving down a street past a great many stores, and at each store he had to stop and back the car into the curb and park it and buy things and load them in and then drive away again. There was a long scratch that had been made in the table top once long ago. Where it crossed the street it became a river, and that made it the river they had all crossed in the ferry, his mother and father and he, and he sitting on his mother's lap because the back was all loaded down with suitcases and bundles.

That was when they had gone to the beach last summer. He drove on and when he reached the beach the car became a dump truck again, because a dump truck goes where they have a lot of sand. He raised his head suddenly. He was wondering why it was that, all through last summer, he had never once seen a dump truck coming to the beach for sand, and he almost started into the other room to ask someone, his mother or his father, why that was.

But just as he was almost going to do so, the door of their bedroom slammed and his father walked rapidly across the living room, and then he heard him yank at the clothes closet and the outer door slammed too. He sat for a moment, thinking. It had struck him that maybe the trucks only came to the beach at night, when no people were there, and in that case he'd have to have headlights and this truck didn't have any headlights. But then he began to forget about the sand problem and he went back to pushing the toy around again. It could just as well not be the beach at all. It could be that place up the street where they had torn the building down and all the steam shovels were working. There were plenty of trucks around there.

Our Spring Fabrics

Reuben Sachs (1888) by Amy Levy is a novel on the inevitable but sad theme of marriage as a financial and social construct - Judith Quixano is in love with Reuben Sachs but has no dowry, and he needs to marry money in order to get into politics. The 1888 cotton velveteen used on the endpaper is called Orange Blossom, the flower traditionally carried by a bride. It was designed by Lewis Foreman Day (1845-1910), who was also the author of many books on the history of design and aesthetics; and is thought to have been printed by the leading Staffordshire manufacturer, Thomas Wardle and Co. The fabric might have been used for drapes, curtains or to cover a table; because cotton velveteen is a heavyweight fabric and the background is quite sombre, we can guess that it was meant for winter curtains or drapes; whereas the 'boudoir' below, although sketched in the same year, has summer-weight curtains and furniture covers.



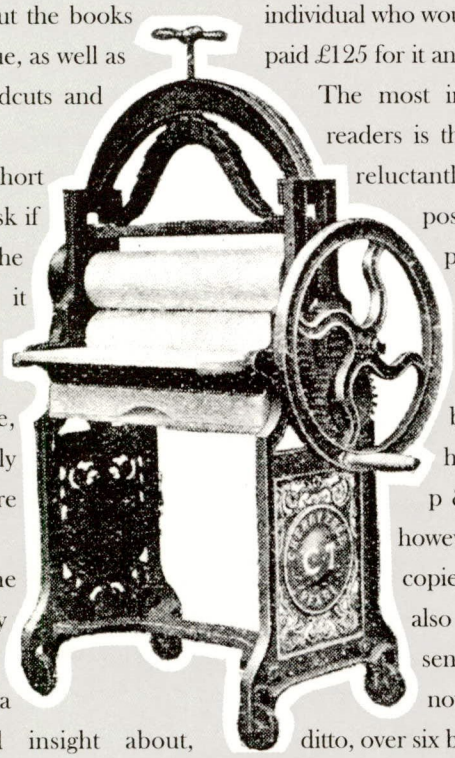
'Boudoir-Bedroom', illustrating 'The Girl's Room', Chapter VI of Nooks and Corners by Mrs Patton (1889) p. 121

The fabric used for Richmal Crompton's ***Family Roundabout*** (1948) is an example of the 'peasant-art' style, popular in the 1940s, and of the revival of figurative woven fabrics; the pink had been a much-used colour since the 1920s (other favourite colours at this period were black, brown-black, bright yellow and an orangey-pink). 'Roundabout', a cotton and rayon tissue, was designed by Warner's staff designer Albert Swindells in 1946, when the book was being written. Mrs Fowler loves her 'faded cretonnes and threadbare damask'; but might have had 'Roundabout' for new curtains.

Finally

This *PQ* is the first since we published our extremely successful Catalogue No. 1 last November – if you do not have one of these, or would like another, please let us know. And do consider buying past *PQ*s for £1 each: they contain a great deal of information about the books that would not fit in the Catalogue, as well as articles of related interest, woodcuts and extracts from Prefaces.

Recent issues also have a short story, and people occasionally ask if it relates directly to one of the books on our list: sometimes it does, for example we published stories by Dorothy Canfield Fisher and Dorothy Whipple, and sometimes the story is merely a stunning example of the genre (as is this quarter's).



The first two Persephone Teas were extremely memorable, Paul Binding and Penelope Hands speaking for a few minutes with wit and insight about, respectively, ***Fidelity*** and ***Someone at a Distance***, before initiating an excellent discussion about each book. We have not given dates for more Teas because, after many months of trying to decide whether to leave our lovely office and, Persephone-like, come up into the light, the decision has been made for us: our building is almost certainly to become part of the Clerkenwell boom and our basement will probably become a restaurant or bar or night club. (Cf. the article in *PQ* No. 5 about our Clerkenwell life.) Since we do not yet know exactly when we will move, or where to, we cannot give a definite date for the next Tea.

When we move, there may be no room for the mangle (pictured), in which case we would like it to go to 'a good home'. If there is a museum or private individual who would like it please let us know – we paid £125 for it and, as they say, 'buyer collects'.

The most important change to affect our readers is that, after two years, we are very reluctantly having to change our free postage policy. Last April, postage prices went up, and recently printing prices increased by a quarter. Rather than changing the £10 price with which we have become so much identified, we have decided we must add £1 p & p to every book; postage will, however, continue to be free for six copies and over. (Prices abroad will also go up by £1 which means that sending a book airmail to Europe is now £12, and to America £14; but, ditto, over six books the extra £1 will be waived.)

Help in the office: if you have a free day in mid-June and would like to help with the mailing of what is by now over 6000 *PQ*s, do please give us a ring. Payment is in the form of Persephone books, lunch and (for those outside London) the train fare; and everyone seems to enjoy it.

Lastly: our Christmas bestseller, ***Miss Pettigrew Lives for a Day*** by Winifred Watson, is to be read on Radio 4 from April 2nd-6th at 3.30. The reader will be Maureen Lipman (who chose it as one of her books of the year in the *Guardian*).

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If we have failed to acknowledge something that appears in The Persephone Quarterly, please let us know.

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