



The Persephone Biannually

Nº6 Autumn & Winter 2009-10

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A Kitchen Interior oil on canvas by Harold Harvey 1918

© Brighton and Hove Museums and Art Galleries



OUR BOOKS FOR AUTUMN & WINTER 2009-10

A *New System of Domestic Cookery* by Mrs Rundell appeared first in 1806 and was frequently reprinted throughout the nineteenth century. The final edition was in 1893, when Mrs Beeton had been hugely popular for thirty years. It will be for food historians to work out why her book remained in print and Mrs Rundell's vanished; but the fact is this is the first time *Domestic Cookery* has been reprinted for over a hundred years. We have used the 1816 edition, and are confident that most people will be able to cook from this book with ease, perhaps not as readily so as with *Good Things in England* but nevertheless nearly everyone will be able to adapt Mrs Rundell's suggestions to present-day use with no difficulty.

We first came across her book in *Jane Austen's Cookbook* by Maggie Black, since *Domestic Cookery* is one of the books Jane Austen would have used (had she cooked); our 1816 edition appeared in the same year as *Emma*. The *Cookbook* has ten of Mrs Rundell's recipes: for beef-steak pudding, apple pie, solid syllabubs, apple puffs, salmagundy, oyster loaves, little iced cakes, pigeon pie, orange peel straws in syrup, and rout drop cakes.

We then read about Mrs Rundell in the *Guardian* – when the John Murray Archive went to the National Library of Scotland there was an article about her because her bestselling cookery book was the foundation for the success of John Murray as a publisher. The new Persephone Preface is by Janet Morgan, a writer and member of the Library Board of Trustees; she explains Mrs Rundell's interesting but sometimes troubled relationship with the firm of John Murray

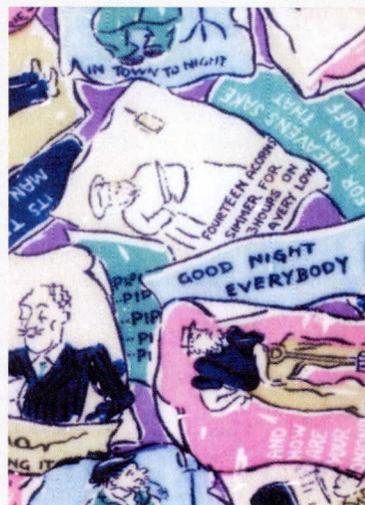
The advertisement for the second edition declared: 'Many receipts are given for things which, being in daily use, the mode of preparing them may be supposed too well-known to require a place in a cookery book; yet we rarely meet with fine melted butter, good toast and water, or well-made coffee.' As Janet Morgan observes, *Domestic Cookery* 'delivers all it promised. Home favourites were included, techniques and tools described and the physics and chemistry of food explained. The first section, for example, is about choosing fish. Salmon: "When just killed, there is a whiteness between the flakes, which gives great firmness; by keeping, this melts down, and the fish is more rich."'



Block printed cotton in Lapis style 1808-15, Victoria & Albert Museum



'Farm Scene' 1930, a dress fabric by Crysedé Ltd., Victoria & Albert Museum



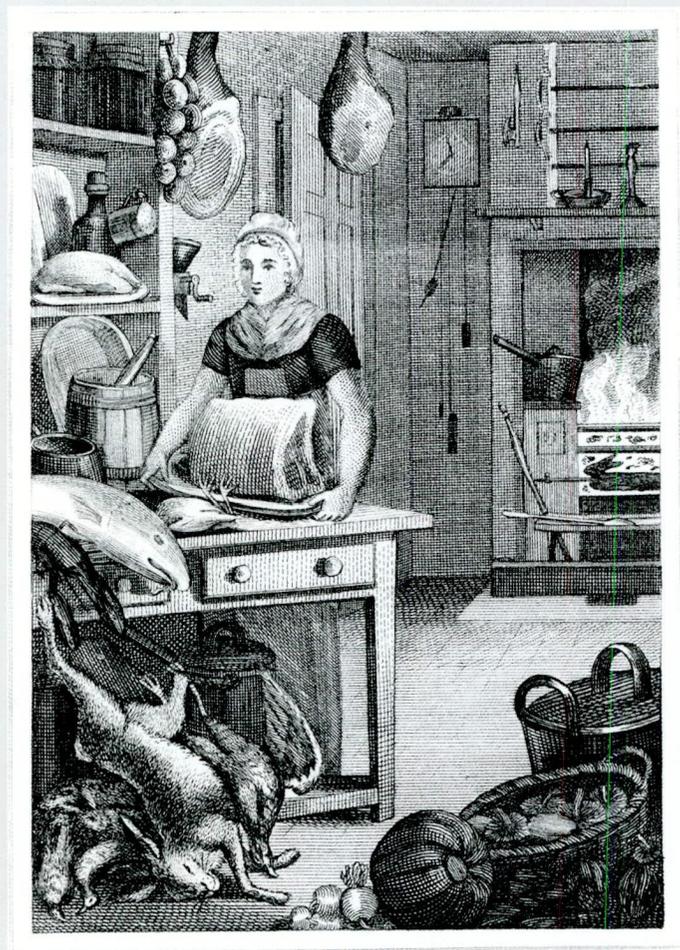
'Good Night Everybody' c. 1940, a Jacquard scarf in a private collection

Domestic *Cookery* was, Mrs Rundell said, 'intended for the conduct of the families of the authoress's own daughters, and for the arrangement of their table, so as to unite a good figure with proper economy... This little work would have been a treasure to herself when she first set out in life, and she therefore hopes it may prove useful to others.' As well as its extensive and varied list of 'receipts', more than a thousand, it addressed multiple daily domestic challenges. "To make Paste for Chapped Hands, and which will preserve them smooth by constant use..."; 'To cement broken China'; "To take Stains of any kind out of Linen..."; '...To make Flannels keep their colour and not shrink...'; '...To dye White gloves a Beautiful Purple...'; 'To take Ink out of Mahogany'; '...Oil from Boards or Stone...'; '...Rust out of Steel'; '...Black off the bright Bars of polished Stoves in a few Minutes...'; '... To prevent the creaking of a Door...'

And, Janet Morgan continues: 'Daily life in the nineteenth century had a long agenda: "To make Pot Pourri; an excellent Water to prevent hair from falling off, and to thicken it [a mixture of unadulterated honey, tendrils of vines and rosemary-tops]; Black Ink; Fine Blacking for Shoes." In addition, the book was practical: "Hot suppers are not much in use where people dine very late." Receipts for elaborate dishes were dissected but the author did not despise the ready-made: "Patent Cocoa: is a light wholesome

breakfast." Evidently Mrs Rundell did not keep to her morning room, marking up menus submitted by Cook, but was pleasurably engaged in growing, harvesting, and buying food. She reared her own hens in yards and poultry-houses built to her specification. Roosting arrangements and systems for deterring foxes and other predators were described. If the hens did not lay (she had a prescription to encourage them), she knew how to choose eggs at the market: "Put the large end of the egg to your tongue; if it feels warm it is new." Butter, too, is best from

home but, if none can be made there, she knew how to test the offerings at the butter-stall: "Put a knife into the butter if salt, and smell it when drawn out..." Tasting butter sold from barrels needs special persistence: "Being made at different times, the layers in casks will vary greatly; and you will not easily come at the goodness but by unhooping the cask, and trying it between the staves." The dairyman surely forgives this customer, who, having dismantled his barrels, finds joy in the contents: "Fresh butter ought to smell like a nosegay."



Frontispiece to a pirated 1818 edition of Mrs Rundell's New System of Domestic Cookery

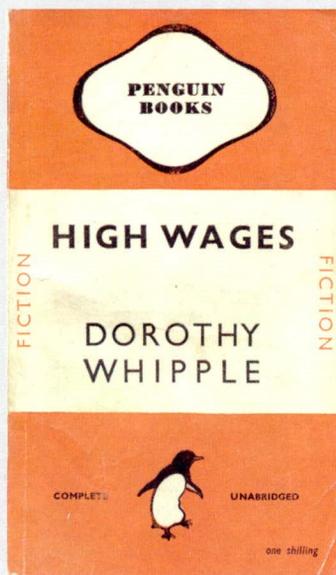
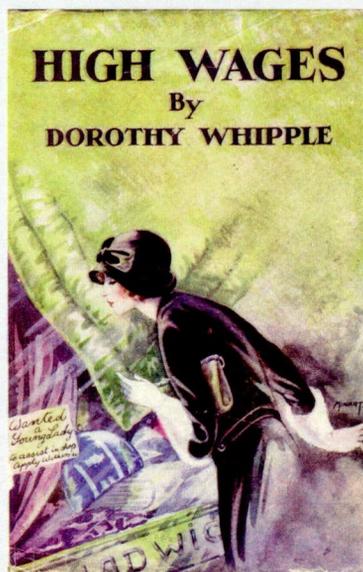
Interestingly, Mrs Rundell's book was also a bestseller in the United States (and has now been scanned in by Google): from 1806-44 there were fifteen American editions. And in that time there were sixty-seven English reprints, an astonishing number; which makes it even more inexplicable that *Domestic Cookery* vanished in the twentieth century.

