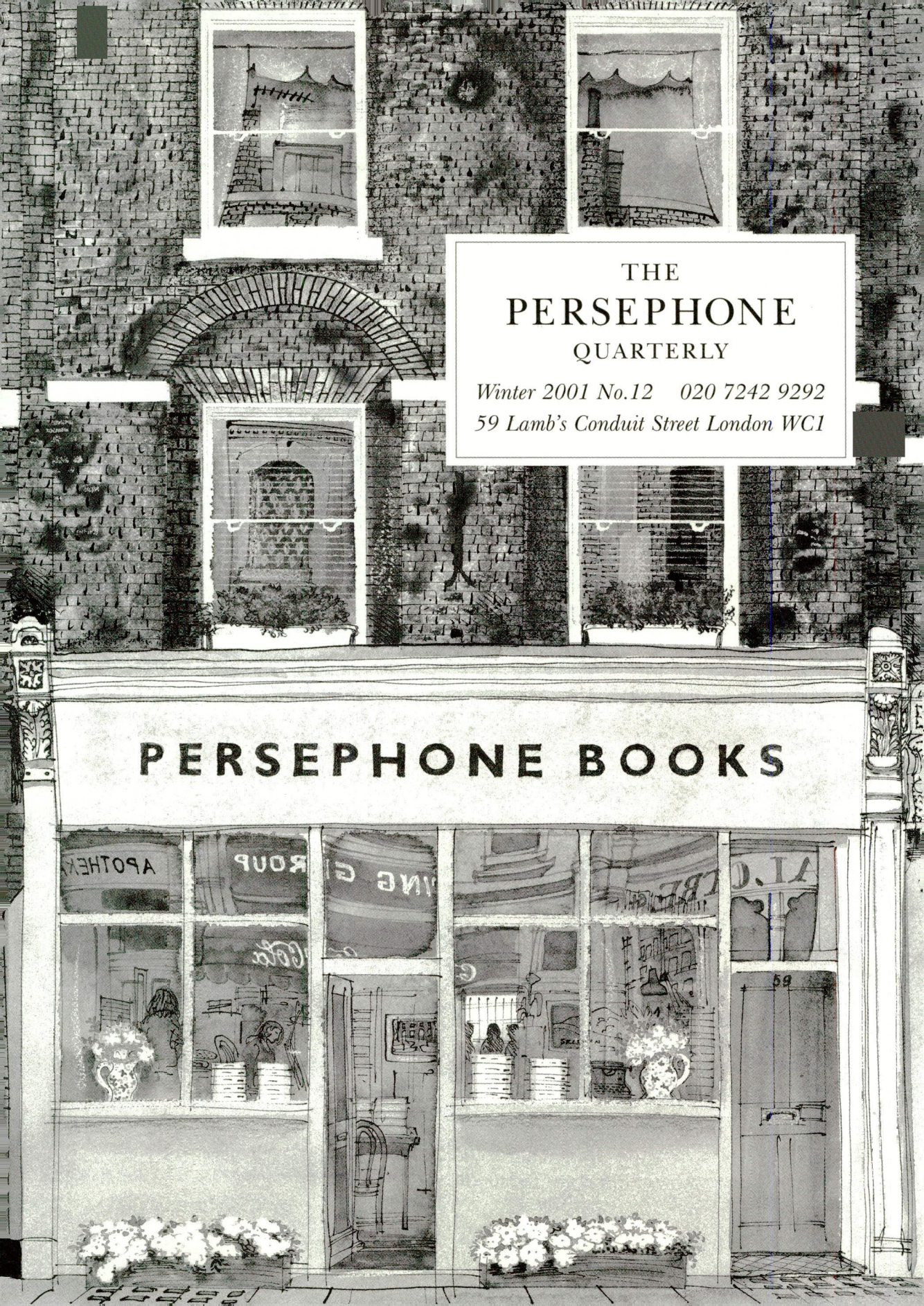
THE
PERSEPHONE
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Winter 2001 No.12 020 7242 9292
59 Lamb's Conduit Street London WC1
PERSEPHONE BOOKS

Our Winter 2001 Books

The Making of a Marchioness (1901) by Frances Hodgson Burnett was one of Nancy Mitford's favourite books. In *The Pursuit of Love* Linda, who works in the Red bookshop, removes *Karl Marx, the Formative Years* from the shop window and substitutes ***The Making of a Marchioness***; in the recent BBC adaptation of both books as *Love in a Cold Climate* by Deborah Moggach, one of Linda's friends exclaims delightedly: '"Oh, I have been looking for a copy of that for ages."'

