



The Persephone Biannually

N°3 Spring & Summer 2008

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'Seated Girl' oil on canvas by Rose Hilton 2002 in a private collection

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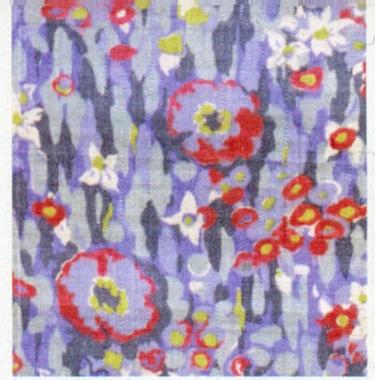
OUR SPRING & SUMMER 2008 BOOKS

The *Crowded Street* was dramatised as a serial on Radio 4 last August; it was such a success, and copies were so hard to find (the Virago 1981 edition being virtually unobtainable) that we thought we would reprint it and ask Winifred Holtby's biographer, Professor Marion Shaw, to write a new Preface. We are confident that Persephone readers will very much enjoy Winifred Holtby's excellent novel, which may not be as well known as the posthumous *South Riding* (1936), but it is in some respects much more interesting.

Winifred Holtby (1898-1935) has always meant something special for Persephone Books: when she and Vera Brittain came down from Oxford they shared a flat round the corner from Lamb's Conduit Street, in Doughty Street (where today there is a blue plaque commemorating both of them). They lived at No. 52 from December 1921 onwards and a year later moved to 58, a larger attic flat with 'shot blue and mauve cushions and blue Delft plates to put on the dark oak dresser'; it was a 'paradise' apart from the mice and stairs. Both were 22 and both were beginning their literary careers: Winifred

lectured at a school, read in the British Museum library and wrote *Anderby Wold* and then *The Crowded Street*, which came out in 1924, when she was 26.

Its theme is one that is familiar from other Persephone novels: it was then assumed that young women would stay at home while looking for a husband. If they failed to find one, and did not inherit money, they would have to be a governess (*Miss Pettigrew Lives for a Day*, *Alas, Poor Lady*), live in a hostel (*Lettice Delmer*), enter a convent (*Consequences*), or be lucky enough to find some other, unanticipated escape route ('After Tea' in *The Closed Door*). (And cf. the page about Virginia Nicholson's book *Singled Out* on p.25 of this *Biannually*.) In *The Crowded Street* Muriel, who believes that 'men do as they like' whereas women 'wait to see what they will do', lives in a town in Yorkshire waiting – for what? She tries to conform to the values of her snobbish, socially ambitious mother; she tries to be 'attractive' to men; eventually she is rescued, by her friend Delia, a young woman who is in some ways a portrait of Vera Brittain and who "happened to think that service of humanity was sometimes more



1920 printed silk dress fabric designed by George Sheringham for Seftons used for *The Crowded Street*



'Saraband' 1956, designed by R McGowan for Edinburgh Weavers used for *Daddy's Gone A-Hunting*

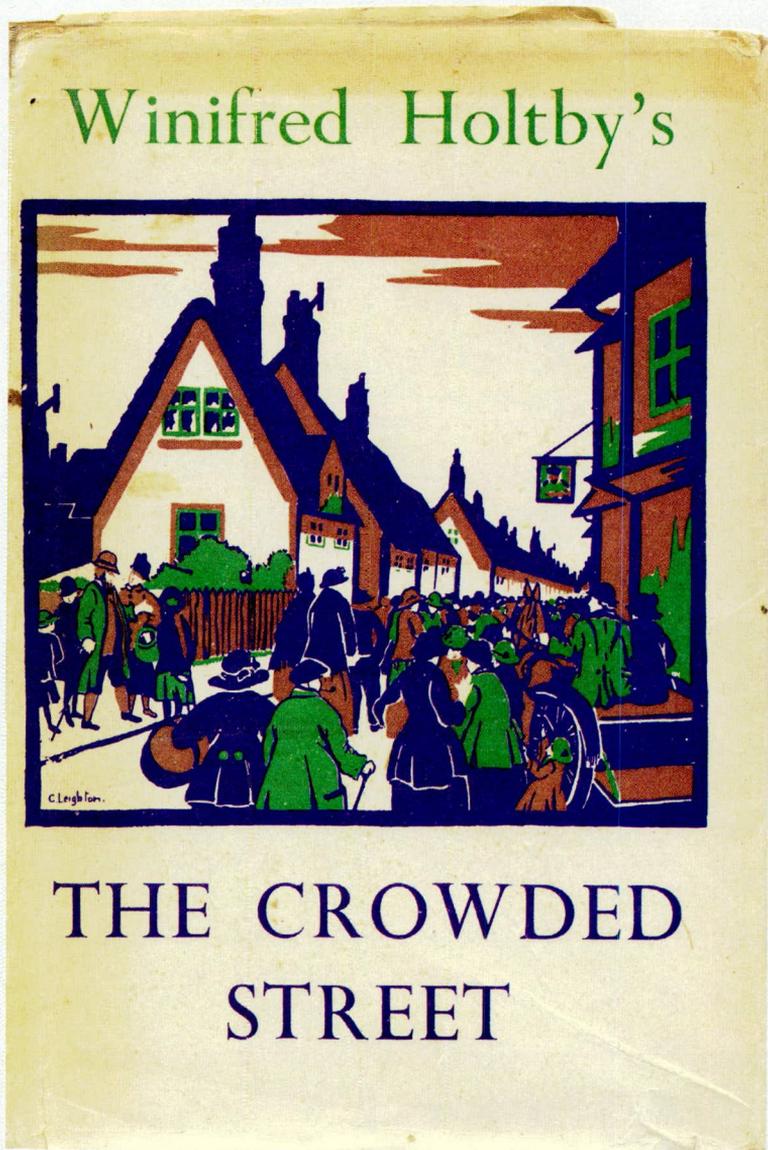


Celia Johnson in *Brief Encounter* holding the basket with her library books, from the 1995 cover for *A Very Great Profession*

important than respectability. I valued truth more highly than the conventional courtesies of a provincial town.'

Throughout the description of life in small-town 'Marshington', Winifred Holtby expressed her conviction that young women should be allowed to live away from home, to work, to develop as personalities away from their families, to shake off the ties that many mothers seemed to think it was their prerogative to impose on their daughters. For this reason this is also a novel about motherhood, but not the modern variety described in *Hostages to Fortune* or *Princes in the Land*, where the two mothers bravely and unselfishly accept that they must 'let go', but the Victorian variety where the mother believes it is her right to hold onto her daughter until or unless she has to relinquish her to a husband.

There are other themes, too, which make the novel fascinating: parts of it are set during the First World War (in 1918 Winifred had left Oxford to serve with the WAACs in France) and it was with first-hand knowledge of war that she spent much of her short life writing and lecturing about pacifism. Some of her preoccupations would reappear in Vera Brittain's *Testament of Youth* and can be seen in sketch form in *The Crowded Street*, for example Muriel's mother's impatience about the domestic difficulties caused by wartime would be echoed by Mrs



*The original 1924 jacket for *The Crowded Street* showing a village street populated entirely by women: a wood engraving by Claire Leighton, the sister of Vera Brittain's fiancé Roland who was killed in the war. Cf. also the Persephone Catalogue p.3.*

Brittain summoning her daughter home from the hospital where she was a VAD simply because she was without a maid. Then there are the pre-Cold *Comfort Farm* scenes: Muriel's sister's marries a farmer's son and lives in circumstances that would, perhaps,

contribute to Stella Gibbons's satirical gaze a few years hence.

Although Muriel goes away to school, most of the novel describes her life waiting for life to begin, waiting for a husband. *The Crowded Street* is thus about

the need to withstand the tyranny of “sex success. Turn and twist how you will, it comes to that in the end.” But it is also about the heroine’s obligation to her family and her wish to be of service to a larger community, a conflict that ran through so much of English fiction at this time (but does not nowadays, when the moral decision, if there is one, is *how* the heroine should find happiness rather than *if* she should). Looking back, Muriel says: “My head was full of dreams about love and service. I wanted to be wise and unselfish... I thought that Mother needed me.” But the book’s conclusion is that ‘the thing that matters is to take your life into your own hands and live it, accepting responsibility for failure or success. The really fatal thing to do is to let other people make your choices for you, and then to blame them if your schemes should fail and they despise you for the failure.’”

It is as a later, 1950s, variation on these conflicts that we publish Persephone Book No. 77, *Daddy’s Gone A-Hunting* (1958) by Penelope Mortimer. This has become less well-known than *The Pumpkin Eater* (1961), partly because the latter was made into a film with Anne Bancroft and Peter Finch (cf. p.19) yet arguably is a better novel: the writer of Penelope Mortimer’s *Dictionary of National Biography* entry calls it ‘magnificent’. Like *The Crowded Street*, *Daddy’s Gone A-Hunting* is about the expectations of women. This time it is about a housebound mother reluctantly (desperately) at home all day, in contrast to her daughter who has escaped, to university and then, we can assume, to a job. ‘The book came out at a time,’ writes Valerie Grove (author of the recently published *A Voyage Round John Mortimer*) in the Preface, ‘when the impact of the new wave of feminism, which would change everything under the banner of

women’s liberation, had not yet arrived’. And she quotes Betty Friedan in *The Feminine Mystique* (1963): ‘Each suburban wife struggled with it alone. As she made the beds, shopped for groceries, matched slipcover material, ate peanut butter sandwiches with her children, chauffeured Cub Scouts and Brownies, lay beside her husband at night, she was afraid to ask even of herself the silent question – “Is this all?”’

The plot is focused on Ruth Whiting, who has two small sons at boarding school, and a daughter at Oxford. She feels her life has no purpose: she is in fact the polar opposite of Ellen (‘that unfashionable creature, a happy housewife’) in the 1953 *Someone at a Distance*. In Ruth’s commuter-belt village ‘the wives conform to a certain standard of dress, they run their houses along the same lines, bring their children up in the same way; all prefer coffee to tea, all drive cars, play bridge, own at least one valuable piece of jewellery and are moderately good-looking.’ Yet Ruth is on the verge of going mad. A ‘nervous breakdown’ would be a politer phrase, but really she is being driven mad by her life and her madness is exacerbated by everyone’s indifference to her plight.