We are confident, however, that nearly two hundred years on Persephone readers will find it both useful and entertaining, as well as being a work of social history in itself. Of course the modern cook will find some oddities, such as the relative scarcity of recipes for vegetables. Indeed, in Jane Grigson's *Vegetable Book* she mentions Mrs Rundell on the first page, quoting a rather sour remark by the poet Coleridge about the 1808 edition. He wrote in a letter: 'And as to

vegetables why "the Lady" [*Domestic Cookery* was originally published by A Lady, Mrs Rundell's own name not being used until after her death in 1828)] must have been all her life tethered in a Battersea Cabbage Garden [actually she was living in Hampstead when she wrote the book, in the building that is now the Holly Bush Inn] with a simple prospect of a Potato Field in the distance, and an occasional glimpse of a Turnip Waggon from over the Hedge – Covent Garden must have been a Terra Incognita, not even named in her Map.' However, 'this is unfair to Mrs Rundell,' writes Jane Grigson, 'but indicates both Coleridge's and general expectation' ie that vegetables should be more part of the meal than she makes them. And in fact, as Jane Grigson says, her *Domestic Cookery* is 'full of good vegetable dishes'.

High Wages is the fifth novel by Dorothy Whipple that we have published; we have also reprinted a selection of short stories as *The Closed Door and Other Stories*. To most of our readers Dorothy Whipple needs no introduction (to use a well-worn cliché) since she is our bestselling novelist. *Miss Pettigrew Lives for a Day* by Winifred Watson is far and away our single bestseller, but Dorothy Whipple, Marghanita Laski and Frances Hodgson Burnett are our bestselling writers.

Yet analysing Dorothy Whipple's appeal is tricky. She is not, of course, a 'great' writer. You could not take one of her sentences, as you can with, say, Mollie Panter-Downes, and hold it up to the light. But she is serviceable, perceptive and humane. Also, she has that great gift of talking directly to the reader. She is telling you a story unpretentiously and directly and we cannot put the book down until she has finished with us. This is the most frequent comment we get in the shop. 'I could not put it down,' people say over and over again about *Someone at a Distance* (particularly), *They Knew Mr Knight*, *The Priory* and *They Were Sisters*. Unfortunately, readability is not a quality that is studied in universities; thus no literary critic has ever defined what makes Dorothy Whipple's domestic, everyday books so gripping. I think it is simply because she creates such alive and realistic characters – if Ellen in



Someone at a Distance or Lucy in *They Were Sisters* walked into the shop, we would recognise them. What happened to you? we would say. But, it is true, the books can be perceived as a little everyday: the short story in this issue, for example, which was discovered for us by the actor Benjamin Whitrow – Mr Bennet in *Pride and Prejudice* – is neither thrilling nor profound, it is just an incident in a young girl's life. But it is an incident that will have a profound effect on her. At the same time it is interesting sociologically – you get a strong sense of how she lives in Endsleigh Street (oddly enough, the street where Amy Levy lived, round the corner from Lamb's Conduit Street) even though there is no detail about her working life.

Of course Dorothy Whipple is a supremely moral novelist and that is one of her greatest strengths. She is quietly angry on behalf of the heroine of 'A Lovely Time'; she is extremely angry on behalf of Ellen in *Someone at a Distance*; and she is incandescent on behalf of the poor woman in 'Wednesday' who is only allowed to see her children once a month. Yet, she was not an angry person. It is just that she cared so much about people, about her characters, and this intense involvement, compassion and insight is what makes her writing so irresistible.

But readers of this *Biannually* should remember that not everyone sees the point of

Dorothy Whipple's novels! Virago, famously, did not like them, and this summer Rachel Cooke wrote in the *Observer*, in the middle of a wonderful panegyric about our books, that Dorothy Whipple 'bores me to sobs'. Was she being ironic? How can she be bored by her? Middlebrow she might be, lowbrow, possibly, but boring? It's a mystery; possibly to be solved one day when we hope to entice Rachel Cooke to debate Dorothy Whipple's appeal, or lack of it, with Sarah Waters, who loves her.

So: we are delighted to be publishing *High Wages* (1930, Dorothy Whipple's second book).

It is about a girl called Jane who gets a badly-paid job in a draper's shop in the early years of the last century. Yet the title of the book is based on a Carlyle quotation – 'Experience doth take dreadfully high wages, but she teacheth like none other' – and Jane, having saved some money and been lent some by a friend, opens her own dress-shop, selling the kind of clothes seen below in a 1913 ad.

As Jane Brocket writes in her novel 'is a celebration of the Lancastrian values of hard work and stubbornness, and there could be no finer setting for a

A Choice selection of *Silk Coats* in all the Latest Models
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Elegant Coat.
Made in black soft Satin, straight shape, deep armhole, long pleated raver, draped front, contrasting at side, lined soft silk.
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Made in black Satin satin, very deep roll collar square back, trimmed moire silk pipings, lined soft silk.
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Becoming Coat.
Made of black double satin, straight shape, sailor collar & deep revers piped velvet fastening at side.
£3-5-6

B B 1

shop-girl-made-good story than the county in which cotton was king.' And the cultural historian Catherine Horwood has written about this novel: 'Dorothy Whipple was only too well aware that clothes were one of the keys to class in this period. Before WW1, only the well-off could afford to have their clothes made: yards of wool crepe and stamped silks were turned into costumes by an invisible army of dressmakers across the country, and the idea of buying clothes ready-made from a dress shop was still unusual. Vera Brittain talks of "hand-me-downs" in *Testament of Youth* with a quite different meaning from today. These were not clothes passed from sibling to sibling but "handed down from a rack" in an outfitter's shop, a novelty.' *High Wages* describes how the way people shopped was beginning to change; it is this change that Dorothy Whipple uses as a key turning point in her novel.

Our third book for this autumn/winter is by another of our bestselling novelists, Marghanita Laski. The unusual thing about her novels is that

each one is so different. *The Victorian Chaise-longue* is a ghost story – well, there is no ghost, but it is about a girl who lies down on her chaise-longue and wakes up frozen in the body of her *alter ego* eighty years before. *Little Boy Lost* is a heartrending, incisive



description of a man's search for his son in France at the end of the war. And *The Village* is about snobbery in England just after the war – about the family in the large house living in straitened circumstances and their charwoman's son who does very well for himself and wants to marry their daughter.

T*o Bed with Grand Music* is different again. It is about sex in wartime. On the first page (a scene as compelling in its way as the five conception scenes at the beginning of *Manja*) Deborah and her husband are saying goodbye to each other before he is posted overseas. They swear undying loyalty, well, undying emotional loyalty because the husband does not deny that he might not be able to be faithful all the time he is away. But once he is gone, Deborah is soon bored by life in a village with her small son and decides to get a job in London. Here she acquires a lover; and another, and another. As Juliet Gardiner, the historian, says in her Preface, this is a near harlot's tale. But she admires the book very much because it shows such a different side of the war from that shown in, for example, Jocelyn

Playfair's *A House in the Country*, which is full of people mostly behaving honourably. The title of *To Bed with Grand Music* comes from an essay by Sir Thomas Browne called 'On Dreams' where he writes, 'Happy are they that go to bed with grand music, like Pythagoras, or have ways to compose the fantastical spirit, whose unruly wanderings take off

inward sleeper.' And indeed Deborah is both happy at going to bed with grand music, and unruly. Although this is, in some ways, a rather shocking book, it is also very funny. There is a scene when she is making a token gesture about resisting her first lover and he says that if his wife was in the same position as Deborah, ie with her husband away possibly for a long time, he would want her to have a lover so that she would not be bad-tempered. This is rather typical of the ironic, sardonic, yet possibly realistic tone of the book, which certainly throws light on the wartime years in a quite different way from any other novel that we know of.

In *To Bed with Grand Music*, writes Juliet Gardiner, Deborah Robertson 'definitely does *not* keep the home fires burning while her husband is away at war. Soon, all too predictably, rather than staying in in the evening eating a tin of baked beans and reading the evening paper, she embarks on a series of affairs, each with a progressively rather less upright character than the one before. Hers is now a world of smart restaurants, cocktail bars, nightclubs, little black dresses, frivolous concoctions of hats, jewels and black market perfume – rather reminiscent of the world evoked in some of Mollie Panter-Downes' short stories *Good Evening*, *Mrs Craven* Persephone Book No. 8, particularly in the eponymous story.' Deborah, however, is not prepared to wait around loyally for either husband

or lover and in fact becomes almost stereotypically the woman on the poster on page 21 of this *Biannually*.