'"On Thursday I went to Oxford again,"' declares Fanny in *Love in a Cold Climate*, '"and this time he proposed to me and look – " I said, showing a pretty old ring, a garnet set in diamonds. "Don't say he had it on him like in *The Making of a Marchioness*," said Polly. "Just like, except that it's not a ruby." "Quite the size of a pigeon's egg though. You are lucky. . ."'

Lady Agatha Slade, US edition 1901

Marchioness was written in London in two weeks early in 1901, fifteen years after *Little Lord Fauntleroy* and ten years before *The Secret Garden*. In the spring of the same year its sequel, *The Methods of Lady Walderhurst*, was written; both appeared in America as *Emily Fox-Seton* but here as ***Marchioness***. Like Miss Pettigrew in ***Miss Pettigrew Lives for a Day***, its heroine 'is a sort of Cinderella,' wrote Frances Hodgson Burnett to her publisher, 'a solid, kind, unselfish creature who arrives at a good fortune almost comic because it is in a sense so incongruous.' Emily Fox-Seton never imagines her life will change: she is quite content living in a bedsitting room in Mortimer Street in Marylebone and supporting herself. '"It is her fate to be a woman who is perfectly well born, and who is as penniless as a charwoman, and works like one. She is at the beck and call of any one who will give her an odd job to earn a meal with. That is one of the new ways women have found of making a living."' She is contrasted with a society beauty, Lady Agatha Slade, who is also poor but can do nothing but wait for a husband. '"She has had the advertising of the illustrated papers this season, and she has gone well. But she has not had any special offer, and I know she and her mother are a little frightened."'

The book's comments on the institution of marriage make this a 'cruel revelation of the nature of Edwardian high society' wrote Marghanita Laski in 1966; and because of its theme she deemed it 'the best novel Mrs Hodgson Burnett wrote, and good at the level she intended, that of the fairy

Cover: Painting of 59 Lamb's Conduit Street
© David Gentleman 2001

story diluted with unromantic realism. But it is, in today's light, a more interesting novel than she could have known it would become, for she could never have supposed its realism to be as harsh as we now perceive it to be.' It is this realism, and the grippingly readable domestic melodrama of the second part, that makes the book so entertaining and interesting for modern readers.

Unfortunately, some of the references to the ayah, Ameerah, so typical of the period, now seem politically incorrect; however, as Isabel Raphael, writer of the Preface, points out, Emily dismisses these as ill-educated prejudice. We reproduce here a photograph of a home for ayahs, set up 'to accommodate Indian women employed to look after the children of English families in India, for whom on visits back to England there was apparently no room in the homes of their employers.'

The Making of a Marchioness does not only resemble ***Miss Pettigrew*** thematically; it is also an extraordinarily good read and therefore ideal as a present. As well as a Preface, it has an Afterword by Gretchen Gerzina, author of a biography of the painter Carrington, who is now working on Frances Hodgson Burnett (the first biography, still in print, was written by Ann Thwaite in 1974). Always better known in America than here, ***Marchioness*** is taught on college courses (presumably from photocopies, since no copy is in print) alongside *Pride and Prejudice*, *Jane Eyre*, *Daisy Miller*, *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, *Lolita* and *The English Patient*; now British readers can discover why it should be read in the context of these great classics.