There is the most harrowing but subtle description of this process and then an equally harrowing insight into Ruth’s

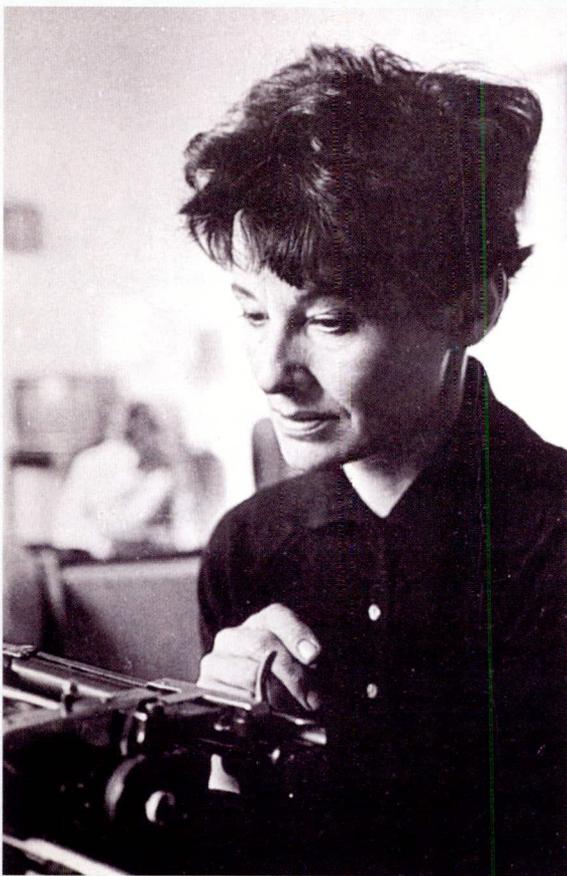


Somerville students 1917, Winifred Holtby is last on the right on the end of the first row

thoughts as, 'resting' in bed and being looked after by a nurse, the doctor tries to cheer her up by saying that there is Christmas to think about and plan for: 'Thinking. Planning. Preparing. Twelve times every year your body becomes elaborately prepared, for nothing. Living is a perpetual preparation for nothing. Stick flags in the bridge rolls, check the store cupboard, empty the ash-trays; have everything in order; have a manicure, send little messages over short distances by telephone. When you move there is a rustle of old shopping lists, like dead leaves; when you sit still there is the terror of time slipping away. You must get on. You run about inside the high walls. You prepare to prepare to prepare –'

A few years later Ruth Whiting's thoughts would be crucially encapsulated in Hannah Gavron's 1966 book *The Captive Wife: Conflicts of Housebound Mothers* (which, sadly, was published posthumously – the 29 year-old author had killed herself just after it was completed). Its conclusions were statistical rather than emotional, but telling nevertheless, for example that '68 per cent of the working-class wives who were at home would

have liked to have been working, as would 75 per cent of the middle-class wives who were not working.' For, although *Daddy's Gone A-Hunting* is at times excruciatingly funny in its caustic dissection of the people among whom the Whitings live, it is also



Penelope Mortimer: 'noticeable for her smouldering dark good looks and her penchant for wearing blue jeans and exotic black leather jackets, a cigarette dangling de rigueur from her lips' (DNB).

a profound study of female isolation. As the critic Judy Cooke has pointed out, Penelope Mortimer's novels were 'intense, imaginative explorations of an inner world. It is an enclosed world, dominated by fear, in which physical experiences such

as sterilisation and abortion isolate her characters from their fellow beings and are metaphors for a deeper spiritual isolation.'

The insights in *Daddy's Gone A-Hunting* are extraordinary given that Penelope Mortimer

herself was a successful writer, and as well as having six children she 'always had a function outside her domestic role; she had earnings of her own' (Valerie Grove) and was able to 'translate her turbulent marriage and motherly anxieties into novels and short stories.' Yet Penelope too suffered from serious depression and well understood Ruth's feelings. She wrote in her diary: 'We dream in the night like ravening beasts and wake up to moan and snap at our children and drink too much in the lonely evenings before the husbands come home like bailiffs, resented & resentful & unpaid.'

Many women's lives are like this. Awful, in the real sense of the word.

And at 38 the tolerable tropic is a long way off. Frustration is a greater poison than jealousy, which at least recognises the existence of someone else. It can, I suppose, on an empty summer evening, drive one mad. OK. Write it.' (In brackets she added, *Daddy's Gone A-Hunting*.)

The resulting book is not, however, depressing. It is at times sad about women's lives but overall is sociologically acute, historically interesting – and funny. It is also profound about motherhood, because what brings Ruth out of her depression is her daughter's need for her after she becomes pregnant by her undergraduate boyfriend (and makes a telling contrast with *The Crowded Street*, in which Muriel's sister is forced to marry the father of her child). Ironically, it is the process of procuring a termination for her daughter that makes Ruth feel valued at last as a mother. As Valerie Grove concludes, '*Daddy's Gone A-Hunting* sensitively and unerringly reflects the subtle dependencies and resentments underlying the mother-daughter relationship, the mother always fearful of saying the wrong thing, the daughter protected by her cool carapace, however lost and afraid she feels inside.'

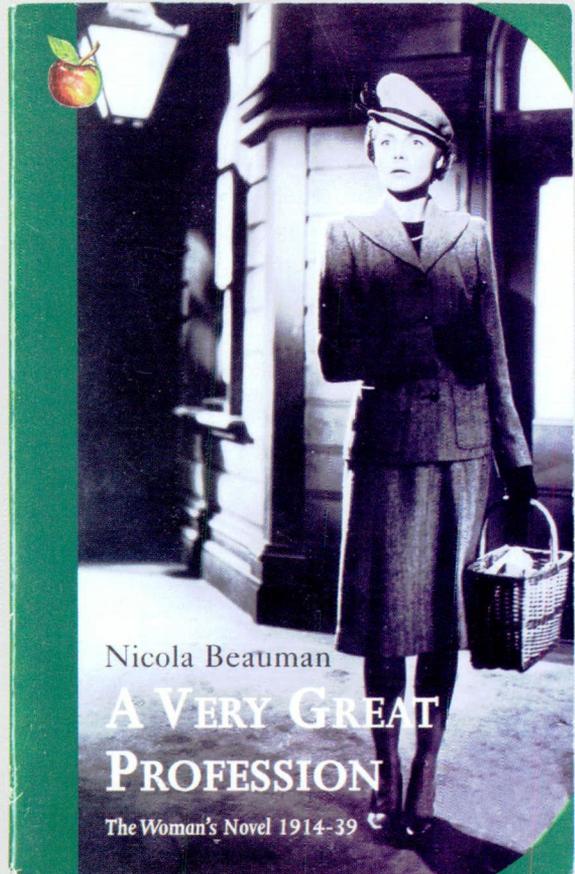
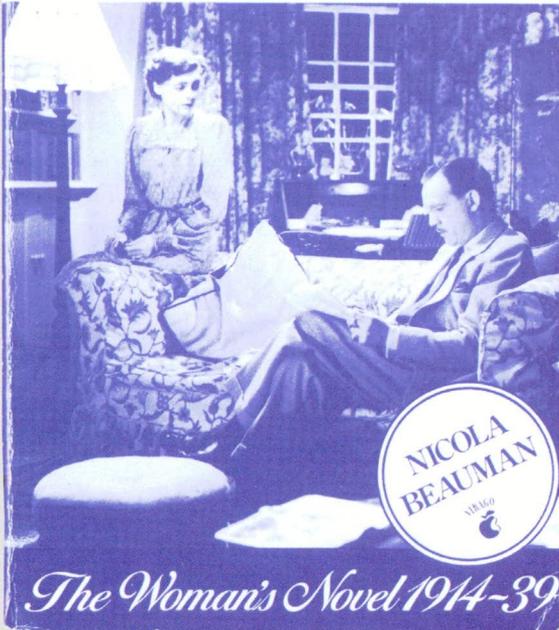
The third Persephone book for Spring & Summer 2008 is Nicola Beauman's *A Very Great Profession: The Woman's Novel 1914-39*. This is the twenty-fifth anniversary of its first publication by Virago in the spring of 1983; it was also reprinted in 1989 and in 1995 (with a different cover, cf. opposite). This is a difficult book for the writer of this *Biannually* to write about, since she and its author are one and the same person. She is

therefore going to take refuge in another critic, Elizabeth Young, who alas died in 2001, but during her last illness discovered Persephone Books. In 1989 she had written very positively about *A Very Great Profession* when it was first reprinted: 'This most welcome reissue must be one of the most compelling and perceptive books of informal literary criticism ever produced. Ranging through a variety of themes such as the Great War, the servant problem, psycho-analysis, sexuality and feminism, Nicola Beauman examines their effects upon the characters created by authors as diverse as Virginia Woolf, EM Delafield and Elinor Glyn. An astute critic, she produces an unforgettable picture of the lives of middle-class women during this period (inspired, she says, by *Brief Encounter*). Such is her genius for quotation that she invariably cites the most apposite excerpts from her texts, sparing one the necessity of reading the works of the more mediocre or, indeed, of ever facing Dorothy Richardson.' But it should be pointed out that although most of the reviews were kind, for example those by AS Byatt, Susan Hill, Molly Keane and Penelope Mortimer, some were not. Lorna Sage's review was apparently so hostile that the *Observer's* literary editor had to spike it. And the writer Patricia Craig concluded in the *New Statesman* that 'almost the only notable

detail contained in *A Very Great Profession* is the fact that EM Hull, author of *The Sheik*, was married to a pig-farmer and lived quietly in the country. But Mrs Beauman makes nothing of this.' We should also acknowledge that there will be many who heartily deplore Persephone republishing this book. 'I can't help but feel it is a little vainglorious an activity' wrote a blogger recently on a discussion group about 'the three new Persephones in April'. 'I do agree,' replied another; although she added kindly, 'perhaps readers have been asking for it?' (They have.)

Ten years after Elizabeth Young's 1989 review appeared, she published an article in the *New Statesman* headed: 'The long, slow demise of our literary culture. British fiction is moribund. Elizabeth Young administers the last rites.' In it she wrote that: 'In the past, somehow, whether by intuition, recommendation or constant experimentation, I always managed to find novels that could be treasured.' Now (although she names exceptions – Shena Mackay, Jane Gardam, Claire Boylan, Georgina Hammick –) she could no longer do so. On our yellowing copy of the article is written, 'Vicky – could you send her *Fidelity* and say that if she doesn't like modern fiction she will anyway love this!' Vicky (Heath, who now has two small children and will soon be work-

A VERY GREAT PROFESSION



ing part-time in our new shop) did so and received a three-page reply in which Elizabeth Young said that she was very interested to receive a novel by the author of 'A Jury of Her Peers', that she had worn out her copy of *A Very Great Profession* and had to buy another, and then said most intriguingly: 'I have discovered, I think, what irks me about very contemporary fiction. There is no sub-textuality.' She went on to write with acute insight about *Fidelity*, ending, 'of course I love it!' and that 'I would like to write what Sherlock Holmes called "a short monograph" at some point about it.' Alas she was never able to do so; nor did she live to see

the publication of her 2001 book, *Pandora's Handbag* (in which she told the story of Vicky writing to her) or to see herself called 'without doubt, the most original critic of her generation' by a contemporary writer.

'*A Very Great Profession* was conceived when I first saw the film of *Brief Encounter* on television' (the book begins). 'In it the heroine, Laura Jesson, goes into the local town every week to do a bit of shopping, have a café lunch, go to the cinema and change her library book. This is the highlight of her week. It was the glimpse of her newly borrowed Kate O'Brien in her shopping

basket that made me want to find out about the other novels the doctor's wife had been reading during her life as "a respectable married woman with a husband and a home and three children." I wanted, also, to learn something about Laura [who] lived uneventful days and was, like Katharine in Virginia Woolf's *Night and Day* (1919), "a member of a very great profession which has, as yet, no title and very little recognition... She lived at home.'" Twenty-five years on, we hope very much that readers of this *Biannually* will enjoy a book *about* the kind of books that have been reprinted by Persephone Books over the last nine years.