'The fascination of *To Bed with Grand Music*,' continues Juliet Gardiner, 'is its unusual recreation of one aspect of the Home Front in the Second World War. The book's appeal lies in its portrayal of someone who signally failed the "test of war", and in its evocation of a fractured and transient society during the exigencies and contingencies of wartime. However, although *To Bed with Grand Music* chronicles immorality, it is not in itself an immoral book, although it is a

cautionary one. This is an ahead-of-the-pack telling of an aspect of the civilian's war it was not yet acceptable to reveal, exposing aspects of its darker side, its other wounds. Deborah, pretty much a tart without a heart by mid-way through the book, exemplifies war's dark underside, its heightened passions – the undoubted eroticism of danger – its moral fragility and pervasive aura of contumely and temptations succumbed to.' It is hardly surprising, then, that Marghanita Laski chose to publish this, her second novel, under the pseudonym Sarah Russell, and the identity of the true author was not revealed for many years.



OUR READERS WRITE

‘I so loved *Doreen*, identifying strongly with the character and similarly desperately missing my mother, who remarried in London during the Blitz while I was sent to the safety of the countryside. I have given copies to two friends, neither of whom had had similar experiences but we all adored the book’s gentle simplicity. None of us could put it down.’ JS, Headington

‘I thought *Making Conversation* was a remarkably accurate picture of painfully keeping up appearances in a changing world and all the misunderstandings that arise between generations. It is such a beautifully observed account of a schoolgirl trying to get things right and always getting them wrong which other readers, like me, will remember only too well. However, this splendidly wry and witty picture of pretensions is too uncomfortably near the truth for me to laugh out loud when reading it. I am so glad that you have republished this.’ AC, Fowey

‘*Making Conversation* is a light, easy read which propels one along with the rather amazing Martha Freke whose precocious intelligence leaves one gasping. Martha’s observations of her peers and her elders are acutely accurate. Her ability to converse with ease on the high plateaux of academia yet never quite fit in makes her escape to

teach English in Prague so very appropriate. At last “to speak simple, distinct English” and “to never again [let her] tongue run away with her” is the perfect ending for this comic novel.’ KD, Westerham

‘I loved *The Fortnight in September*. It was so well written and interesting and I started caring about the different characters including the cat and the canary and the lady next door and the people across the street and wished the fortnight would go on for ever. It was the sort of “natural” writing that conceals a great deal of craftsmanship.

I also enjoyed *Making Conversation* and felt sure that large chunks of it were lifted straight from real life. It is a real life enhancer of a novel and some of the descriptions of the women’s college were quite priceless. At times I did not know whether to laugh or cry. A gem of a discovery.’ JH, Ebbw Vale

‘I would just like to tell you how much I enjoyed reading *Making Conversation*. It was a really funny and lovely read.’ CP, Wheatley

‘I wanted to let you know how much I loved *The Far Cry*. I found myself underlining many passages and stopping frequently to admire Emma Smith’s beautiful writing. This was such an inspirational story, with

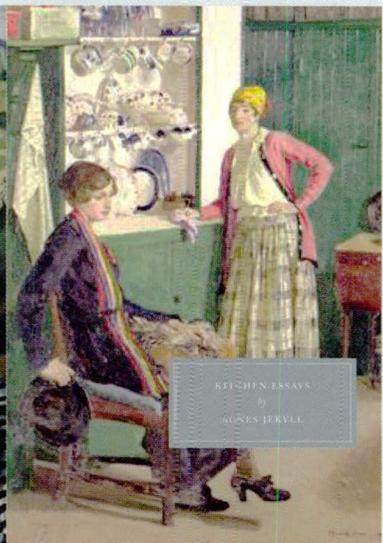
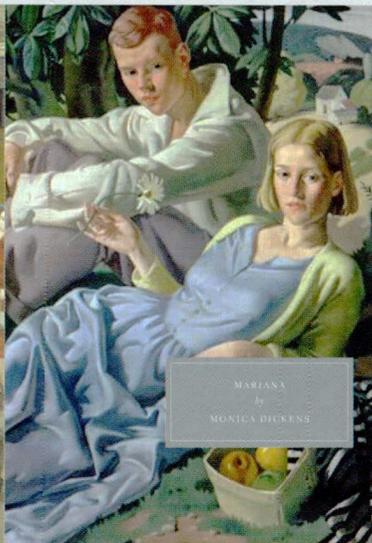
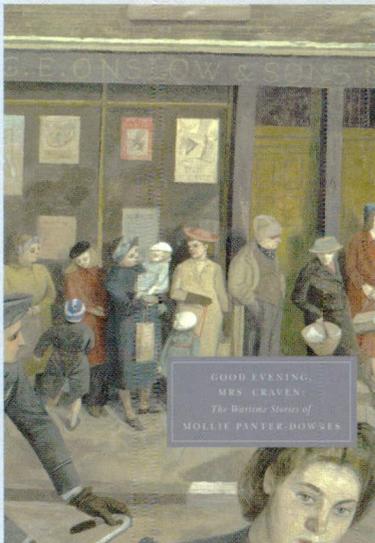
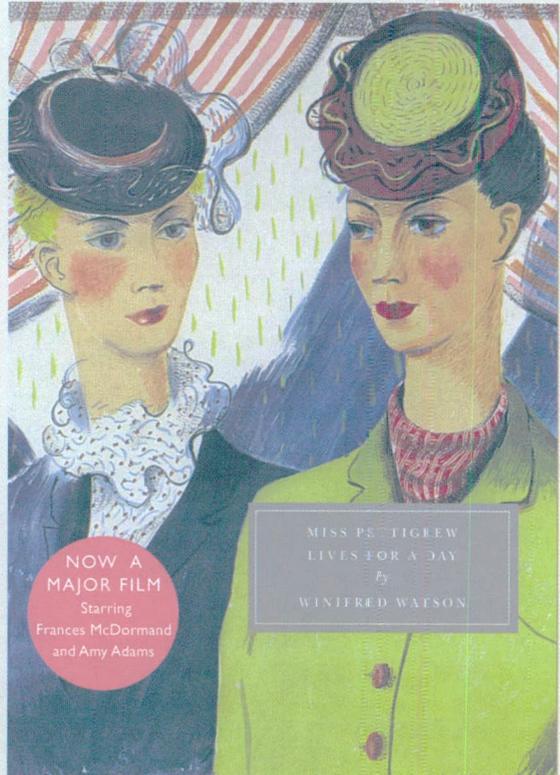
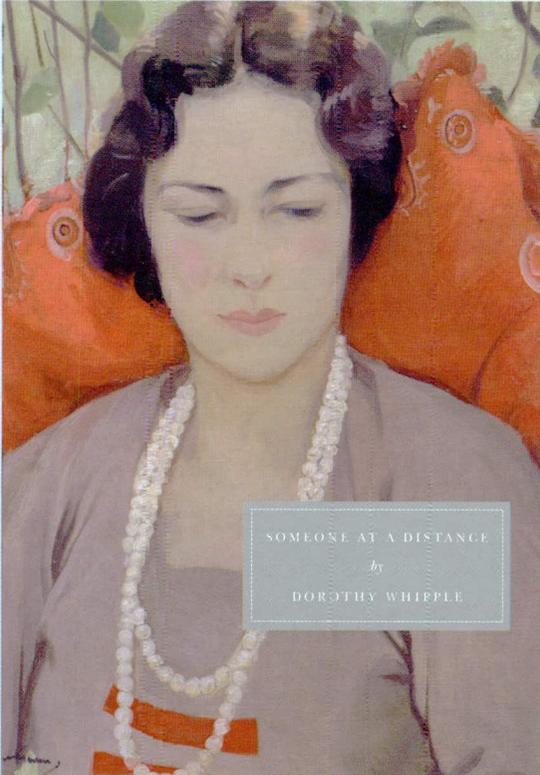
delightful characters (especially Miss Spooner). When I finished the last page it was a pleasure to find Susan Hill’s ‘Afterword’. She expressed everything I felt about the book.’ MK, New York City

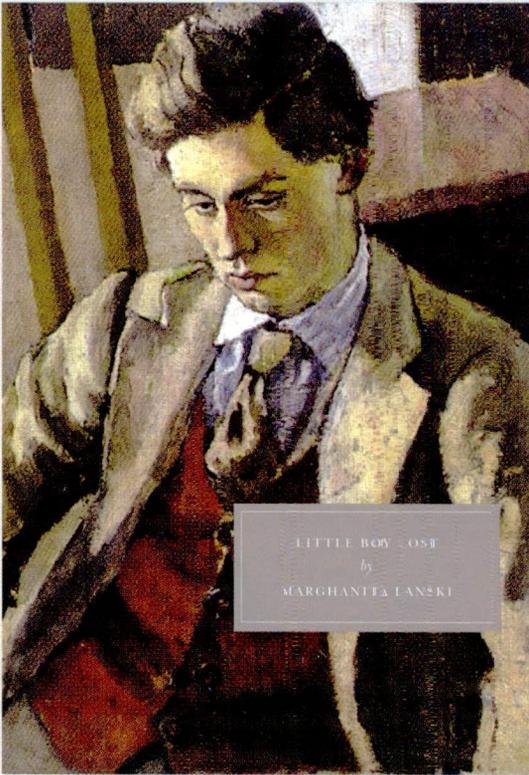
‘Thank you for *Brook Evans*. Susan Glaspell’s evocation of landscape and of the effects of stifling morality made the wait while it reprinted worth every hour.’ Gill Farnen, Newton