Persephone Book No. 30 is ***Kitchen Essays*** by Agnes Jekyll, sister-in-law to the great Gertrude. Agnes was the daughter of William Graham, a Liberal MP and friend of the pre-Raphaelites; when she married Herbert Jekyll, the guests at her first dinner party included Browning, Ruskin and Burne-Jones. The couple lived partly in London and partly at Munstead House near Godalming in Surrey, which had been built by the Jekyll family in 1878. Even before the death of her mother-in-law, and before Gertrude's move to the famous Munstead Wood (designed by Lutyens in the late 1890s), Agnes was much admired for her hospitality. 'Munstead House,' wrote Mary Lutyens, was 'the apogee of opulent comfort and order without grandeur, smelling of pot-pourri, furniture polish and wood smoke'; and Gertrude Jekyll's biographer commented that if she 'was an artist-gardener, then Agnes was an artist-housekeeper.'

Ayahs outside the Ayahs' Home , 26 King Edward's Road, Hackney, c.1910
© Hackney and Stoke Newington Past by Isobel Watson (1990) p. 59

In 1921 Agnes was persuaded to write cookery articles for *The Times* and the recipes she included were the first it had ever printed. One thinks of Forster's Lucy Honeychurch, who is praised because, after Italy, 'she is not always quoting servants or asking one how the pudding is made' - 1908 *Times* readers were not supposed to need or to want recipes. But by 1921 this had changed and Lady Jekyll (who had also by now become Dame Agnes Jekyll because of her services to charity) could publish her well-tried recipes (albeit presented *en croute* within an essay format). Her pieces were unsigned, but the tone implied that servants did most of the hard work; it would be another two decades before books like *How to Run your Home without Help* became necessary reading for almost everyone.

On Saturdays during the autumn and winter of 1921 (exactly eighty years ago, the same winter that Katherine Mansfield was in Switzerland writing ***The Montana Stories***) Agnes Jekyll published her essays, and in 1922 they were collected together as a book, with the rather beautiful and simple title of ***Kitchen Essays***. Among them were 'A Little Supper after the Play', 'Christmas Cheer', 'Country Friends to a Christmas Shopping Luncheon', 'Food for Artists and Speakers' and 'For the Too Thin'. The pieces are timeless in their tone and wit; they are about urban living, yet have an aura of the country; and cooks and non-cooks alike will enjoy this 1920s version of How to be a Domestic Goddess. 'Exquisitely reprinted . . . priceless' (BBC *Good Food* magazine).

'Persephone Books deserves sainthood for republishing ***Kitchen Essays***' wrote the *Church Times* very flatteringly, having seen an advance copy, 'wit, culinary wisdom and social history. . . "Luncheon for a Motor Excursion in Winter" and "Hints for Holiday Housekeeping" have some oddly contemporary-sounding remarks about dreadful roadside catering, and the impossibility of finding good country food in the country. You can imagine Agnes enjoying her picnic alfresco, wrapped in furs and committing the 21st century sins of drinking (mulled wine) while driving, and picking a few wild flowers.' And 'lastly the cup of hot coffee tasting as good out of the Thermos as tea tastes nasty.'

Munstead House, Surrey in 1934, the south front, where Agnes Jekyll wrote Kitchen Essays during the winter of 1921-2, taken from Gertrude Jekyll at Munstead Wood by J.B Tankard and M.A. Wood (Sutton Publishing, 1996) p28, © SE Schnare

Our Readers Write

'More Dorothy Canfield Fisher please - if at all possible! Have just finished reading ***The Home-Maker*** in two sittings. It is brilliant - very moving and insightful and astonishingly modern in its concerns. . . . Particularly moved by the character of Lester Knapp, esp. Chapters 4 and 5 - a new man well before his time.' SG, Woodford Green

'I read the Berridge, Panter-Downes and Hodgson as a trio. I was so 'relieved' to finish Hodgson; the grimness of London during the war was too much for me at times, but then I missed her and her friends so much afterwards. . . I am sauntering, not rushing, through ***Mariana***. I smiled a lot when reading ***Miss Pettigrew*** but I am laughing out loud during ***Mariana***.' FMcM, New York