OUR READERS WRITE

‘I finished *The Closed Door* yesterday, hardly able to believe that short stories this good could be written by anyone with a name less resonant than Katherine Mansfield. Dorothy Whipple’s depictions of domestic tyranny and claustrophobia are so coolly achieved: one would wait in vain for the strident note of indignation, or the plea for sympathy, that would put these stories in their place, back where they belong, justly forgotten. I was at the same time reading *Mrs Dalloway*, so there was a good and reliable measure to hand!’ CL, London WC1

‘I have today finished *The Shuttle* by Frances Hodgson Burnett and wanted to write & tell you how much I have enjoyed it. The theme engaged me from the outset and I loved all the characters (except Sir Nigel, of course!) – they fill the pages as very much warm, living people with believable dilemmas and solutions. The descriptive passages of the English countryside as seen for the first time through the eyes of the American visitors certainly mirror my own as a tourist many years ago. I found it compelling reading on many levels and a wonderful portrait of the life of the times.’ JW, Australia

‘There is humour in *Miss Ranskill Comes Home*, in this tale of a woman who does not

understand the status quo; along with this comes embarrassment and confusion. I spent the first part of the novel feeling so badly for her. This is the tale of a great and abiding friendship that transcends sex, class and even life, of a woman who must find a way in this new world that she does not quite understand and how she does it with strength and grace and love. A remarkable book.’ Tara on booksandcooks

‘I’m reading about the last war and its aftermath and of the impact it had on the civilians. To find there is an authentic account of life in Germany in those years excited me and *On the Other Side* has engrossed me.’ AB, Lulworth

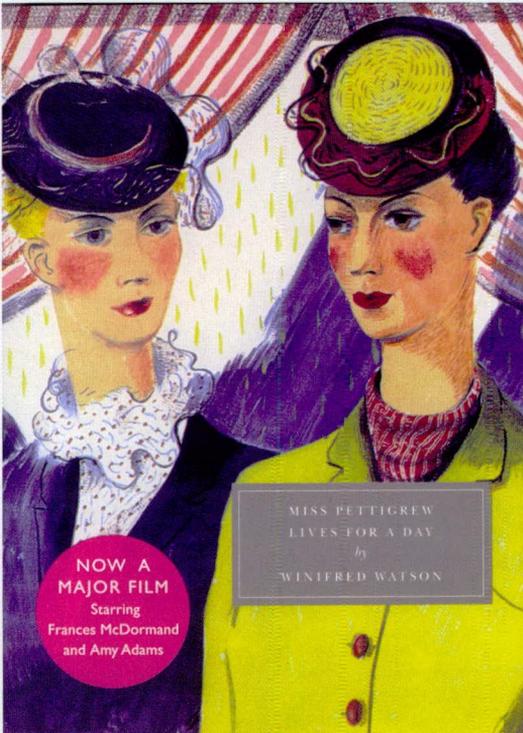
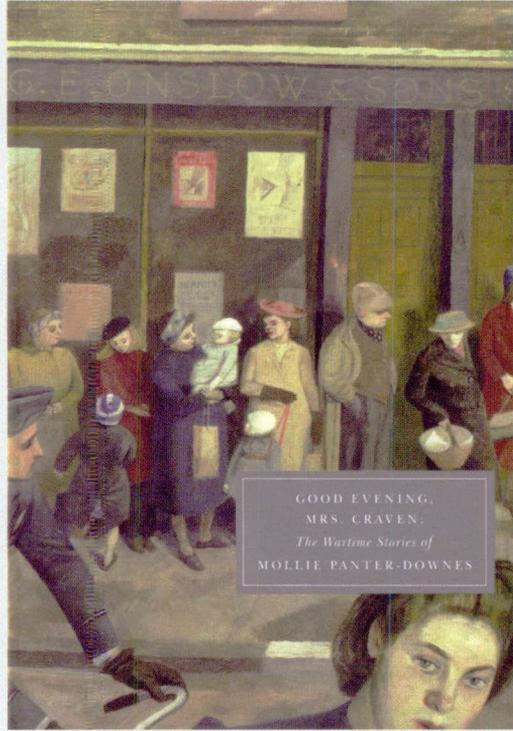
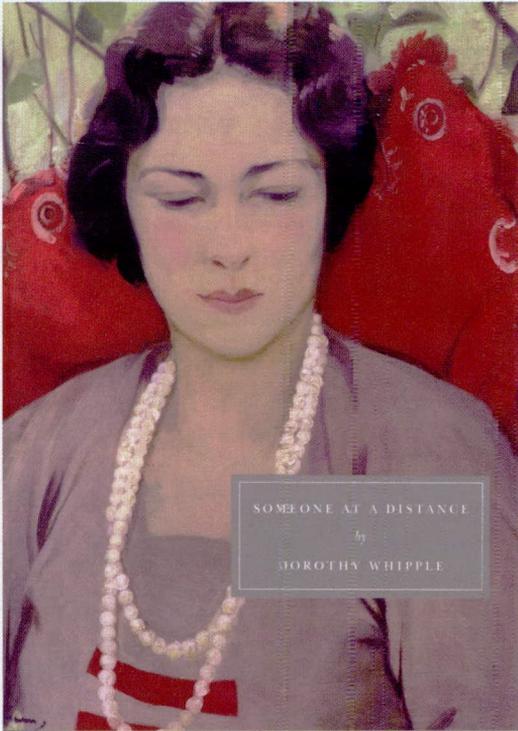
‘I write to say that I am disappointed with the Autumn/Winter 2007 *Biannually*. I have read your magazine with interest for several years, saving the memorable short stories and illustrations, and reviews of your latest books. However, I detect that the *Biannually* is becoming increasingly smug and I found the latest edition unbearable. The section ‘Our Readers Write’ is now heavily lifted from blogs – an inherently self-engrossing medium which rarely makes interesting reading. Isn’t this a rather easy form of praise? Jane Brocket is surely an intelligent and creative woman, but have you included the article about her book for any other reason than

some artful photos of Persephone books piled up in her house and some loose praise of your books? I hope that you can search a little harder for reviews in your future editions.’ BD, London SW12

‘Thank you for publishing *The Montana Stories*. I can understand the worry of a great writer that unfinished ‘unpolished’ pieces were presented. But if there is another life after this one, I can’t believe a genius of the stature of Mansfield would grudge her thirsty readers such amazing and masterful glimpses. Some seem *finished* – though obviously KM would not think so – but they *work*, conveying all sorts of deep emotion and debate.’ TL, St Leonards on Sea

‘I have just read *The Closed Door*. What I loved about these stories is the focus on the minutiae of everyday life. This is the reality of life for most people I suspect. Her observation of domestic relationships is acutely accurate and often humorous, it is a delight to read. But at the same time there is passionate intensity, arising from a seemingly bland domestic setting. I also noticed in this collection a recurrent theme of daughters having their lives repressed by selfish parents. Was it then so prevalent? I thought these stories raised a lot of interesting points for discussion, as well as being a wonderful read.’ JC, New Zealand

THE PERSEPHONE CLASSICS



The artwork on the front of *Someone at a Distance* is 'Pauline' 1929 by Sir James Gunn, on *Good Evening, Mrs Craven* is a detail from 'The Queue at the Fish Shop' 1944 by Evelyn Dunbar and on *Miss Pettigrew* is a detail from 'Blondes and Brunettes' 1938 by Charles Mozley (now in the window of the Bloomsbury shop).

The *Persephone Classics*, launched this April, are three of our bestselling titles in a more bookshop-friendly format (but also available from us by mail order). They cost £9 each, the typeface and paper are the same, the covers have flaps, and the endpaper used on each grey Original can be seen on the back of the Classic cover in grey. The books are bound so that they lie flat (Dispersion Binding), something new in the UK. Whereas the grey books are printed by Biddles in Kings Lynn, the Classics are printed by GGP in Germany. The next three Classics, to be published in October, will be *Mariana* by Monica Dickens, *Little Boy Lost* by Marghanita Laski and *Kitchen Essays* by Agnes Jekyll.

JOHN & PENELOPE MORTIMER

Valerie Grove's *A Voyage Round John Mortimer* was published last year; at the heart of the book is a description of John and Penelope's courtship and marriage over the nearly thirty years between 1942, when they met, and 1971, when they divorced. At their first meeting John was 19, and Penelope was 23, married with two children. John had decided to be a pacifist and went with a friend 'to be schooled by an Oxford graduate, Charles Dimont, in persuading the authorities of their truly conscientious objection to war.' Here, in

the Dimonts' cottage near Oxford, 'there seemed to be a large number of small children about, one of whom was dropping raspberry jam into *The Bible Designed to be Read as Literature*.' In a corner of the cottage's main room sat 'a dark young woman of remarkable beauty who said nothing and looked as if she were heartily sick of the tramp of conchies through her sitting-room.' John later wrote that he had no idea 'that in some distant peace I would marry the dark, silent Mrs Dimont and bring up her children.'

They did not meet again for another four years, by which time Penelope had had another child by a lover. As her marriage fell apart, John started to call on her, and she 'would advise him in an auntly way as to which of his current girlfriends he should marry.' She found him attractive, but then discovered that she was again pregnant, by another lover. This did not stop their relationship developing, and in 1949 Penelope was divorced and she and John married. Valerie Grove chronicles their married life in the 1950s, as John developed



The Mortimer family at home in the sitting room at Harben Road, Swiss Cottage in the late 1950s. Taken from About Time Too 1940-78 (1993) by Penelope Mortimer

his career as barrister, playwright and novelist. ‘Dramatic rows ended in passionate reconciliations.’ Their marriage ‘was turbulent and volatile, but it contained much that makes life worthwhile.’ With John, Penelope had a fifth daughter and then her first son. Both of them used their marriage simultaneously as material for their novels and stories. By the early 1960s the lives of ‘The Media Mortimers’ ‘were becoming a performance. Enviably talented and fecund, they were often featured... in glossy magazines.’

The account of the Mortimers’ marriage is sensitive and nuanced. But it also includes some memorably hilarious Mortimer anecdotes. In 1970 John met Penny, who was to become his second wife. At one point it was suggested that Penelope might live close by, and she was asked whether she would enjoy this. “Well, that had worried me,” Penelope agreed. “I thought that if John was living with some intelligent, middle-aged, talented, interesting, articulate woman I would be jealous. But now I’ve met you, I don’t think I need to be.”

In 1971, John and Penelope met for lunch not long before their divorce. John had just had a tooth capped. Penelope ordered spare ribs. “They talked and reminisced...Then Penelope bit into her spare rib and suddenly (“it was like a freeze-frame in

a movie”) looked horrified, gathered up her dog Chloe, her cigarette and her lighter, and rushed from the scene. John sat, bemused, and eventually took a bite of the abandoned spare rib. Crack! Immediately he realised he had lost his brand new tooth-cap. Then he was summoned to the phone. It was Penelope, now back home, wanting to explain her sudden departure. She too had lost the cap of her front tooth when she bit into the spare rib! So the divorcing pair were orthodontically united, at their last married meeting.’

Simon Callow wrote in the *Guardian* about Valerie Grove’s biography: ‘But it is with the arrival of Penelope in John Mortimer’s life that the book, always interesting and entertaining, begins to become magnificent. In a remarkable passage covering her past before she met John, real life, harsh and complex, suddenly crashes into the narrative of the life of a dreamy, posy, amiably ambitious young fellow; extensive quotations from Penelope’s superbly written diaries, stories and novels offer an unforgettably unsparing analysis of the man she so deeply and despairingly loved. For long stretches, the book feels like a double portrait of the Mortimers, and is all the better for it. From the moment of John’s first affair, “the barque of their marriage was holed”, but it sailed on fitfully and painfully for many years.’