‘I recently read *They Were Sisters*, which I had had on my bookshelves for years and never read, thinking it was just a popular romantic novel. I realised the brilliance as soon as I began to read it. Then I ordered *Someone at a Distance* through a local bookshop and when it came I devoured it immediately and fell in love with Persephone Books. Now I have forty-one of your books, none of which has been a dud, though obviously I have preferences. At present I am reading *Alas, Poor Lady* in which Rachel Ferguson explores with apt and cruel sensitivity the plight of unmarried middle-class women well into the twentieth century.’ TW, Mansfield

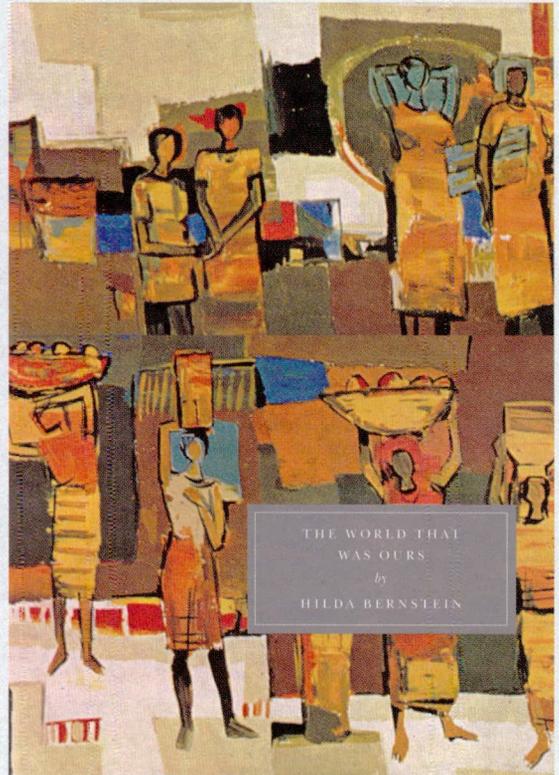
‘The way of life *The Country Housewife’s Book* was written for went on well into my childhood. I had been searching for a copy for my daughter-in-law and was delighted to see the reissue.’ SW, Horton Kirby

TEN PERSEPHONE CLASSICS TO CELEBRATE OUR TEN YEARS 1999-2009

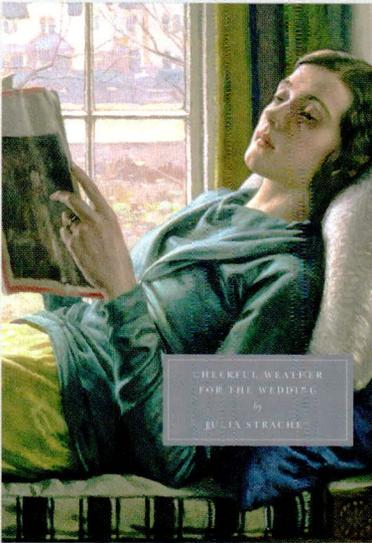




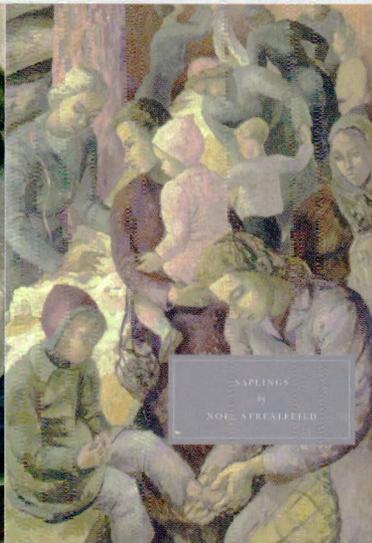
LITTLE BOY LOST
by
MARGHANITA LANSKI



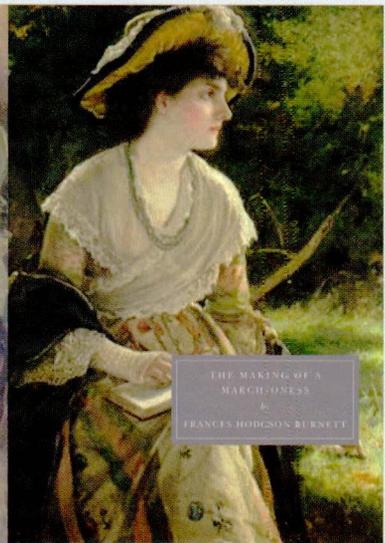
THE WORLD THAT WAS OURS
by
HILDA BERNSTEIN



CHEERFUL WEATHER FOR THE WEDDING
by
JULIA STRACHE



SAPLINGS
by
NOE STRATFIELD



THE MAKING OF A MARCHIONESS
by
FRANCES HODGSON BURNETT

The artwork on the front of *Someone at a Distance* is 'Pauline' 1929 by Sir James Gunn, *Miss Pettigrew Lives for Day* has a detail from 'Blondes and Brunettes' 1938 by Charles Mozley, *Good Evening, Mrs Craven* has a detail from 'The Queue at the Fish Shop' 1944 by Evelyn Dunbar, *Mariana is Amity* 1933 by Bernard Fleetwood-Walker, *Kitchen Essays* is 'In the Kitchen' 1918 by Harold Harvey, *Little Boy Lost* is 'Youth Wearing a Brown Waistcoat' 1938 by Rhoda Glass, *The World that was Ours* is a detail from a painting by Walter Battiss 1906-82, *Cheerful Weather for the Wedding* is 'Girl Reading' 1932 by Harold Knight, *Saplings* is 'WVS Clothing Exchange' 1943 by Evelyn Gibbs and *The Making of a Marchioness* is 'Woman Reading' by Robert James Gordon fl.1871-93.

HAROLD HARVEY AND CRYSÉDE

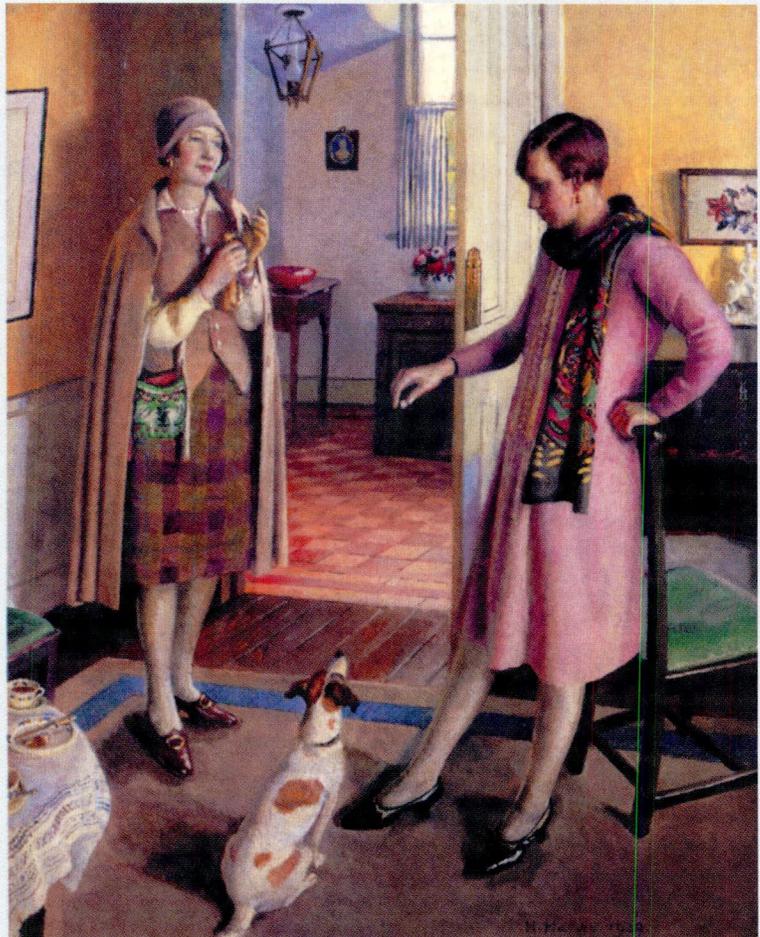
Harold Harvey (1874-1941) is celebrated four times in this issue of the *Biannually*: on the cover, on page 9 (the cover of the Classic *Kitchen Essays*), on this page and on page 17. He had two distinct styles: in his early work he painted local Cornish scenes and people; but after his 1911 marriage (his wife Gertrude Bodinnar was also a painter, of landscapes and flowers) he began to move away from the traditional *plein-air* subjects of the pre-war Newlyn School towards more contemporary interiors.