'[It is] one of the most charming and funniest books I have ever read. Dear Miss Pettigrew - and her beau at the end.' Philip Howard, London W11

'Thank you so much for the lovely book (***Little Boy Lost***). I read it years ago (it's marvellous) and Marghanita Laski once took me to the opera.' Beryl Bainbridge, London NW1

'I have just finished ***Little Boy Lost*** and had to tell you how much I loved it. As promised in the PQ, once started I couldn't put it down, so well-written, so unsentimental yet very moving. The characters were beautifully drawn: Hilary's determination to stay aloof and 'safe' from emotion, little Jean's need for love, yet he had such dignity and compassion . . .' LB, Australia

'The books you publish by Noel Streatfeild and EM Delafield add so much to their more well-known works; ***Saplings***, for example, is life without the sharp ends rounded. . .' CC, Oxford

'I loved ***The Home-Maker*** but disagree with the reader in the last issue who thought that the psychological effects on the children were not emphasised enough - I'm sure DCF knew exactly why the children were ill and gave her audience the credit of working it out themselves.' JT, Hatfield

'Have just read ***Brook Evans***; what an amazing book, brilliantly formed, incredibly moving and beautifully written, I think my favourite so far, I couldn't sleep or read anything else after I had finished it, just lay there with the book on my chest feeling a bit stunned. I think I'm going to choose it as my next reading group choice.' SH, London N4

'I fully endorse the comments in the *PQ* about ***Brook Evans*** being a classic -how *did* it ever go out of print? ***The Children Who Lived in a Barn*** is not a true *classic* since it lacks the psychological realism of the really great children's books. But it has an infectious delight in 'coping on your own' - amazing how it makes a housewife's lot so compelling; where it falls down is in the depiction of the adults. Jacqueline Wilson's preface v. good.' RH, Coventry

'I am so touched by this ravishing, ravishing book [***The Children Who Lived in a Barn***]. It is so beautifully produced, the endpapers are simply ravishing and it has such a lovely little book mark; and such lovely illustrations.' Jilly Cooper, Stroud.

'I loved all the *William* books when I was young and still dip into them from time to time, but ***Family Roundabout*** was a revelation.' PL, Bath

'I had to write to tell you how much I loved reading ***The Home-Maker***. I was astonished at the acute angle of vision and the fullness of sympathy, toward both men and women - and children! I confess I had never heard of Dorothy Canfield Fisher; now I must find out more.' Carol Shields, Canada

From Some Recent Reviews

Nicholas Lezard chose ***Little Boy Lost*** as his 'Pick of the Week' in *The Guardian*. 'When I picked up this reprint of Marghanita Laski's 1949 novel I offered it the tenderly indulgent regard I would any period piece. As it turned out, the book survives perfectly well on its own merits – although it nearly finished me. If you like a novel that expertly puts you through the wringer, this is the one.' (His review is reprinted in full in the *Supplement* to the *Persephone Catalogue*.)

In *The Tablet*'s 'Back in the Bookshops' column Elizabeth Berridge wrote: 'Steering determinedly away from sentimentality, Marghanita Laski reveals a sensibility that places ***Little Boy Lost*** in a class of its own. . .The ending is, as Anne Sebba writes in her admirable Afterword, one of the most poignant in twentieth-century fiction. Re-reading this novel some fifty years later, I am struck by its timelessness.' In *Myslexia* Nina Bawden described the 'splendid' ***Little Boy Lost*** as being 'ahead of its time' and praised its 'poignant depth of feeling'.

'"Lost" gem still dazzles' headlined a review in the *Jewish Chronicle* of ***Little Boy Lost***. Jonathan Self admitted he was prejudiced against publishers who repackage so-called classics, 'associating its author (unfairly) with my parents' school of wishy-washy, Hampstead liberalism – which I considered to be long on ideals and short on realism.' After ten minutes, however, 'I read a sentence of such poignancy that I found myself weeping, and I was able to finish the book only with the aid of a substantial box of Kleenex and many comforting cups of tea. ***Little Boy Lost*** is a gem. At its most obvious level, it is an emotional thriller: a literary, early-post-war version, if you will, of Tony Parsons's *Man and Boy*. . . Persephone is to be commended on reissuing this wonderful book and on producing such an exceptionally handsome edition.'