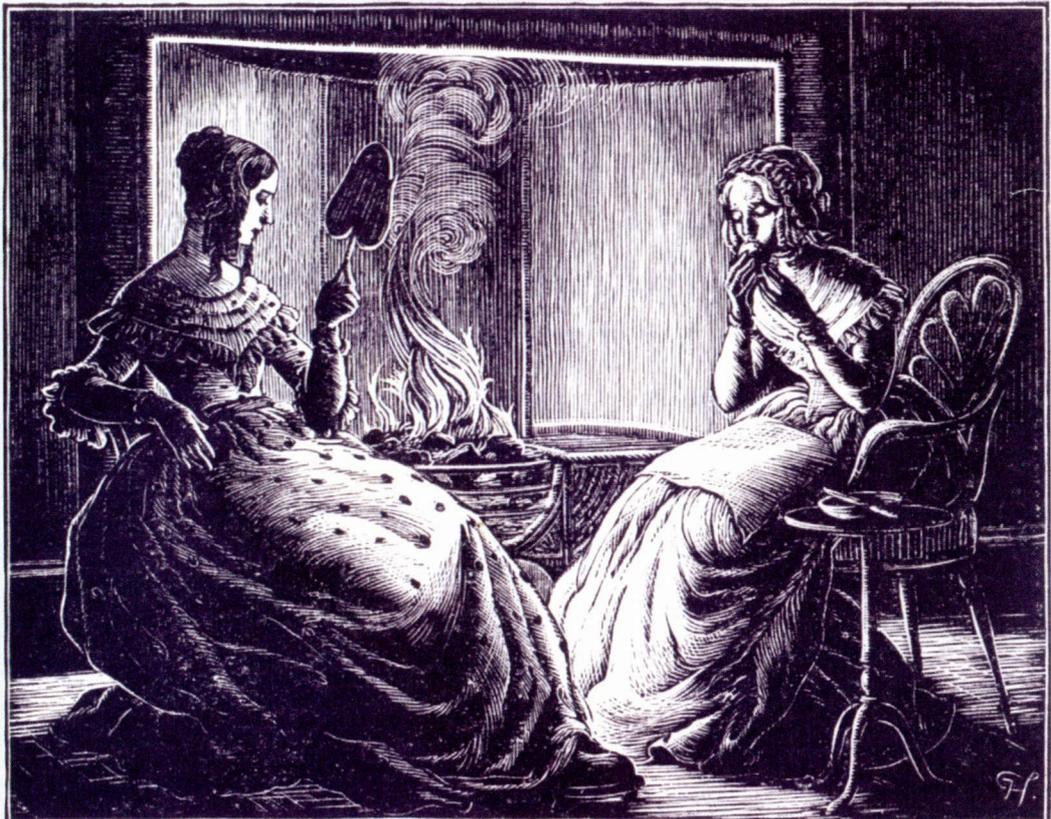
And Sam Leith wrote in the *Spectator*: ‘The most gripping part of Valerie Grove’s book is its first half – which isn’t really about John Mortimer so much as it is about his first wife, the novelist Penelope. She was older than John when they took up together, very bright, already married, fabulously feckless and with a brood of children from various fathers. Mortimer took the whole ménage on and seems to have been a delightful father and stepfather. The story of that relationship was played out in their writing. It’s piercing, in parts, and absurd in others. Both of them directly cannibalised the stuff of the unhappy later days of their marriage for their fiction, and it plays out, in some ways, like a comic-opera version of the Ted Hughes and Sylvia Plath story. What’s striking, though, is that both of their writings quoted here, instead of being self-justifying or vengeful, display considerable analytic understanding and generosity. *The Pumpkin Eater*, Penelope’s novelisation about the end of their marriage and Mortimer’s infidelity with Wendy Craig, sounds extraordinarily tough and painful. Valerie Grove writes about it in a way that suggests she considers it a greater artistic achievement than anything John Mortimer ever did, and Penelope in many ways the more sympathetic and interesting character of the two. Yet John was a trouper and seems to have had at least five separate careers.’

BONNETS

‘All this emphasis on bonnets and re-doing of period dramas is demeaning and patronising. It’s as if the film-makers think the viewers can only cope with something they’ve heard of before,’ we were quoted as saying in the *Guardian*, which went on to refer to our ‘baffle-ment at the BBC’s recent production of *Sense and Sensibility*, which has, of course, been brought to the screen very successfully before. News that there’s another version of *Brideshead Revisited* in production doesn’t thrill either.’ We were, of course, exaggerating to make the point. And want to emphasise

that when we went to the set of *Miss Pettigrew* at Ealing Studios last April, the actresses were wearing hats identical to those worn by the ‘Blondes and Brunettes’ in Charles Mozley’s picture on the front of the new Classics edition. So we are not against hats, or bonnets really. It is just that the BBC seems to feel that for a television serial to get ratings the actors must be wearing them and therefore will not countenance any proposals to film *Someone at a Distance* (Ellen would never have had one) or *Miss Ranskill Comes Home* (she loses her hat overboard in the first chapter) or even *The Village*

(though the women would have worn hats to go to Church). All these books would make superb television serials and would have the great advantage that most people would not know what was going to happen and might therefore spend an hour or so being entertained or even enthralled, rather than being sleepily amused by the acting and the costumes and the scenery and the heritage interiors. Even *A Room with a View*, one of the great books, had a makeover – but for what? Stick to the Merchant Ivory version, we say, and film something we have never seen before!



'I held up a screen and did not look': Joan Hassall illustration to the 1940 edition of Cranford published by Harrap p47

THE PERSEPHONE 78

1. **William - an Englishman** by Cicely Hamilton Prize-winning 1919 novel about the effect of WW1 on a socialist clerk and a suffragette. Preface: Nicola Beauman
2. **Mariana** by Monica Dickens First published in 1940, this funny, romantic first novel describes a young girl's life in the 1930s. Preface: Harriet Lane
3. **Someone at a Distance** by Dorothy Whipple 'A very good novel indeed' (*Spectator*) about the tragic destruction of a formerly happy marriage (pub. 1953). Preface: Nina Bawden
4. **Fidelity** by Susan Glaspell 1915 novel by a Pulitzer-winning author brilliantly describing the long-term consequences of a girl in Iowa running off with a married man. Preface: Laura Godwin
5. **An Interrupted Life** by Etty Hillesum From 1941-3 a young woman in Amsterdam, 'the Anne Frank of grown-ups', wrote diaries and letters which are among the great documents of our time. Preface: Eva Hoffman
6. **The Victorian Chaise-longue** by Marghanita Laski A 'little jewel of horror': 'Melly' lies on a chaise-longue in the 1950s and wakes as 'Milly' eighty years before. Preface: PD James
7. **The Home-Maker** by Dorothy Canfield Fisher Ahead of its time 'remarkable and brave 1924 novel about being a house-husband' (Carol Shields). Preface: Karen Knox
8. **Good Evening, Mrs Craven: the Wartime Stories of Mollie Panter-Downes** Superbly written short stories, first published in *The New Yorker* from 1938-44. Five of them were twice read on R4. Preface: Gregory LeStage
9. **Few Eggs and No Oranges** by Vere Hodgson A 600-page diary, written from 1940-45 in Notting Hill Gate, full of acute observation, wit and humanity. Preface: Jenny Hartley
10. **Good Things in England** by Florence White This comprehensive 1932 collection of recipes inspired many, including Elizabeth David.
11. **Julian Grenfell** by Nicholas Mosley A biography of the First World War poet, and of his mother Ettie Desborough. Preface: author
12. **It's Hard to be Hip over Thirty and Other Tragedies of Married Life** by Judith Viorst Funny, wise and weary 1960s poems about marriage, children and reality. Preface: author
13. **Consequences** by EM Delafield By the author of *The Diary of a Provincial Lady*, this 1919 novel is about a girl entering a convent after she fails to marry. Preface: Nicola Beauman
14. **Farewell Leicester Square** by Betty Miller Novel (by Jonathan Miller's mother) about a Jewish film-director and 'the discreet discrimination of the bourgeoisie' (*Guardian*). Preface: Jane Miller
15. **Tell It to a Stranger** by Elizabeth Berridge 1947 short stories which were twice in the *Evening Standard* bestseller list; they are funny, observant and bleak. Preface: AN Wilson
16. **Saplings** by Noel Streatfeild An adult novel by the well-known author of *Ballet Shoes*, about the destruction of a family during WW2; a R4 ten-part serial. Afterword: Jeremy Holmes
17. **Marjory Fleming** by Oriel Malet A deeply empathetic novel about the real life of the Scottish child prodigy who lived from 1803-11; now published in France; was a play on Radio Scotland.
18. **Every Eye** by Isobel English An unusual 1956 novel about a girl travelling to Spain, highly praised by Muriel Spark: a R4 'Afternoon Play' in 2004. Preface: Neville Braybrooke
19. **They Knew Mr Knight** by Dorothy Whipple An absorbing 1934 novel about a man driven to committing fraud and what happens to him and his family; a 1943 film. Afterwords: Terence Handley MacMath and Christopher Beauman
20. **A Woman's Place** by Ruth Adam A survey of C20th women's lives, very readably written by a novelist-historian: an overview full of insights. Preface: Yvonne Roberts
21. **Miss Pettigrew Lives for a Day** by Winifred Watson A delightful 1938 novel about a governess and a night-club singer. Read on R4 by Maureen Lipman; now a film with Frances McDormand and Amy Adams. Preface: Henrietta Twycross-Martin Also available as an unabridged Persephone audiobook read by Frances McDormand
22. **Consider the Years** by Virginia Graham Sharp, funny, evocative WW2 poems by Joyce Grenfell's closest friend and collaborator. Preface: Anne Harvey
23. **Reuben Sachs** by Amy Levy A fierce 1880s satire on the London Jewish community by 'the Jewish Jane Austen' who was a friend of Oscar Wilde. Preface: Julia Neuberger
24. **Family Roundabout** by Richmal Crompton By the *William* books author, 1948 family saga contrasting two matriarchs and their very different children. Preface: Juliet Aykroyd
25. **The Montana Stories** by Katherine Mansfield Collects together the short stories written during the author's last year; with a detailed publisher's note and the contemporary illustrations. Five were read on R4 in 2002.
26. **Brook Evans** by Susan Glaspell A very unusual novel, written in the same year as *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, about the enduring effect of a love affair on three generations of a family.
27. **The Children who Lived in a Barn** by Eleanor Graham A 1938 classic about five children fending for

themselves; starring the unforgettable hay-box. Preface: Jacqueline Wilson

28. Little Boy Lost by Marghanita Laski Novel about a father's search for his son in France in late 1945, chosen by the *Guardian's* Nicholas Lezard as his 2001 Paperback Choice. A R4 'Book at Bedtime' read by Jamie Glover. Afterword: Anne Sebba

29. The Making of a Marchioness by Frances Hodgson Burnett A wonderfully entertaining 1901 novel about the melodrama after a governess marries a Marquis. A R4 Classic Serial in 2007. Preface: Isabel Raphael, Afterword: Gretchen Gerzina

30. Kitchen Essays by Agnes Jekyll Witty and useful essays about cooking, with recipes, published in *The Times* and reprinted as a book in 1922. 'One of the best reads outside Elizabeth David' wrote *gastropoda.com*

31. A House in the Country by Jocelyn Playfair An unusual and very interesting 1944 novel about a group of people living in the country during WW2. Preface: Ruth Gorb

32. The Carlyles at Home by Thea Holme A 1965 mixture of biography and social history which very entertainingly describes Thomas and Jane Carlyle's life in Chelsea.

33. The Far Cry by Emma Smith A beautifully written 1949 novel about a young girl's passage to India: a great Persephone favourite. 'Book at Bedtime' in 2004. Preface: author

34. Minnie's Room The Peacetime Stories of Mollie Panter-Downes 1947–1965: Second volume of short stories first published in *The New Yorker*, previously unknown in the UK.

35. Greenery Street by Denis Mackail A delightful, very funny 1925 novel about a young couple's first year of married life in a (real) street in Chelsea. Preface: Rebecca Cohen

36. Lettice Delmer by Susan Miles A unique 1920s novel in verse describing a girl's stormy adolescence and path to

redemption; much admired by TS Eliot.

37. The Runaway by Elizabeth Anna Hart A Victorian novel for children and grown-ups, illustrated by Gwen Raverat. 'There never was a happier book' (*Country Life*, 1936). Afterwords: Anne Harvey, Frances Spalding.