The initial impetus for this was the influence of his friend Harold Knight, Laura Knight's husband, who had studied the paintings by Vermeer in Holland and been painting domestic interiors since 1905 – in 1932 he painted the picture of the girl reading, used on the front of the Classic edition of *Cheerful Weather for the Wedding*, opposite. Harold and Gertrude Harvey, and Laura and Harold Knight, were close friends.

The Harveys rarely left Cornwall, and all four paintings reproduced in this *Biannually* were painted there. Gertrude can be seen on the left on the cover, on the right in the *Kitchen Essays* image on page 9 and on this page on the left in a cloche hat.

It is appropriate that the fabric we have used for *High Wages* is a Cryséde fabric since the firm was founded in Newlyn in 1920 by one of the Harveys' closest friends, Alec Walker. The curator at Penlee House in Penzance, where the archive is kept, has written: 'The textile designs were available in a wide variety of colour-ways, printed on silk, silk georgette and to a limited degree

on cotton and linen. The designs were applied using wood block; a different block was used for each colour, sometimes as many as seven.' Several of Harold Harvey's 1920s paintings show Cryséde fabrics in use. On this page Gertrude is with a friend, who is dressed in a plain silk dress and a long Cryséde scarf, in the dining-room of the Harveys' home, Maen Cottage, Newlyn.



Titbits 1929 by Harold Harvey, oil on canvas, The Trehayes Collection, Cornwall

OUR REVIEWERS WRITE

In *The Victorian Chaise-longue* a young married woman, Melanie, scours antiques shops to furnish her new home and comes back with an old chaise-longue, which is perfect apart from an unsightly reddish-brown stain. She falls asleep on it and wakes up in an unfamiliar house, an unfamiliar time – and an unfamiliar body. At first she assumes she must be dreaming. But gradually she starts to piece together the story of Milly, the young Victorian woman in the last stages of consumption whom she has apparently become, and the nature of the disgrace she has brought on the household run by her fearsomely stern elder sister. Why does the sight of the doctor make her pulse beat faster? And can she find a way back to her own life?’ From the *Guardian*’s ‘1000 novels Everyone Must Read’

Good Evening, Mrs Craven is a funny, poignant book indeed. Mollie Panter-Downes has the sharpest of eyes for irony and manners, and she loves to poke affectionate fun at overly stiff characters. Her greatest grace, though, is her ability to capture, in quick flashes, the immediacy of life during the war. Her characters are petty and noble, hungry and brave, solid and silly and true.’

Over the course of the day (and the evening and the late, late night) Miss Pettigrew enjoys

her first cocktail party, her first night-club visit, first waltz in a very long time, and she makes the first friends she’s found in ages. To read *Miss Pettigrew Lives for a Day* is to spend several enjoyable hours feeling that the world is a loving, forgiving place. It’s a flute of champagne after a good filling tea-time meal. It’s a lark and a spree and a little bit of literary therapy.’ Watermark Books

Despite its original publication 75 years ago, *The Country Housewife’s Book* is full of sound advice that many of us would love to spend long summer days following – picking and bottling fruit, making jams and jellies, drying herbs and making medicinal use of them. There are also useful tips on how to dispatch “the mischievous mouse” and cherish ladybirds since they are the “the unpaid helpers of the country housewife”.’ *History Today*

First published in 1934, *Miss Buncke’s Book* is a hilarious romp that pokes gentle fun at publishing and at the claustrophobia of village life. Miss Buncke, frumpy and 40, writes a risqué bestseller (nom-de-plume John Smith) based all too obviously on her neighbours. Outraged, they threaten libel suits if only they could identify Mr Smith. Miss Buncke has the last laugh – all the way to the bank.’ Val Hennessy in the *Daily Mail*

I relished every minute I spent reading *The Home-Maker*, which is thought-provoking, heart-warming and immensely readable. It mulls over serious questions like the power relationships that exist between parent and child and whether “even a little boy had some standing in the world, inviolable by grown-ups, yes, *sacred even to parents.*” Moira Richards in Red Room

In *Cheerful Weather for the Wedding* Julia Strachey creates an environment of comic high anxiety and unexpected imagery. Metaphors that at first appear whimsical are quickly revealed to be perfectly apt, as when Strachey describes the bride’s forgetful mother, who has just assigned half of the overnight guests to the same bedroom, as having the worried facial expression of someone who had “swallowed a packet of live bumblebees”. Julia Strachey’s sharp eye, playful language and perfect comic timing will have you laughing.’ Jessa Crispin on NPR.org

I am currently reading Clough’s wonderful narrative poem *Amours de Voyage* in a charming edition. It has a soothing grey cover with a satin finish and warm blue and green endpapers. The paper is thick, creamy and sweet-smelling. I would happily give this lovely thing a smacking great kiss.’ Rupert Christiansen *Daily Telegraph*

THE PERSEPHONE 86

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 Beuman
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 writer 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 for 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 Beuman
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 Funny, observant and bleak 1947 short stories, twice in the *Evening Standard* bestseller list. 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 Oriol 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 Beuman
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 first 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 1947–65: Second volume of short stories first published in *The New Yorker*, previously unknown this side of the Atlantic.

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 on two cassettes 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 Sarrax 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 owners which can nevertheless easily 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, and marriage, 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 Bowden). 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 Beaman

56. They Were Sisters by Dorothy Whipple The fourth Persephone book by this wonderful writer; a 1943 novel that contrasts the vicissitudes of 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 wonderful 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* (fritillary), *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 about Rosalie Vanderpoel, an American heiress who marries an English aristocrat, whose beautiful and enterprising sister Bettina sets out to rescue her. Preface: Anne Sebba
72. **House-Bound** by **Winifred Peck** This 1942 novel describes an Edinburgh woman deciding, radically, to run her house without help and do her own cooking; the war is in the background and foreground. Afterword: Penelope Fitzgerald
73. **The Young Pretenders** by **Edith Henrietta Fowler** An 1895 novel for adults and children 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 and 2009.
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 counter-point to *Few Eggs and No Oranges*. Preface: Ruth Evans
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.
79. **Round About a Pound a Week** by **Maud Pember Reeves** A study of working-class life in Lambeth in the early years of the C20th that is witty, readable, poignant and fascinating – and relevant today. Preface: Polly Toynbee
80. **The Country Housewife's Book** by **Lucy H Yates** A useful 1934 book, suggested to us by the owner of a working farm, on topics such as the storeroom and larder, using garden produce, and game.
81. **Miss Buncl's Book** by **DE Stevenson** A middle-aged woman writes a novel, as 'John Smith', about the village she lives in. A delightful and funny 1934 book by an author whose work sold in millions. Preface: Aline Templeton.
82. **Amours de Voyage** by **Arthur Hugh Clough** A novel in verse, set in Rome in 1849, funny and beautiful and profound, and extraordinarily modern in tone. Preface: Julian Barnes
83. **Making Conversation** by **Christine Longford**. An amusing, unusual 1931 novel about a girl growing up which is in the vein of *Cold Comfort Farm* and No. 38 ***Cheerful Weather for the Wedding***. Preface: Rachel Billington
84. **A New System of Domestic Cookery** by **Mrs Rundell** An 1806 cookbook – we have reprinted the 1816 edition in facsimile, it is long, detailed and fascinating. Preface: Janet Morgan
85. **High Wages** by **Dorothy Whipple** Another novel by the eternally popular Dorothy Whipple about a girl setting up a dress-shop just before the First World War. Preface: Jane Brocket
86. **To Bed with Grand Music** by **Marghanita Laski** A husband and wife are separated by the war; she is serially unfaithful. This is quite a new take on 'women in war'. Preface: Juliet Gardiner
- The First Persephone Life: The Other Elizabeth Taylor** by **Nicola Beauman** The first biography of the twentieth-century English novelist, using new material to throw light on the novels and the life.

'A LOVELY TIME'

BY DOROTHY WHIPPLE

She got in from the office earlier than usual because she had been lucky with buses. She thought she would write to Lucy to keep her mind off the cold. There were gas-fires in the bedrooms at Vale House, but she was determined not to light hers until she was undressing for bed; the meter was a glutton for shillings and ate a great hole in her money every week.

Only one light was allowed in the bedroom, but by means of a long flex from the ceiling she had made it into a bed-lamp, which bloomed now like an orange in the dusk it created. She sat down under it to write to Lucy, who had remained at home in Ilkeston.

'I have just come in from the office. It is a cold night, but my little lamp makes a glow, and my little room feels very peaceful after the busy day. Oh, Lucy, it is wonderful living in London.'

Yes, it was wonderful. Especially when she wrote about it to Lucy, but her feet were very cold. She settled herself again with pen and pad, but before she could write another word, there was a knock on the door, and in came Sheila Spence, with her hair in lead curlers under a pink shingle cap.