In the light of the events of September 11th the *Tallahassee Democrat Review* ran a review of ***Few Eggs and No Oranges***, calling it 'a classic book that still rings vibrant and helpful today. . . a poignant, honest, frightening, yet heartwarming record of one articulate woman's pragmatic coping with war. . . her book is a testament to the resilience of the British and a reminder of the unimaginable hardship they endured for half a decade.'

'Persephone Books has managed to resuscitate yet another charming classic that has mysteriously fallen out of print,' wrote Georgia Metcalfe in her review in the *Daily Mail*. '***The Children Who Lived in a Barn*** was a favourite book of Jacqueline Wilson, Britain's best-selling children's author after JK Rowling. [For today's adult readers] she has written a superb new introduction to the 1930s story of five children who have to fend for themselves when their parents mysteriously disappear . . . This is a delightful book by Eleanor Graham, the Puffin publishing supremo who brought *The Secret Garden* and *Ballet Shoes* to the nation's children.'

The *Bookseller* magazine runs a column called 'Booksellers' Choice' in which ***The Making of a Marchioness*** was chosen by two members of its panel. Waterstone's was racily enthusiastic; and the Books Etc reviewer wrote: 'Not only is this a delightful novel, but the production of the book is beautiful, right down to the endpapers and page headers. A sparky sense of humour combined with lively social commentary make this a joy to read and a beautiful item to treasure.'

Our Winter Fabrics

The fabric for ***The Making of a Marchioness*** is a 1901 figured cotton which is in the Victoria and Albert Museum archive but with no details attached. We chose it because it is simple, cheerful, and beautiful without being oppressive - it has a twentieth-century charm quite different from the heaviness of conventional Victorian fabrics. 'Tulips' might have been picked by Emily Fox-Seton (although not on her first visit to Mallowe Court since this was in early August). Later, when her life changed, she might have chosen the material as furnishing fabric.

The endpaper for ***Kitchen Essays*** was being sold at the time Agnes Jekyll was writing her pieces for *The Times*. 'Clusters of stylised fruits, flowers and shell motifs' was a 1922 design for Seftons of Belfast by the painter and theatrical designer George Sheringham. It is an interestingly domestic design which hints both at the traditionally pastoral and at 1920s abstracts. Agnes Jekyll herself might have preferred an art nouveau fabric, but the modern tone of ***Kitchen Essays*** makes it an appropriate choice: the colours are very 2001.

Spring 2002 Books

We publish our first and, in all likelihood, only novel in verse in March 2002. Instances of narrative verse in Western literature range from Byron's *Don Juan* to Vikram Seth's *The Golden Gate*; but there is little by a woman.

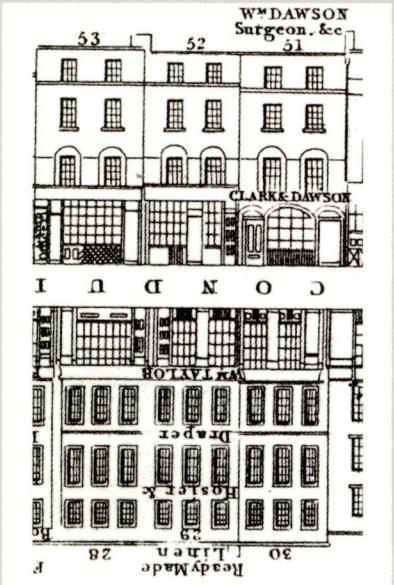
Lettice Delmer (1958) by Susan Miles is a short book that will stay in the reader's mind for ever. Beginning in a comfortable villa in Highgate during the First World War, when Lettice is perhaps 18, and ending about fifteen years later, it describes the Delmer family, Lettice's spiritual journey, life in England at the time. It is funny, tragic and utterly absorbing; we cannot recommend it highly enough.