38. Cheerful Weather for the Wedding by Julia Strachey A funny and quirky 1932 novella by a niece of Lytton Strachey, praised by Virginia Woolf. Soon to be a film with Emily Blunt and David Tennant. Preface: Frances Partridge. **Also available as an unabridged Persephone audiobook read by Miriam Margolyes.**

39. Manja by Anna Gmeyner A 1938 German novel, newly translated, about five children conceived on the same night in 1920, and their lives until the Nazi takeover. Preface: Eva Ibbotson (daughter of the author)

40. The Priory by Dorothy Whipple A much-loved 1939 novel about a family, upstairs and downstairs, living in a large country house. 'Warm, witty and realistic' (Hatchards). Preface: David Conville

41. Hostages to Fortune by Elizabeth Cambridge 'Deals with domesticity without being in the least bit cosy' (Harriet Lane, *Observer*), a remarkable fictional portrait of a doctor's family in rural Oxfordshire in the 1920s.

42. The Blank Wall by Elisabeth Sanxay Holding 'The top suspense writer of them all' (Chandler). A 1947 thriller about a mother who shields her daughter from a blackmailer. Filmed as both *The Reckless Moment* (1949) and *The Deep End* (2001); a R4 serial in 2006.

43. The Wise Virgins by Leonard Woolf This wise and witty 1914 novel contrasts the bohemian Virginia and Vanessa with Gwen, the girl next door in 'Richstead' (Putney). Preface: Lyndall Gordon

44. Tea with Mr Rochester by Frances Towers Magical, unsettling 1949 stories, a surprise favourite, that are unusually beautifully written; read on R4 in 2003 and 2006. Preface: Frances Thomas

45. Good Food on the Aga by Ambrose Heath A 1932 cookery book for Aga users which can nevertheless be used by anyone; with numerous illustrations by Edward Bawden.

46. Miss Ranskill Comes Home by Barbara Euphan Todd An unsparing, wry 1946 novel: Miss Ranskill is shipwrecked and returns to a completely changed wartime England. Preface: Wendy Pollard

47. The New House by Lettice Cooper 1936 portrayal of the day a family moves to a new house, and the resulting adjustments and tensions. Preface: Jilly Cooper.

48. The Casino by Margaret Bonham Short stories by a 1940s writer with a unique voice and dark sense of humour; they were read on BBC Radio 4 in 2004 and 2005. Preface: Cary Bazalgette.

49. Bricks and Mortar by Helen Ashton An excellent 1932 novel by a very popular pre- and post-war writer, chronicling the life of a hard-working, kindly London architect over thirty-five years.

50. The World that was Ours by Hilda Bernstein An extraordinary memoir that reads like a novel of the events before and after the 1964 Rivonia Trial. Mandela was given a life sentence but the Bernsteins escaped to England. Preface and Afterword: the author

51. Operation Heartbreak by Duff Cooper A soldier misses going to war – until the end of his life. 'The novel I enjoyed more than any other in the immediate post-war years' (Nina Bawden). Afterword: Max Arthur

52. The Village by Marghanita Laski This 1952 comedy of manners describes post-war readjustments in village life when love ignores the class barrier. Afterword: Juliet Gardiner

53. Lady Rose and Mrs Memmary by Ruby Ferguson A 1937 novel about Lady Rose, who inherits a great house, marries well – and then meets the love of her life on a park bench. A great favourite of the Queen Mother. Preface: Candia McWilliam

54. They Can't Ration These by Vicomte de Mauduit A 1940 cookery

book about 'food for free', full of excellent (and now fashionable) recipes.

55. *Flush* by Virginia Woolf A light-hearted but surprisingly feminist 1933 'life' of Elizabeth Barrett Browning's spaniel, 'a little masterpiece of comedy' (*TLS*). Preface: Sally Beauman

56. *They Were Sisters* by Dorothy Whipple The fourth Persephone book by this wonderful writer, a 1943 novel that contrasts three very different marriages. Preface: Celia Brayfield

57. *The Hopkins Manuscript* by RC Sherriff What might happen if the moon crashed into the earth in 1946: a 1939 novel 'written' by a delightful anti-hero, 'Mr Hopkins'. Preface: Michael Moorcock, Afterword: George Gamow

58. *Hetty Dorval* by Ethel Wilson First novel (1947) set in the beautiful landscape of British Columbia; a young girl is befriended by a beautiful and selfish 'Menace' – but is she? Afterword: Northrop Frye

59. *There Were No Windows* by Norah Hoult A touching and funny novel, written in 1944, about an elderly woman with memory loss living in Kensington during the blitz. Afterword: Julia Briggs.

60. *Doreen* by Barbara Noble A 1946 novel about a child who is evacuated to the country during the war. Her mother regrets it; the family that takes her in wants to keep her. Preface: Jessica Mann

61. *A London Child of the 1870s* by Molly Hughes A classic memoir, written in 1934, about an 'ordinary, suburban Victorian family' in Islington, a great favourite with all ages. Preface: Adam Gopnik.

62. *How to Run Your Home Without Help* by Kay Smallshaw A 1949 manual for the newly servantless housewife full of advice that is historically interesting, useful nowadays and, as well, unintentionally funny. Preface: Christina Hardyment

63. *Princes in the Land* by Joanna Cannan A novel published in 1938 about

a daughter of the aristocracy who marries an Oxford don; her three children fail to turn out as she had hoped.

64. *The Woman Novelist and Other Stories* by Diana Gardner Short stories written in the late 1930s and early 1940s that are witty, sharp and with an unusual undertone. Preface: Claire Gardner

65. *Alas, Poor Lady* by Rachel Ferguson A 1937 novel, which is polemical but intensely readable about the unthinking cruelty with which Victorian parents gave birth to daughters without anticipating any future for them apart from marriage.

66. *Gardener's Nightcap* by Muriel Stuart A 1938 pot pourri: a huge variety of miniature essays on gardening – such as *Dark Ladies* (fritallary), *Better Gooseberries*, *Phlox Failure* – which will be enjoyed by all gardeners, keen or lukewarm.

67. *The Fortnight in September* by RC Sherriff Another novel by the author of *Journey's End*, and *The Hopkins Manuscript*, Persephone Book No. 57, about a family on holiday in Bognor in 1931; a quiet masterpiece.

68. *The Expendable Man* by Dorothy B Hughes A 1963 thriller set in Arizona by the well-known American crime writer; it was chosen by the critic HRF Keating as one of his hundred best crime novels. Afterword: Dominic Power

69. *Journal of Katherine Mansfield* The husband of the great short story writer (cf. *The Montana Stories*, Persephone Books No. 25) assembled this journal from unposted letters, scraps of writing etc, to give a unique portrait of a woman writer.

70. *Plats du Jour* by Patience Gray and Primrose Boyd is a 1957 cookery book which was a bestseller at the time and a pioneering work for British cooks. The black and white illustrations and the coloured endpapers are by David Gentleman.

71. *The Shuttle* by Frances Hodgson Burnett A 1907 page-turner by the

author of *The Making of a Marchioness* (Persephone Book No. 29) about Rosalie Vanderpoel, an American heiress who marries an English aristocrat and whose beautiful and enterprising sister Bettina sets out to rescue her. Preface: Anne Sebba

72. *House-Bound* by Winifred Peck This 1942 novel describes a middle-class Edinburgh woman who decides, radically, that she must run her house without help and do her own cooking; the war is in the background and foreground. Afterword: the late Penelope Fitzgerald

73. *The Young Pretenders* by Edith Henrietta Fowler An 1895 novel for both children and grown-ups about Babs, who lives with her uncle and aunt and has not yet learnt to dissemble. Preface: Charlotte Mitchell

74. *The Closed Door and Other Stories* by Dorothy Whipple Ten short stories drawn from the three collections (now extremely hard to find) that Dorothy Whipple published during her lifetime. Read on BBC R4 in 2007.

75. *On the Other Side* by Mathilde Wolff-Mönckeberg: *Letters to my Children from Germany 1940-46*. Written in Hamburg but never sent, these letters provide a crucial counterpoint to *Few Eggs and No Oranges*. Preface: Ruth Evans, Afterword: Christopher Beauman

76. *The Crowded Street* by Winifred Holtby A 1924 novel about Muriel's attempts to escape from small-town Yorkshire, and her rescue by Delia, alias Vera Brittain. Preface: Marion Shaw

77. *Daddy's Gone A-Hunting* by Penelope Mortimer This 1958 novel is about the 'captive wives' of the pre-women's liberation era, bored and lonely in suburbia. Preface: Valerie Grove

78. *A Very Great Profession: The Woman's Novel 1914-39* by Nicola Beauman A mixture of literary criticism and historical evocation, first published 25 years ago, about the women writers of the inter-war period,

WHAT A LOVELY SURPRISE

BY PENELOPE MORTIMER

Paul Lawrence came back from work early. Jill lost count of the pile of shirts she was checking and impatiently started again, cramming each shirt into the laundry basket and muttering: 'One ... two ... three ... four ...' By the time she had captured them all and written them down in the book, he had shouted for the children and, after a great deal of rustling and whispering, they had shut themselves in the sitting-room.

With desperate speed, she began to count sheets. Louisa, their twelve-year-old daughter, came two steps at a time up the stairs, stopped short on the landing and said furiously, 'Oh. There you are. Can't you move?'

'But I'm in the middle of doing the laundry.'

'Well, we've got to bring something upstairs. Can't you just go away for a minute?'

Jill dropped her armful of sheets; she had already forgotten how many there were. 'All right,' she said, trying to look pleased. 'I suppose so.'

She went and sat on her bed. She was tired, and there was nothing to do in the bedroom so she just sat on the bed and waited. In a few moments she heard them coming up the stairs, the crackle of new, stiff brown paper, her husband swearing as he stumbled over the laundry basket.

'Where shall we put them?'
'Up in the attic, stupid.'
'Won't she go up to the attic?'
'Of course she won't.'
'Well how do you know she won't?'

'Oh, do be quiet...'
They creaked on up the stairs. She gave them another couple of minutes, then crept out of the bedroom and began counting tin sheets again.

Paul came down from the attic hitting the dust off his suit and looking exhausted.

'Hallo,' he said. 'What on earth are you doing?'

'I should have thought it was obvious,' she said, writing down six sheets.

'Isn't it rather a peculiar time to be doing the laundry?'

'Well, it goes tomorrow.'
'Oh. I see.'

He realised, of course, that she couldn't do the laundry tomorrow. He sat down heavily on the stairs, watching her.

'There's an awful lot of it,' he said gloomily. 'Couldn't we cut down on it a bit?'

She realised that he had spent too much money today and was regretting it. She scooped up three pairs of his pyjamas and pushed them into the corners of the basket.

'If you'd wear dripdry shirts,' she said, 'like everyone else.'

'But I loathe all that nylon and terylene and stuff.'

'Well, then. Eight shirts at one and sevenpence each. Pyjamas are one and ten. No one else sends any clothes to the laundry. Why don't you buy a washing machine?' At last she had the whole lot battened down. She straightened herself, pushing the hair out of her eyes. 'You could have bought me one for my birthday, come to think of it.'

He was alarmed. 'Really? Would you have liked a washing machine? I didn't think of it.'

'No,' she said. 'I wouldn't.'
'I could have got one on hire purchase,' he insisted. 'But I didn't think of it.'

'But I don't want one!' she said, smiling desperately.

'Then why did you say - ?'
The children came out of the attic and peered down over the banisters. 'Are you going to stay there all night?' Louisa asked. 'We want to bring something down.'