'Oh, you're in at last, Barnesy darling,' she cried. 'I've been umpteen times before. You must help me out tonight. You must

come out to dinner with me and Geoff Potter and Perry Gifford. Rosamund's just telephoned to say she's too seedy to come, and I can't let them down. We must be four. Do say you'll come. We're going to Barteolozzi's and then on to a night club sort of place. You'll like the chaps, and Gifford writes or something. Do say you'll come, darling!'

Alice – since she had come to London she spelt it 'Alys' and pronounced it to rhyme with 'knees'; she would have liked to do something with 'Barnes' too, only it was difficult on account of letters from home and that kind of thing – Alice stared at Sheila while her poised pen deposited a large blot on the letter to Lucy.

'Oh, Miss Spence...' she breathed at last. No one had asked her out since she came to London, and now here was an invitation to dinner and a night club! Dinner and a night club...!

'You'll come then?' said Sheila. 'Cheers. Have you got an evening dress? Without sleeves, I mean? Good. Well, get a move on, darling. I've had my hair in Queen Besses since I got in from the office. What are you going to do with yours?' she eyed Alice's lank locks with some anxiety.

'I don't know. What can I do? I'll do anything,' promised Alice.

Sheila considered her.

'Well, I think an Eton Crop's your style,' she said. 'What about

borrowing Shandon's "Stickit", or whatever it is she uses for hers, and then you can plaster it behind your ears. Make it sleek and smart, see?'

'D'you think she'd lend me some? I could pay her back tomorrow,' said Alice hopefully.

'Oh, don't you bother about that. I'll go and get it from her. She's in.' Sheila knew she was in because she had first given her the invitation she now gave to Alice. But Shandon couldn't go, and Alice was Hobson's Choice and must be made the best of.

Alice hurriedly put away the letter to Lucy and fled to the bathroom for hot water. Then she recklessly lit the gas-fire. The first time you went out with young men to dinner and a night club, you didn't stop to cavil about a shilling in the meter.

She sang as she took off her work-a-day clothes. Fancy Miss Spence asking her! It was most kind, because she hardly knew her really and yet she called her darling and asked her out to dinner and a night club. Oh, London life had begun! She had been lonely, she had been dull, she had been cold and felt the food at Vale House inadequate, but now the lights had gone up, the fun, the excitement, the experience she had come for were going to begin!

'I say,' said Sheila, putting her head in again. 'Dutch treats, you

know. We're all paying for ourselves. That's all right, isn't it?'

'Oh, of *course*,' said Alice, snatching at her cotton kimono.

'It won't be much at Barteolozzi's,' said Sheila consolingly. 'But it's jolly good food all the same. Got any cigarettes?'

'Oh, I'm afraid I haven't,' said Alice. She didn't really like the taste of cigarettes, and only smoked when she wished to be smart.

'Well, you can get some on the way. I'll take some too. And matches,'

'I haven't a fancy box for the matches,' faltered Alice.

'Oh, don't bother about that. Nobody has.'

Alice smiled happily once more and went on with her dressing. She was so glad she had the artificial satin cloak. It was strawberry pink and had a ruched collar. Lucy had made it for her to come to London with, but although she had been in

London more than four months, she had never had it out of its box. Now she was going to wear it at last.

She recklessly cut a piece out of the top of her winter vest so that it should not show above her black frock. She knew she was being thriftless and in every way awful, but she was going to have a lovely time, and nothing, nothing must spoil it. The brand-new woollen vest must be sacrificed.

She put on the black dress. It



Harold Harvey Girls Outside the Gaiety Cinema, Newlyn 1925 oil on canvas, in a private collection .



Mademoiselle?’

Alice said water, please, and Maddelena went to the top of the stairs to shout down the order, beginning with ‘Quattro cocktails’ and ending with ‘Aqua’. Alice thought she would enjoy water as never before, since it had been called by the name the Romans used for it.

The dinner ordered, the young men turned their attention to their companions. Mr Potter stroked Sheila’s arm with one hand, while with the fingers of the other he pressed in the waves of his fair hair, or sought the

spots on the back of his neck.

Alice was conscious of the gaze of Mr Gifford and was thrilled. Perhaps he would put her in a book. She began to tear the waxed paper from the new packet of cigarettes to give herself countenance while under the observation of a writer.

She did not see the look he transferred to Sheila before he turned away, a look that said as plainly as any words: ‘How you had the nerve to bring me this...’

‘Will you smoke?’ asked Alice, with a smile.

He looked over his shoulder

consideringly at the packet.

‘Perhaps I will,’ he said.

Alice put a cigarette between her own lips, and striking a match lit first his and then her own. She was very gallant. She felt she had copied Sheila very successfully. Men used to do these things for women, but now it was the other way round. Much newer and smarter, she reflected, and was glad she had not betrayed her provincialism by waiting for him to light up for her.

She smoked very slowly, because she had read once that novices gave themselves away by smoking too fast. Once she managed to blow down her nose, but it was a great effort to suppress a cough afterwards. She decided to practise inhalation in the privacy of her room at Vale House.

‘You write, don’t you?’ she said in a respectful tone to Gifford.

‘Sometimes,’ he answered indifferently. He did not encourage enquiries about his literary activities, which were as yet unsuccessful.

‘What are you working at now?’ asked Alice softly, in what she hoped was the right phraseology.

‘I never discuss my work,’ said Mr Gifford shortly.

Alice shrank, and looked out of the window again, but the little boy had gone to bed. Mr Gifford glared balefully at the stiff poke of hair at the back of her head, and again at Sheila, who giggled and went on eating the middle out of Mr Potter’s bread.

Something like a panic was going on in Alice’s small breast,

as she kept her head turned away to the window. Whatever could she talk about next to Mr Gifford? He was so Byronic and difficult, and the other two across the table were so engrossed with each other. Topics ran through her mind like mice, but she couldn't catch any of them.

Aeroplanes, or had you to say aeroplanes now? Music, but she didn't know anything about it. Theatres, but she hadn't been able to afford to go to any yet.

'Oh, dear... oh, dear...' she cried silently. 'What shall I talk about? What will he think of me?'

The eternal anxiety of youth! 'What will he think of me?' not 'What do I think of him?' Poor Alice!

'Ecco,' said the maternal voice of Maddelena, placing a cocktail before her.

Alice smiled again. The dreadful moment was past. She leaned her sharp little elbows on the table and drank her cocktail with the others.

'Here's how!' said Gifford.

'Happy Days!' said Sheila and Geoff.

'Thank you,' said Alice.

It didn't sound right, somehow. She was faintly worried again, and wondered if there was a little book to be bought on the subject of what to say when drinking cocktails. But the worry was soon dispelled by the mounting influence of a cocktail on an empty stomach. Alice began to feel queer, but happy. She thought her legs had left her, but when she felt for her knees under the table they were surprisingly still there.

Reassured, Alice leant impulsively towards Perry Gifford.

'Won't it be lovely at the Night Club?' she said, beaming into his face.

'That is hardly the term I should use,' he said without warmth. 'I should say it will be...'

He looked at her and left it at that.

Alice felt rebuked for using such a word as 'lovely' to a writer who must, of course, be particular about the choice of words. 'Lovely' was a slack sort of word; you used it for everything whether you meant it or not. She must be more careful in future. She smiled apologetically at Mr Gifford.

The ninon scarf and the black dress slipped a little and revealed one small bony shoulder. She left it like that, and felt elegant and rather fast. She did not know her winter vest showed, but Perry Gifford did, and that, as he put it to himself, settled it.

Maddelena arrived with a steaming copper dish and proceeded to serve out the contents. Alice was immensely relieved to find that tournedos were comfortable steaks with rich dark sauce and potatoes in rosettes. She smiled happily and began at last to appease her hunger. Mr Gifford became engrossed in his dinner and did not need to be talked to. Sheila and Geoff across the table were very gay together and held hands between mouthfuls.

It was only by the exercise of great self-control that Alice managed to leave a little of the

steak for manners, and the caramel cream she chose afterwards because it was the cheapest, disappeared almost before she had properly looked at it.

'We'll have coffee at the club,' said Sheila, collecting the sums due for the dinner to hand over to Mr Potter. 'Come along, Barnesy, we'll go and do our faces. Find out what Perry keeps mouthing to me about,' she said in an aside to Geoff. I can't make out what he wants. Come along, Barnesy.'

Alice caught up the strawberry satin cloak and what remained of the cigarettes, and followed Sheila to the tiny cloakroom, where the paint was labeled wet and they had to keep their elbows into their sides as they powdered their noses.

'Wasn't the dinner good?' said Alice. 'It was excellent.'

'Your hair's come unstuck at the back,' said Sheila.

'Oh, has it?' Alice was alarmed. 'Oh, what can I do to it?'

'I think you'd better wet your



comb and plaster it down again,' said Sheila. Alice thought she detected a faint coldness in her voice. But perhaps it was her fancy, because when she spoke again Sheila was quite friendly.