The author wrote under a pseudonym, her real name being Ursula Roberts (née Wyllie); she was the wife of the vicar of Christ Church, Woburn Square, Bloomsbury and wrote poems and non-fiction - but nothing as memorable and ahead of its time as ***Lettice Delmer***.

Our other spring book is ***A House in the Country*** (1944) by Jocelyn Playfair. It used to be said that women did not have time to write during the war, but Jenny Hartley's book about 1940s literature by women dispelled this myth; and we have published books by Etty Hillesum, Vere Hodgson, Mollie Panter-Downes, Virginia Graham and Elizabeth Berridge. This, however, is our first novel (could it be that the difficulties of life at the time made short stories and poems an easier format?) The author, a woman with two sons who was forty in 1944, wrote ten novels between 1939 and 1952 and then, like Winifred Watson, stopped writing. This, in our view, is the best of her books, a beautifully written description of Cressida's wartime life in Brede, a large, run-down house in the English countryside where lodgers, friends and relations gather around her, mostly in the kitchen and next to the Aga - but the war changes their lives, and outlook, for ever.

Finally. . .

Since the last issue of the *PQ* we have become a 'very-happening' publisher. The *Evening Standard's ES Magazine* wrote: 'Nowhere has benefited more from the rediscovery of WC1 than Lamb's Conduit Street, recently highlighted in *Vogue* as one of London's trendiest. In fact, you could argue it is the trendiest. The street is home to very-happening publisher Persephone Books, a cool optician's, and a dentist with abstracts on the wall; there is also Cigala, a stylishly sparse Spanish restaurant, The Perseverance, a highly rated gastro-pub, Vats, a wine bar that seems almost Parisian, and The Lamb, boasting arguably the most-unwrecked Victorian bar in London. Dickens drank here, so did Ted Hughes – apparently much to Sylvia Plath's irritation [they lived round the corner at 18 Rugby Street]. Lamb's Conduit Street has it all, and the only bad news is that its name is already being funkily truncated to LCS.'



Tallis's map of LCS, 1840

Another reason for visiting our street is the historical aspect. We wrote about this in the last *PQ*, but have now discovered that until the 1870s we were No. 52 not 59: in Tallis's 1840 *London Street Views* our shop was Benham, Grocer & Tea Dealer, opposite Taylor, Hosier & Draper. By the 1860s, 52 had become William Glaisher, Bookseller and by the 1870s John Woodgate, Cheesemonger.

With this *PQ* we enclose the *Supplement* to the *Persephone Catalogue No.1* **or** the *Catalogue No.2*.

We are open from 9-6 every day except Sunday (Saturday 10-5) at: **59 Lamb's Conduit Street, off Gt. Ormond St., WC1N 3NB tel. 0207 242 9292** Although the majority of our books are sold by mail order, a quarter are now sold here or in other book-shops. We stock all our titles (wrapped for £2 extra or £5 for three). Car drivers may stop briefly to pick up a book; but there is parking nearby, numerous buses and Russell Square and Holborn stations not far. We will be open normally in December, up to and including Christmas Eve. **Please note that, due to rising costs, three books are now £27 plus £3 postage.**

Persephone Lunches: November 13th, Ann Thwaite on ***The Making of a Marchioness***; December 13th, the first Persephone Film screening, *They Knew Mr. Knight* (1945); January 16th, Susan Hill on ***The Victorian Chaise-longue*** and her own *The Woman in Black*; February 14th, Pamela Norris on Persephone books and Romantic Love (the subject of her next book); March 14th, Angela Huth on Persephone books about WWII and her own *Land Girls*; April 23rd, Maureen Lipman on ***Miss Pettigrew*** and her other favourite Persephone books; May 16th, Claire Tomalin on Pepys, the subject of her new book, and Katherine Mansfield (the link is London and in particular this part of Bloomsbury). All lunches cost £25, to include an excellent buffet lunch and wine, and last from 12.30-2.30; please telephone to reserve a place.

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