'All right,' Jill said, dragging the laundry basket across the landing and bumping it down the stairs. 'I'm just going.'
She had prepared, as far as possible, for tomorrow. Her birthday cake, with one deceitful candle, was ready in the larder; she had washed the kitchen floor and bought groceries for two days and checked that the tin opener and the corkscrew were both in the drawer. She took a pile of mending and sat down on

the window-seat in the sitting-room. The sun was misty, the small, narrow gardens littered with disorderly September flowers, leaning stacks of Michaelmas daisies, chrysanthemums like spilled copper, Aaron's rod and seedy willowherb, slovenly splashes of dahlia against the grey brick walls. Somewhere somebody was already burning leaves. The clock in the hall chimed and struck the hour.

As she counted the strokes, one hand gloved in her husband's sock, she was momentarily caught by a sharp, composite memory of all her birthdays. She could actually feel anticipation, even pleasure, flash through her, as though tomorrow really contained a mystery; as though she might unwrap something – a doll, the shrouded bulk of a new bicycle – which would really be a surprise, an astonishing happiness. It had left her before the clock had finished striking. If only, she thought, stabbing the hard heel of the sock with the needle, it was all over.

'We want the scissors,' Jane announced, bursting through the door. Her round, seven-year-old face was stern. 'We are very busy.'

'Bring them back,' Jill said. 'And be careful.'

The door slammed, the child pounded upstairs. Two minutes later she was back again.

'Where's the string?'

'I don't think,' Jill said brightly, 'we've got any string.'

Dismay threatened. 'What shall we do, then?'

Jill pulled her hand out of the

sock, lifted the pile of mending off her knee and began to look for the string. She groped in the back of shelves, hunted through the drawer of the desk which contained bits of sealing-wax, dried-up bottles of marking ink, three or four unidentified keys, two pipes, various bits of broken china, an old toothbrush and some lighter flints, but no string. Jane sat down patiently and looked at a magazine. Jill looked systematically through the broom cupboard and kitchen drawers and produced at last a roll of

green garden twine and six yards of new pink ribbon intended for reviving someone's party dress. 'You'll have to manage with this,' she said.

Jane looked at it critically. 'All right,' she said. 'I suppose it'll do.'

She went off, and Jill sat down again, lifting back the mending. She decided not to bother with the sock, but to do something restful, like changing all the buttons on Louisa's overcoat. They hadn't brought back the scissors, so she gnawed and



'The Floral Dress', 1997 etching by Rose Hilton, published in an edition of eight, which can be seen in the Bloomsbury shop. (Rose Hilton is represented internationally by Messum's Cork Street London W1.)

pulled at the buttons for a while and then gave up, folding the overcoat neatly over the back of the chair and waiting.

Becky, the middle one, was the next to come down. She put her sharp little face, weighted with horn-rimmed glasses and topped with a scrub of chopped red hair, round the door and asked, 'Daddy says, where's the glue?'

'There might be some in the cupboard.'

Becky was ten and had just finished a two-year-long impersonation of Roy Rogers. The change had been sudden and extreme. The checked shirt, the patched jeans, the stringy neck scarf were still in a heap on her bedroom floor. She now wore one of Louisa's petticoats trailing its grubby frill two inches below a velvet skirt she had salvaged from the dressingup box. She also wore ballet pumps and a large broderie Anglaise blouse which Jill remembered putting away to give, in another three or four years' time, to Louisa. Round her neck, instead of the scarf, she wore a broken necklace of plastic beads, cunningly mended with fuse wire. She looked as though she had just been converted by a visiting missionary.

'Becky -' Jill began.

'Yes?' The huge spectacles,

which the child had mistakenly been allowed to choose for herself, flashed innocently.

'Oh, nothing. It should be in the bottom shelf.'

'I've got it. By the way, how old will you be tomorrow?'

'A hundred and ninety-five.'



A statue of Persephone in the Pergamon Museum, Berlin

'No. Really.'

'Thirty-nine.' But she couldn't help adding, 'I think.'

'Gosh. Daddy didn't know.' She wandered to the door. 'I asked him,' she explained. 'He said oh, about thirty-five or something.'

Jill smiled. Her face was already beginning to ache a little.

'We need to know, you see, for the play.'

'Do you mean to say there's going to be a play?' There was always a play. It took up, mercifully in some ways, most of the afternoon. 'Really?' she asked incredulously.

'Perhaps I shouldn't have told you. Oh dear.'

'It's all right. I'll just pretend I don't know.'

In a little while her husband came down.

'Well,' he asked in a distraught way, 'and how's the birthday girl?'

She looked at him imploringly. She had the absurd idea that she could ask him to abandon the whole thing.

'The children are working so hard,' he said.

'How sweet of them.' She smiled quickly.

'Looking forward to your day off?'

'Oh yes. Of course I am.'

'That's good.'

He settled himself in an armchair and closed his eyes. The expression on his face was that of a man doggedly resting before a

battle that might well be his last.

Next morning she woke, opened her eyes, took in the grey square of window and the sound of rain, snapped her eyes shut again. Thirty-nine, she thought. It didn't mean anything. She was relieved and, turning cautiously over, settled to sleep again. In five minutes the alarm began to ring.

Her husband had, of course, taken the day off. However, being her birthday, the alarm rang half an hour earlier than usual. He groaned and humped about the bed a little, then got up. She heard him putting on his dressing-gown and shuffling out of the room.

'Honestly,' she heard before the door closed, 'we've been up for hours...'

She got quickly out of bed and brushed her hair, peering at herself in the damp mirror with the superstitious

feeling that overnight her hair should have gone grey, the wrinkles multiplied. However, she looked much the same, except for the anxious smile that already seemed to be driven into her face. She shut the window and switched on

the fire, then got back into bed and folded her hands calmly over her stomach. The great thing, she told herself, is to relax. Just relax, and it may all be quite painless.

The door opened and the three clear, sturdy voices struck up:

'Happy Birthday to you,
'Happy Birthday to you,
'Happy Birthday' – Paul joined in rather haphazardly – 'dear Mother,'

'Happy Birthday to you!
'Oh,' she said. 'What a lovely surprise.'

They filed in, business-like, serious, dumped their packages on the bed, kissed her and stood back. Paul followed with the tea-tray and kissed her and wished her a happy birthday.

'Well,' she said. 'I don't know where to start.'

They glanced at each other and giggled shortly. She began untying the pink ribbon.

'Oh,' she said, 'what a beautiful card! Did you make it, Becky?'

Becky nodded. 'I made up the poem too.'



'Let's read it, then.'

"Thirty-nine is not such a very great age to be. Think how you'd feel if today you were ninety-three."

There was a moment's silence.

'Well,' Jill said, 'I think it's perfectly lovely. And a blotter, too! Just what I wanted. *Thank you, darling.*' She kissed Becky, who blushed almost purple.

'Open mine now,' Jane said. 'But it's a needle case! And you made it all by yourself! *Thank*

you, darling.'

While Jill was kissing Jane, Louisa, who thought her youngest sister a frightful show-off, looked distantly out of the window. 'Now,' Jill said, 'whatever can this be?' She unwrapped, with caution, two quilted coat-hangers. 'Oh! she breathed. 'And another poem!'

'It's not much good,' Louisa muttered.

'I'm sure it's brilliant.'

"You're Thirty-nine today,

So Happy
Birthday, Mum.
You may feel
rather old,
But to us
you're still
twenty-
one!"

Paul choked over his tea. The tray nearly upset and, helped by this distraction, Jill kissed Louisa warmly. The

worst was over.

The remaining presents were from Paul. The sweater, a size bigger than last year's, would be quite possible if she took the collar off and had it dyed. She said it was lovely, and the perfume was lovely and the Braque print – she nervously turned it the right way up – was really lovely.

'I think it's perfectly ghastly,' Louisa said.

'Oh well,' Jill was amazed to hear herself saying, 'we can't all have the same tastes, can we?'

And it's awfully cheerful.' She kissed her husband gratefully. 'I don't know how to thank you,' she said. 'Such wonderful presents.'

Something was wrong, her tone of voice or what she said: there ought to be more. They waited, and she kept smiling, and at last Paul said, 'Well, you'd all better go off and get dressed or something. I'll go down and get breakfast.'

'I really don't want any,' Jill said. 'Please don't –'

'But you always have breakfast in bed on your birthday!' Louisa blazed. 'You always do!'

'Oh well, then. All right. Thank you,' she said humbly.

Left alone, she wound up all the pink ribbon which, if ironed, might still do for the party dress. She folded the wrapping paper and arranged the cards on the mantelpiece and got back into bed. A faint smell of burning crept up from the kitchen. How wonderful, it is, she told herself sharply, to be loved.

The rule of her birthday was that she was not allowed to do anything. This had started when Louisa was about four. It had impressed Louisa, if no one else, as a wonderful idea and she had never allowed it to be forgotten. She was a highly organised child, very good at giving orders. Combined with remarkable beauty this made her, at twelve, rather formidable.

Unhappily dressed in the new sweater, Jill sidled downstairs at about ten o'clock. Louisa was vacuuming the sitting room.

'Why didn't you stay in bed?' she asked. 'And rest?'

'Oh well . . .' Jill said.

'It's a pity, because if it was a nice day you could sit in the garden.'

'Yes,' Jill said.

'Well, do you mind moving, because I want to Hoover over there?'

Jill went back to the bedroom and did her nails. When they were dry she thought of tidying her drawers and this reminded her that she had, for weeks, been meaning to move the chest of drawers over to the other side of the room where it would not only look better but hide a small patch of damp on the wall. She resolutely put this idea out of her head and went downstairs again. Louisa was dusting, Becky finishing the washing up. They both seemed disappointed to see her so she went and stood in the dining-room for a little while, looking with interest at the rain, until Jane burst in and said, 'Oh. You're here. We're going to lay the table now.'

'But it's not nearly lunch time!'

'Well, that's what Louisa told me to do. Couldn't you,' she suggested sympathetically, 'go for a walk or something?'

Jill went upstairs again and looked at the chest of drawers. She closed the door and cautiously pulled out the drawers, balancing them on the bed. Then she pulled the heavy chest carefully, inch by inch, across the room. One of its feet got caught in the carpet, so she lay down on her stomach, lifting up the chest with one hand while niftily

tucking the carpet down under its foot with the other. She was lying half under the bed and had just got the carpet straightened out when Louisa came in.

'I brought you some coffee,' Louisa said, and then, 'Oh! What are you doing?'

Jill got up and took the cup without looking at her. 'Thank you,' she said. 'I was just moving the chest of drawers.'

'But why?' Louisa wailed. 'On your birthday?'

'Oh, don't be so silly,' Jill snapped. 'Why shouldn't I move the chest of drawers on my birthday if I want to?'

'But you're meant to be resting?'

'But I don't want to rest!'

They glared at each other and slowly, painfully, Louisa's eyes filled with tears. Jill held out her hands, but the child turned her head away and ran down the stairs. Nobody, Jill remembered hopelessly, cried on her birthday. She knelt down and heaved savagely at the chest, upsetting the cup of coffee which poured, a scalding christening, over her new sweater.

'Louisa's thoroughly upset,' Paul said from the doorway. 'I do think you might – What on earth are you doing?'

'I'm trying,' she said, getting up slowly, 'to move the chest of drawers. It isn't a crime. It isn't hurting anybody. It isn't spoiling anyone's fun.'

'Look at that sweater.'

'I know.'

'It's ruined. When I think what it cost –'

'Don't tell me,' she said. 'I can

always have it dyed.'

'Why can't you rise to the occasion a bit? You've thoroughly upset Louisa.'

'Is it Louisa's birthday,' she snapped suddenly, 'or mine?'

'Everyone's trying their damndest to please you.'

'Oh, really. If that's your attitude.'