'I say, darling,' she said suddenly. 'Could you possibly lend me five bob for tonight? I'm getting short. You know how it is when you go out. And Geoff never has any money. I'll give it you back on Friday, I swear I will.'

'Oh, yes, Miss Spencer, I'll lend it you with pleasure,' said Alice, blushing under her white powder at the embarrassment the other must feel at having to ask a comparative stranger for a loan.

'It's awfully decent of you,' said Sheila.

'Don't mention it,' begged Alice, handing her two half-crowns, and looking surreptitiously to see that there was still some money left. Lending money had not entered into her calculations for the week.

'Now for the club,' said Sheila gaily.

'Oh, won't it be lovely?' said Alice, squeezing her friend's arm as they went down the stairs to where the young men stood. As they approached, Perry Gifford walked off to the door. He even went through it.

'These writers are very queer,' admitted Alice to herself.

'Sheila, one moment,' said Mr Potter, drawing her apart.

Alice stood at the foot of the stairs, holding the satin cloak round her and humming to herself. The Night Club, the

Night Club ... this is London, this is Life...!

She looked at Sheila listening to Geoff. When Sheila looked at anyone, she looked from eye to eye, from one eye to the other very fast. Alice tried to do it to an imaginary face, and felt dizzy. She hummed again. The Night Club, the Night Club... What a lot she would have to write to Lucy!

Sheila was coming towards her.

'Now are we ready,' called Alice gaily, advancing.

'I say, Miss Barnes,' said Sheila, drawing her back to the foot of the stairs. 'I'm ever so sorry, but Perry Gifford finds he can't go on to the Club after all. He says he's got to go home and do some writing. You know how it is. If he feels in the mood, he has to go, hasn't he?'

'Oh, yes,' said Alice, her face relaxing with relief. If this was all...

'Well, you see,' said Sheila, fiddling with her green earrings and looking from one eye to the other in Alice's face, which was stiffening again with apprehension. 'Well, you see, that makes us three, doesn't it? And three's not much use at a dance club, is it? I mean to say, it wouldn't be much fun for you if you went, would it? You see what I mean.'

Alice saw at last, and blushed to have been so long about it.

'Oh,' she said hurriedly. 'I quite understand. Don't worry about me. I can go home.'

Home did not seem to be the right word.

'I can go back,' she amended.

'I'm ever so sorry, Miss Barnes,' said Sheila, retreating towards Geoff.

'Oh, it's quite all right,' said Alice. 'Goodnight, Mr Potter. Goodnight, Miss Spence.'

'Goodnight,' said Sheila, with a gushing smile, taking Mr Potter's arm.

Mr Potter raised his hat a little way, and with a wide, aching smile of her own, Alice left them.

She got a bus at the corner and went back to Endsleigh Street. She opened the door of Vale House with the key attached by string and a safety-pin to her bag, and tiptoed into the hall. She hoped to reach her room without being seen, but before she had passed the great mirror in the tarnished gilt frame, Miss Taylor came out of the dining-room.

'Hello, Miss Barnes, you're back early,' she said.

Alice smiled once more and murmured 'Yes' as if admitting to a crime.

'I thought you and Sheila were going to make a night of it,' cried jolly Miss Taylor.

'Oh, no,' murmured Alice, slipping past her to the stairs.

'Well, it'll do you more good to go to bed early,' called Miss Taylor.

Alice murmured again, and reached the haven of her room.

She took off the satin cloak, the black dress, the powder and the eyeblack. Her head ached, her heart ached and she was cold. She couldn't light the gas-fire now, or for a long time to

come. She realised with bitterness that Sheila would not pay back the five shillings. She had protested too much. She said: 'I swear I will.' That meant she wouldn't. Besides, she looked at me from eye to eye.

Alice hurried into bed to get warm, but before she turned out the lamp she finished the letter

to Lucy.

'I went out to dinner tonight,' she wrote, and then paused.

What could she say? She thought a long time, staring into the shadows of her narrow room. She would never be able to be gay and smart like other people, she thought; never know what to say, what to wear, what to do;

never be happy and at ease. It was terrible, terrible to be so lonely, so outside...

But because no one, not even Lucy, must know that she had been thus weighed in London scales and found wanting, she wrote at last: 'I had a lovely time.'

© The Estate of Dorothy Whipple/Adelphi magazine



Wartime drawing by Adrian Allinson 1890-1959, in a private collection.

OUR BLOGGERS WRITE

‘Apparently Mollie Panter-Downes was one of the few writers whose copy *The New Yorker’s* fastidious style police never had to change. Her style is as easy to read as magazine fiction ought to be but manages to be haunting and picturesque at the same time. Whether or not she knew it, she was describing the lives of her subjects at the same time as they were undergoing permanent change. People were moving out of houses they could no longer afford, enduring the terror of the Blitz and later in the war missing the companionship it provided. She’s particularly good on the fact that the English class system is sustained as much from below as it is imposed from above and what she calls in one story “the dignity of all human affection”. Marvellous stuff.’ AndAnotherThing

‘I think *Flush* is a brilliant book – mostly because it so successfully presents a new angle, a new way of perceiving things. Critics haven’t always been enamoured by the novel, perhaps because the initial concept sounds a trifle silly. But in Woolf’s very able hands this is a clever, funny and very well observed book. From the entirely new angle of a dog, I found the descriptions of London and Italy fascinating. And *Cheerful Weather for the Wedding* is very, very funny. There is a semi-serious romance story-

line through the centre of it (should Dolly be marrying Owen? Will they actually get married?) but it is the host of secondary characters which make this novel so amusing. The whole family, and especially servants, are very funny characters – slightly ridiculous, but not too exaggerated as to not ring true. I suppose that’s why the humour is so good – rooted in the actual. Sort of a less-hyperbolic PG Wodehouse, perhaps, crossed with Virginia Woolf.’ StuckinaBook

‘*Greenery Street* is a lovely story that you simply want to escape into for a while. It is such a fascinating look at a particular slice of life, in so many ways changed yet in some ways still the same. Although the novel is a bit short on plot, what carries things along is the simple day-to-day living it details. I often read books high on thrills or with some deep, dark mystery to solve, but sometimes just reading about the normal, average business of living can be as comforting as it is entertaining. Denis Mackail wrote an amusing and utterly charming novel.’ AWorkinProgress

‘I cannot heap sufficient praise upon *Miss Buncke’s Book*. I rarely sit down and read a book through these days, but that is precisely what I did with this book. Please, please get a copy if you can.’ PinkLadyBug’sLife

‘*Cheerful Weather for the Wedding* is a very small book – but really a beautifully written and well observed piece. There is for the reader a real sense of time and place with this novella – you can hear the china clinking, imagine the chintz, but it is maybe only after you get right to the end you realise just what perfection this little book is.’ Heaven-Ali’sJournal

‘I smiled, I laughed at the never-ending antics in *Miss Pettigrew Lives for a Day*. What I liked most is that even as we see Miss Pettigrew become a stronger, happier person this is not without a bit of faltering and questionable decisions on her part. Thus, she is stern in her recommendations to Miss LaFosse about her boyfriend’s behaviour but in her mind she admits that she would do the exact opposite and “have lain on the ground and let him walk all over me”.’ Leaning Towardsthe Sun

‘I knew nothing of Ethel Wilson and her reputation in Canada and *Hetty Dorval* is all about reputation. Or of ‘a woman of no reputation’. This clever little novella, which is compelling, is about the insidious danger of gossip as much as it is about the insidious nature of people with faces like angels. It is also about prejudice – is Hetty as awful as everybody makes out and were

Frankie's innocent first impressions more accurate than her adult prejudiced-by-gossip and influence take.' PaperbackReader