'Good God, if you can't appreciate it, I'm sorry.'

'Oh. . .' She hung her head,

watching the pale grey coffee dripping on to the carpet. 'Of course I appreciate it, Paul.'

'Well, then. Now where do you want this chest of drawers?'

'Over there,' she said humbly.

He picked it up, carried it across the room and dumped it against the wall.

'Now,' he said, 'why don't you go downstairs and look at a magazine or something?'

'All right.' It struck her that

they were behaving in the most curious way. He looked shifty and sick and it suddenly occurred to her that he really hated her birthday, hated her growing older. That, in fact, he was ashamed. She was certain of it. He was ashamed because he could no longer avoid knowing that she was middle-aged.

'Paul –' she began.

'Well?' He had his back to her, pushing in the drawers.

She couldn't think what to say. 'Do you love me?'

'Of course. You might just have a word with Louisa. She tries hard on your birthday.'

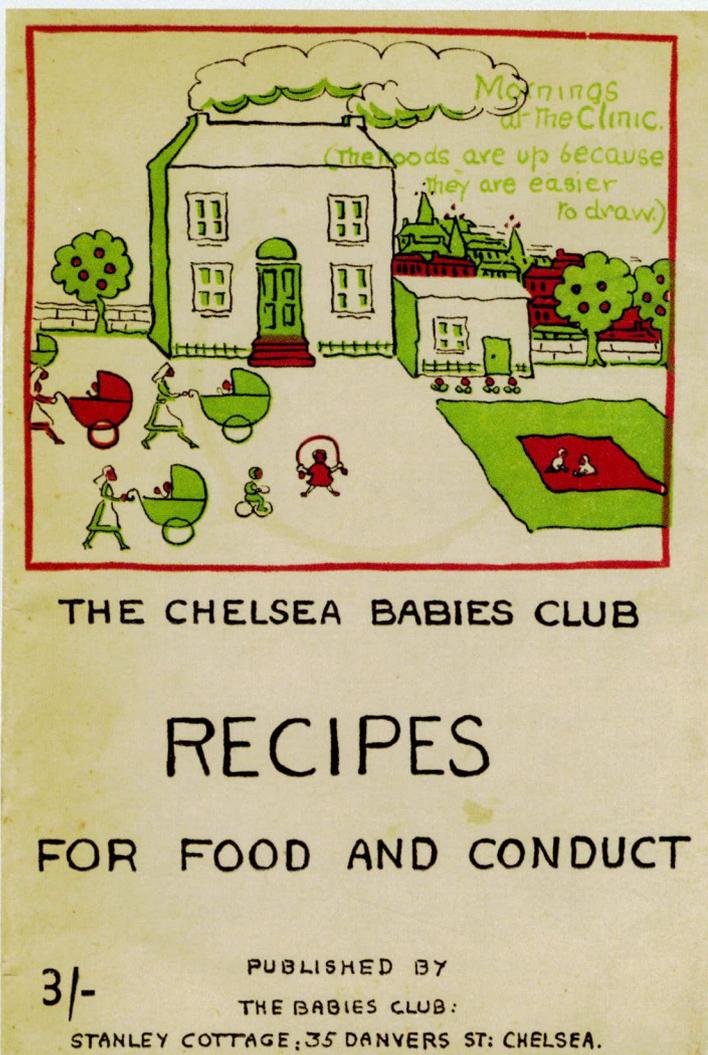
'I know,' she said. 'You all do.'

'Well, then. I'll go and get the lunch. You just relax. You know – relax a bit.'

'Yes,' she said. 'All right.'

He went heavily downstairs. She sat down on the bed and began pulling the fluff off the blanket, rolling it between her finger and thumb.

The play, this year, concerned two princes captured by a wicked wizard and saved in the nick of time by a benevolent fairy aged thirty-nine. Last year it had been two princesses captured by a wicked witch and saved in the nick of time by a benevolent fairy aged thirty-eight. Jane and Becky played the princes and Louisa doubled for the other parts. It was full of 'Oho!' and 'By my troth!' and 'Whither away?' After each scene Jane applauded loudly and was scolded by Louisa. In the interval, while Louisa was bringing up the



1943 Chelsea Babies Club recipe book cover by Enid Bagnold (who chaired the Literature Sub-Committee, of which Vera Brittain was also a member). The Chalk Garden by Enid Bagnold is at the Donmar Warehouse from 5 June-2 August.

birthday cake and ice-cream, Jane and Becky danced to a long-playing record of Sidney Bechet. As time wore on their faces became grimmer and their breathing louder, but they continued to lollop bravely about and never moved their eyes from the audience, which kept smiles of appreciation clamped firmly on both their faces. At last the record ended, Jill cut the cake and remembered to wish.

'What did you wish?' Jane asked.

'Don't be silly. She can't tell. Come on, we've got to do the second scene now.'

They hurried busily away.

'It's a lovely play,' Jill said timidly. 'Are you all right?'

Her husband nodded. He was absolutely exhausted and had put down four dry martinis before lunch in order to nerve himself for the washing up. Jill had changed into a dress and made up her face with great care. In spite of this, she had begun to feel slightly hysterical. It was not surely necessary for the fairy to grow so old?

'Gadzooks!' Louisa cried, looking evil, 'those princes will make me a jolly fine supper. . .'

At the end of the play the entire cast sang God Save The Queen and Happy Birthday To You. Then the curtains were drawn back and Jane inexplicably burst into tears. Becky, too, hung about looking moistly through her enormous glasses.

'They're tired,' Jill muttered, patting them hopelessly, 'I'll put them to bed.'

'You can't,' Louisa said, looking disgusted under her benevolent fairy's crown. 'It's your birthday. You're going out. I'll put them, if they're such babies.'

'But I'm sure there's time –'

'You wouldn't want Mummy to bath you, would you? On her birthday?'

Dumb, guilty, swamped in tears, Jane shook her head.

'Then come on.' A tinsel and muslin wardress, she pushed them out of the room. 'And if you're good,' Jill heard her saying, 'you can watch television for half an hour but, mind you, not a minute longer.' Their voices, like the voices of tired, nattering old women, retreated up the stairs.

Jill tidied the sitting-room and poured herself a drink. The day weighed heavily on her, like some expensive mistake, a lapse of good taste which, once paid for, is irrevocable. The bonfire had been extinguished by the day's rain. Some of the leaves on the laburnum had turned yellow overnight, but this was the only sign of autumn. The air had become clear and watery as spring and birds were twittering and fussing in the tall, grimy trees. The year, yesterday so mellow, had become petrified in a grey, damp evening.

'Well, shall we go?'

She turned reluctantly. Paul had changed his suit, but not his expression. He went straight over to the decanter and poured himself a triple whisky.

'Yes,' she said. 'When you're ready.'

'I'm ready now.'

'All right, then. Let's go.'

'Well, what do you mean, when I'm ready.'

'Nothing. Where are we going?'

'Where do we always go on your birthday? Pierre's, of course.'

'How silly of me,' she said.

'I should have known.'

They came home, rather unsteadily and in silence, about eleven. The children were all asleep. The house felt surprisingly normal, freed from tension. There was even a banana skin in the sitting-room grate which Louisa hadn't tidied away. They climbed slowly upstairs, not speaking, yawned and sighed in the cold bedroom. It's over, they both thought, pulling off their shoes. Weariness, apathy, drowned them. They moved about the room as languidly and pointlessly as fish in a small tank. When, at last, she had turned down the coverlet, put his pyjamas ready on the pillow, opened the window, turned off the main light, he was still standing in his shirt looking vaguely about the room. She had already forgotten about her birthday. Her face, after an enormous yawn, settled back lax and unsmiling.

'Do hurry,' she said. 'I'm dropping.'

He picked up his pyjamas, looked at them with distaste and let them fall in a heap on the floor. Then he wandered to the cupboard, took out a clean pair of pyjamas and began, with

laborious concentration, to undo the buttons.

In one movement she sat upright. Her whole body was stiff and trembling. 'You can't,' she said, 'wear clean pyjamas.'

He lowered towards her, his head stuck forward. 'Why not?'

'You had clean pyjamas last night.'

'And is there any reason,' he inquired, skidding a little over the words, 'why I shouldn't have clean pyjamas tonight as well?'

'Of course there is!' She was desolate, outraged. 'We can't afford the laundry! You said so yourself! We can't afford the laundry!'

At last he let fly. 'Then why

don't you wash them yourself instead of fooling around all day moving the furniture?'

'Why should I wash your horrible pyjamas? Why should I?'

'Don't shout,' he said. 'I cannot stand you shouting.'

'Why shouldn't I shout?'

'Because,' he said, 'you are too old.'

They stared at each other. All sound, even the sound of breathing, had stopped. He went out of the room, carrying the clean pyjamas. He went downstairs. She heard the sitting-room door close.

He had drunk too much, of course. It had been a strain. She had only been trying to save him

the expense of the laundry. He was overtired. He would soon come back and apologise. She turned off the bedside light and lay on her back, staring at the patterns of the street lamp on the ceiling. The clock chimed and began to strike midnight. Next year, she realised, I shall be forty. She lay waiting, the little smile of gratitude fixed on her face, a distant welcome.

Published in *The New Yorker* 30 November 1957 and in *Saturday Lunch with the Brownings and other Stories* (1960)

© The Estate of Penelope Mortimer



'Sisters Playing Chess' 1555 by Sofonisba Anguissola 1530-1625; she was the best-known female artist of the sixteenth century

HOLLYWOOD DUSTS OFF MY GRANNY'S RACY GOVERNESS

To me she will always be Granny Pick [writes Jeremy Pickering] but a new Hollywood remake of one of my grandmother's novels is set to put her name in lights 70 years after she wrote it. It's a rags-to-riches tale as heartwarming as the story of how Winifred Watson, as granny was known before she married into the Pickerings, came to write *Miss Pettigrew Lives for a Day* – now a new film starring Oscar-winner Frances McDormand and Amy Adams. To say it has been a family affair is somewhat of an understatement – seeing granny's work republished and on the big screen is more than we ever imagined. The story began in Thirties' Newcastle, where my grandmother was born and lived her whole life. Like many women of her generation, Winifred was a feminist without needing the label, an old-fashioned – I won't say stubborn – lady with a streak of humour and tenderness she kept well-hidden in company but who was quietly devoted to her family. Fittingly, it was her family who had a direct hand in her becoming an author in the first place. On hearing granny complain for the umpteenth time that the book she was reading was 'rubbish' and that she could do better, her brother-in-law Joe simply said: 'Go on then.' That was all the encouragement she

needed. It was not long before she had finished her first book but being my grandmother she just put in the attic and forgot about it. Eight years had passed when my great-aunt Anne saw an advert in the local paper inviting new authors to submit their work. Apparently reluctantly, but I like to think with a sense of what was to come, my grandmother sub-



mitted *Fell Top*. It was accepted immediately but only on the understanding that she had more books in the pipeline. She didn't, of course, but taking more advice from great-uncle Joe she claimed another was on its way and quickly supplied a follow-up, *Odd Shoes*. Both were successful, and with that granny felt confident enough to write *Miss Pettigrew*.

With its heady mixture of charming characters, risqué jokes, nightclubs and true love set over the course of exactly 24 hours in London – *Mrs Dalloway* it certainly wasn't. Granny's publishers were horrified. Her previous two books were essentially potboilers and here she was – a provincial housewife – tackling the racier elements of a London life she knew nothing about. They were right in a way. Granny had never set foot in a nightclub in her life (or so she always told me and my sister Joanna) but she also knew that a writer had only to think something for it to become true. An avid cinema-goer, granny rejected first-hand experience in favour of gleaning everything she need to know from the local picture house. The publishers weren't happy and demanded another country romance, saying *Miss Pettigrew* would never sell, but granny stuck to her guns, telling them: 'You're wrong, it's a winner.' She was right. And it was not long before Universal Pictures snapped up the film rights. They had planned to release it as a musical. But as granny told the story: 'Then the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbour and *Miss Pettigrew* ended up back on the shelf.' There she stayed until republished by Persephone Books in 2000. *Printed with permission of Express Newspapers © Sunday Express*

SINGLED OUT

The film of *Miss Pettigrew Lives for a Day* has a harsher undertone than the book: Miss Pettigrew is not at all sure what will become of her if she fails to find a job, so that one of the running themes is that she is hungry all day – the 24 hours are a whirl but never involve any actual food.

The theme of the impoverished single woman runs through several Persephone books and has had renewed attention because of *Singled Out*, a new book about the ‘surplus’ women of the inter-war period who, as the 1921 census revealed, exceeded men by 1.75 million.

Virginia Nicholson shows how difficult it was for women who viewed marriage as their birthright to adjust’ wrote Lynn Knight in the *Guardian*: ‘They had not only to manage their own disappointment and reduced expectations in a climate that pushed home-making to the fore, but do so in the face of pity and condemnation. For many, tedious

employment, poor housing and poor pay made daily life and future prospects bleak.’

Some of the unmarried fictional heroines manage to make a life away from home, for example Emily in *The Making of*

a Marchioness. But Grace in *Alas, Poor Lady* would be destitute unless looked after by a kind employer or by the Distressed Gentlefolk Protective Association. And it is not always easy for the liberated modern

reader to empathise with the plight of her unmarried ancestors, with Muriel in *The Crowded Street* or Rhoda in *The New House*. Even Penelope Mortimer missed the irony in EM Delafield’s *Thank Heaven Fasting* (when Monica succeeds in finding a husband, ‘she was to have a life of her own, after all... At last, she would have justified her existence’), remarking scathingly in an interview: ‘How repugnant, what right did Monica have to use poor Herbert as a justification for her existence?’ But the film of *Miss Pettigrew* reminds us that most unmarried women either had to stay at home or with difficulty find a job – or go hungry.

“Romantic and charming in every possible way!”
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“A blissfully entertaining comedy with a lot of heart!”
Amy Adams is irresistible!
Frances McDormand is terrific!”
SCOTT MANTZ, ACCESS HOLLYWOOD

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STEVE OLDFIELD, FOX TV

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FRANCES McDORMAND

ACADEMY AWARD® NOMINEE
AMY ADAMS

MISS PETTIGREW
LIVES FOR A DAY

EVERY WOMAN WILL HAVE HER DAY.

FOCUS

OUR REVIEWERS WRITE

‘How to explain Dorothy Whipple to those who aren't already fans?’ asked the *Oldie*. ‘In *The Closed Door* she tells moral, old-fashioned (some would say unfashionably old-fashioned) tales in straightforward prose, with the emphasis on story – and yet they are utterly gripping. These stories, despite their ‘quiet’ plots – Ernest and Alice oppress their daughter, a woman is divorced by her husband and only allowed to see her children once a month – are page-turners just like her novels.’

Frederick Taylor (author of *Dresden*), wrote in the *Literary Review* about *On the Other Side*: ‘These are the unvarnished, often raw, impressions of a decent, intelligent woman living through impossible times. When she rails against Allied bombing (Hamburg was attacked scores of times between 1940 and 1945), it is with the emotive immediacy of someone who has experienced the death and suffering it has caused and who naively resents the fact that her family, who never supported Hitler, are forced to share their Nazi compatriots’ fate. When she complains that the British, whom she and her husband so admired and were initially delighted to see occupy the city in May 1945, reveal themselves as vengeful, pettifogging conquerors, it feels authentic (and even more naive – a fact she has the sense to recog-

nise in a later entry). Persephone Books has yet again performed a great service in publishing a handsome new edition of a neglected treasure. The afterword is a model of concise and erudite contextualisation that makes clear how urgently we need to read and reread such revealing tales from “the other side”.’

‘*On the Other Side* contains the unsent correspondence Mathilde Wolff-Monckeberg wrote to her adult children during the war, when they were all living abroad,’ said the *Independent on Sunday*. ‘They show a woman desperate to maintain a link with those she loved but thought she might never see again. It’s difficult to read what are obviously very personal, private documents, but they contain a kind of truth that can only be read with a strong degree of discomfort. Testimonies like Tilli’s illustrate why war should always be unthinkable.’

‘In *The Closed Door*, the compass of Dorothy Whipple’s concerns is apparently small,’ observed Matthew Dennison in the *Spectator*. ‘Her focus is the domestic life of a certain sort of Englishwoman at a given moment in time. Her heroines are unremarkable, distinguished only by anxiety or unhappiness. That they suffer is the result not of Grand Guignol or seismic events in the world at large, but

the petty malevolence of the dysfunctional family. Whipple’s work has a strong period flavour, but the problems it unravels – the fragility of lifelong emotional fulfilment or the cruelty latent in relationships defined by love – remain constants of human experience. Her sense of place is as vivid as that of Doris Lessing or William Trevor – although in place of Lessing’s Africa or Trevor’s Ireland is a series of smarter residential streets in unnamed provincial towns, all tall trees and painted railings. Dorothy Whipple wrote with a story-teller’s instinct, so that each of these compelling short stories is a richly satisfying page-turner.’

‘Charlotte Mitchell, in her thoughtful and well-informed introduction,’ wrote Juliet Townsend in the *Spectator*, ‘points out that although *The Young Pretenders* is about children, and views the bewildering grown-up world through their eyes, it was written with both a child and adult audience in mind. Part of the enjoyment for the older reader lies in the merciless light the innocent but tactless candour of childhood sheds on the shallow pretension of the sophisticated world. Edith Henrietta Fowler casts a bright light on a particular kind of Victorian home at a particular moment in time, with a mixture of humour, perception and sympathy.’

THIS AND THAT

The *Persephone Bookshop* is now open at 109 Kensington Church Street London W8, 0207 221 2201, email: sales@thepersephonbookshop.co.uk. The opening hours are 10-6 every day except Sunday (8 on Thursdays). All the grey Original Persephone books are on sale here, and of course the new *Classics*; and we plan to stock a wrapped copy of every book (£2 extra). We also have a good selection of other new books, arranged by category (children's, fiction, biography, cookery, history, French etc.) and publisher (Granta, Eland, Hesperus, Jane Nissen, Pushkin, Everyman, New York Review Books etc.). We hope that some local readers will have an account, and plan to offer an inexpensive London-wide courier service. But the mail-order will still be done from Persephone Books, 59 Lamb's Conduit Street WC1N 3NB, which will of course continue to sell the full range of Persphone books and be open from 10-6 on weekdays and 12-5 on Saturdays.

The film of *Miss Pettigrew Lives for a Day* opened in the United States at the beginning of March and will be opening in the UK before too long. The star of the film, Frances McDormand, suggested that she read the

unabridged audiobook for us and this she has now done – it is available on five CD's in a very nicely designed little box. The retail price is £20 in the UK or \$30 in the US but Persephone readers may buy it for £18 (plus £2 postage).

We are delighted to be able to bring Rose Hilton's work to the attention of those who do not already know it, both through the cover of this *Biannually* and the etching on p. 17. Rose Hilton, who has lived in west Cornwall for the last forty years, is one of our most brilliant modern painters, whose work (still life, landscapes, nudes, and interiors with figures) can be seen at Tate St Ives in an

exhibition called *Rose Hilton: The Beauty of Ordinary Things, a Selected Retrospective* that runs until May 11th.

It is her childhood in Cornwall that is the subject of Emma Smith's most recent book, which Bloomsbury publish this summer, very nearly sixty years after *The Far Cry*, Persephone Book No.33, first came out. *The Great Western Beach* is the most beautifully written and evocative description of the Newquay childhood of Elspeth Hallsmith, as she was really called, between 1923 and 1935.

Next autumn's books are *Round about a Pound a Week* by Maud Pember Reeves, a 1913 analysis of the lives of women living in poverty in Lambeth, with a new Preface by Polly Toynbee; *The Country Housewife's Book* (1934) by Lucy H Yates, a useful and charmingly illustrated book about (for example) pickling, junket and moths; and *Miss Buncle's Book*, also 1934, by DE Stevenson, a funny and quirky novel in the EF Benson tradition about a woman living in the country who, finding herself short of money, uses the material at hand to write a novel about her neighbours. The Preface is by Aline Templeton.



Winifred Holtby in 1921

EVENTS

The first Persephone event this summer will be a *Cream Tea* in Georgetown, Washington DC: a long-standing Persephone reader is kindly lending her house on the afternoon of **Saturday May 3rd** from 3-5 for a celebration of the new *Classic* edition of *Good Evening, Mrs Craven*. Please ring the office for more details (invitations have already been sent to DC readers).

On **Thursday May 15th** Valerie Grove will talk at a *Lunch* in the shop (from 12.30-2.30) about Penelope Mortimer, as well of course about John Mortimer, who is the subject of her recent book (cf. pp.10-11 of this *Biannually*).

On **Wednesday June 4th** from 3-5 there will also be a *Cream Tea* at Roppelegh's, *Mollie Panter-Downes's* former house near Haslemere, by kind permission of the Persephone reader who now lives there. Again, this is to celebrate the publication of *Good Evening, Mrs Craven* as a *Persephone Classic*. It is hoped that Benjamin Whitrow will read a story; and we will walk through the woods to Mollie's writing hut.

We shall be showing the rarely-seen film of Penelope Mortimer's *The Pumpkin Easter* (the screenplay is by Harold Pinter) on **Thursday June 12th** at the British Film Institute

21 Stephen Street W1. Lunch will be served at 1pm, the film will be shown at 2 and there will be tea and cake afterwards; Valerie Grove will introduce the film.

On **Wednesday June 18th** there will be a *Cream Tea* from 3-5 at Adamczewski's Fine Houseware shop 196 High Street, Lewes which has 'tradit-



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ional, stylish utility essentials' (*Country Living*) and stocks our books, a fun way, we hope, to celebrate the shop and Persephone and to spend time in Lewes.

On **Thursday July 3rd** from 12.30-2.30 Professor Marion Shaw will talk at a *Lunch* in the shop about Winifred Holtby, who

lived round the corner and wrote *The Crowded Street*.

Other dates for your diary: Persephone will be at an evening event at *Much Wenlock* on Friday June 20th; at a lunchtime event at the *Wivenhoe Bookshop* on Friday June 27th; at the *Sevenoaks Festival* on the afternoon of Saturday October 4th; at an evening event in the main *Sheffield Library* on Tuesday October 14th; and at the *House and Garden* fair at Olympia from November 5th-9th. The *Fourth Persephone Lecture* will be on Tuesday November 18th, again at the Art Workers Guild in Queen Square at 6.30: Professor *Elaine Showalter* will talk about 'The Home-maker and the Home-Wrecker: Dorothy Canfield Fisher, Susan Glaspell and 20th Century American Women Writers'. Her new book about American women writers will be published in 2009.

The Persephone *Book Group* continues on the first Wednesday of every month from 6.30-8: about a dozen of us discuss that month's book, drink madeira and eat bread and cheese. We plan to start a *Book Group* at the Notting Hill shop, please telephone for details (0207 221 2201). And to book for any of the above events *please ring Persephone Books* on 0207 242 9292. The *Teas* costs £10, the *Book Group* £10, the *Lecture* £20, the *Lunches* and the *Film* £30.

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If we have failed to acknowledge something that appears in the *Persephone Biannually*, please let us know.

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