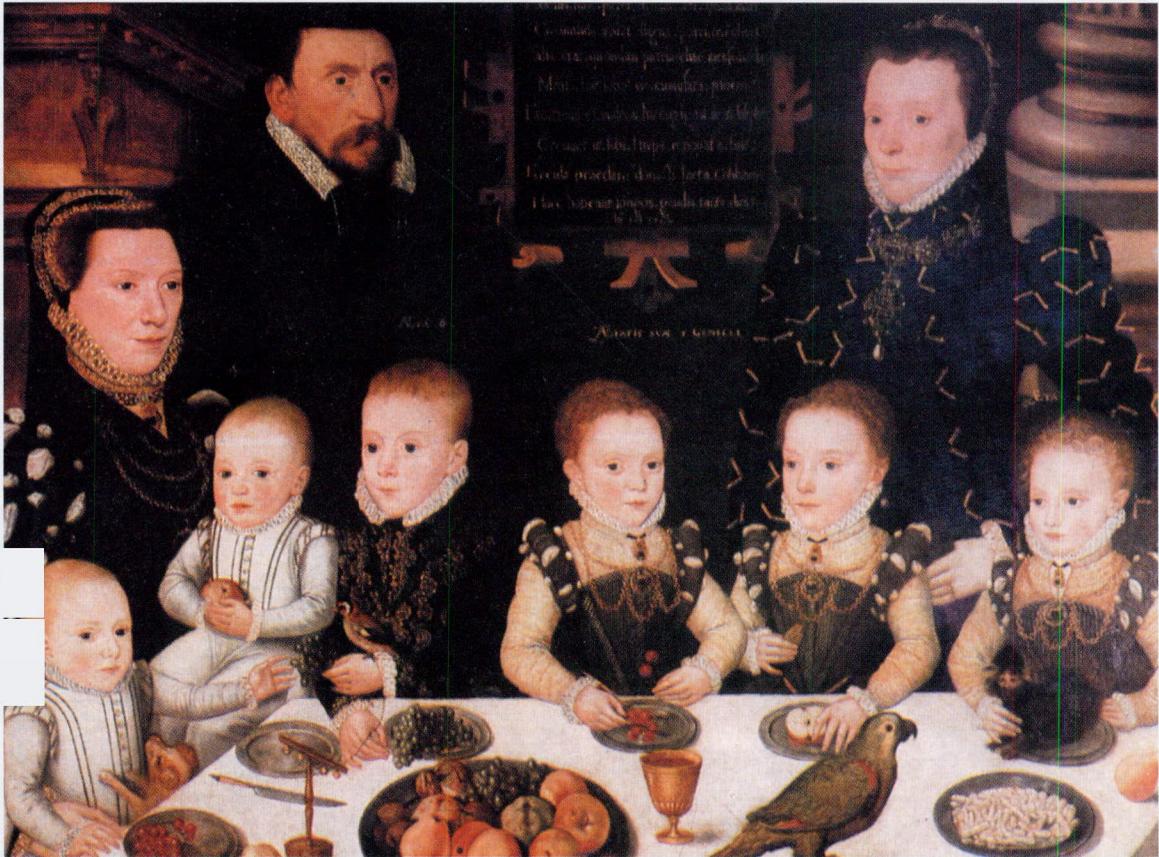
‘**W**hat a brilliant book *Saplings* is. I had never read Noel Streatfeild (no, not even *Ballet Shoes*) before, so I had no idea what to expect. Well, it turns out that she is an excellent writer, subtle, perceptive, sensitive, occasionally ironic, everything that I love. *Saplings* reminded me a little of AS Byatt and (don't laugh!) of DH Lawrence. It was something about the way she uses multiple points of view, jumping from one perspective to another quite

frequently, and yet still managing to make it work. But most of all it was the way she wrote about her characters with such tenderness, such care. I loved them; I felt for each and every one of them, no matter how flawed they were. I also loved how well it captured a child's perspective and understanding of the world.' Things MeanALot

‘**A** *Very Great Profession* is a lovely, wallowy book which takes themes such as love, sex, psychoanalysis and looks at these themes in the books which became the mainstay of Persephone Books fifteen years after it was written. True to

women's studies, herstory etc, Beauman puts enough of herself and her foremothers in to make it recognisable but not unprofessional. And in the Afterword to the 1995 edition she foreshadows Persephone Books and takes issue with the over-feminist theorists of the times between the editions and the critical reaction. So, a good workmanlike survey, a lovely reclaiming, and a look at how far we've come.' LyzzBeeLiveJournal

‘**M**iss *Pettigrew* is so light it practically floats. Yet beneath the story's bubbly surface lurk hints of the gravity of Miss Pettigrew's situation. Older, ineffective with children,



'The Tenth Baron Cobham and his Family, painted by an unknown artist

dismiss-ed from employment with increasing frequency, she can see her options diminishing rapidly. The theme of the lack of choices for women of all ages and social classes runs through every Persephone book I've read though you might miss it in this book if you aren't thinking too hard.' ABookAWeek

'**C**heerful *Weather*, although mordantly smile-inducing in places, is not a funny book. It is a rich mosaic of impressions taken from a traditional social event into which the remains of a self-thwarted, feckless, youthful attachment has been very queasily embedded. The experience is felt rather than looked at; this is what makes it like *To the Lighthouse*. A younger cousin of Woolf's master-piece, it exhibits an appealing family resemblance beneath its own character.' Portifex.com

'I felt like I had well and truly been through the wringer after reading *Little Boy Lost*, but every tear was worth it; this is a stunningly beautiful portrait of post war Europe, of the damage loss can do to a heart, and of the redeeming power of love that we all have within us. The final sentence is one of, if not the most, powerful and beautiful and wonderful I have ever read, and if you haven't read *Little Boy Lost*, you need to get hold of it NOW and read it instantly. It is perfect. I am tearing up a little bit just remembering the conclusion of this marvellous, unputdownable read.' BookSnob

'I'm a little gobsmacked by *Farewell Leicester Square*: so much better than I had any reason to guess. I set out to read a book of considerable historical interest, a worthy book. I found instead a really expert novel. Betty Miller's writing is wonderful and she is at home with all kinds of scenes. It's been a long time since I've read a book that moved among classes, cultures, genders with such grace.' Fernham

'I hadn't read *Minnie's Room* before but a story a day over the last ten days has become a ritual and one I'm feeling quite bereft now that I've read them all. The timescale offers a measured narrative progression through all that post-war disquiet after those years which had spelt death, destruction and deprivation for so many. Though the upper classes were struggling to come to terms with the new social order and managing on much less money than they had been used to, it was the middle classes who were hit hardest by the burden of income tax at 9/-, almost 50% in old money, which on reflection seems quite staggering. Here are the widows, the spinsters, the memories, the holidays, the weddings, the bereavements, and all perfectly captured in microscopic detail. I have been beyond impressed with the delicate and intense perception of that oft-ignored detail. Somehow Mollie Panter-Downes captures the essence of the moment and conveys it with a delicacy and an immediacy coupled with that elusive ease

and necessity all making these stories a complete pleasure to read.' Dovegreyreader

'**E**very *Eye* is a gem of a book. The story of a woman on her belated honeymoon, from the start we glean knowledge of her childhood and young womanhood in flashbacks. Her observations are stunning and descriptions marvellously vivid. We are there, traveling in the train with her, arriving in Paris, Barcelona, Ibiza...' Hjelliot on LibraryThing

'**O**n the surface *Lady Rose and Mrs Memmary* gave off a trifling appearance. But the further I got into the story I was aware that it was already tiptoeing its way into my heart. The underlying themes of this book are so rich and so deep. What is wonderful is that it's only hinted at. At the outset it felt like a children's fairy tale; underneath, though, is the sting of society and the pains of living in the aristocracy in the late 19th century. For a novel of 223 pages, it's amazing how it felt so epic. It swept me through an entire lifetime in so few words.' Kissacloud

'**D**orothy Whipple's observations of human character are both astute and piercing. *Someone at a Distance* probes the great theme of love and portrays an ordinary family trying to cope with the betrayal of the husband. For a searing account of human nature at its worst I recommend *They Knew Mr Knight*.' BloomsburyBell

THE PERSEPHONE POST

We now have something on our website which quite a few people access on a regular basis: 'every weekday a parallel in pictures to the world of Persephone Books'. Those who do not have access to the internet may like to know about the Post. The idea is that if you like the visual aspect of Persephone Books – the endpapers, the pictures in the *Biannually* and *Catalogue*, our postcards, our mugs, the Gwen Raverat calendar – you can access something on the web every day (although we only put

up new posts on weekdays).

Recently we have had pictures of: Scott of the Antarctic's Hut; the front of the *Saturday Evening Post* showing an American family sitting round listening to the radio (to accompany a link to the entire output for 21st September 1939 on CBS); a piece of Omega fabric (as exhibited at the Courtauld); a painting by Frederic Gore who died on August 31st this year aged 95; a cartoon drawn by a bookshop in Paris showing a young woman

saying to another, 'Have you ever read any Dorothy Whipple?'; Matisse's *The Music Lesson*; a photograph of Mahler; a 1920s postcard of the bathing machines at Bognor Regis, beloved by the Stevens family in *The Fortnight in September*; a photograph of Emmeline Pankhurst with other suffragettes; some Laura Knight plates; Vanessa Bell and Duncan Grant's address book.

If you have not already put the Post in your list of favourites, why not do so now?!

THESE MEN USE SHELL



SIGHTSEERS

C. MOZLEY

YOU CAN BE SURE OF SHELL

Shell poster by Charles Mozley, who painted the Shell poster we have used on the front of the Classic Miss Pettigrew Lives for a Day.

EVENTS

The first Persephone event of the autumn will be a Lunch on **Thursday November 12th** when Janet Morgan, who has written the preface to *A New System of Domestic Cookery* by Mrs Rundell, will talk about the book and in particular its publishing history.

The four speakers to date at the annual Persephone Lecture have been Salley Vickers, Hermione Lee, Penelope Lively and Elaine Showalter. This year's lecture will be *From Mrs Rundell to Mrs Beeton* by Bee Wilson, whose two acclaimed books are *The Hive: The Story of the Honeybee* and *Swindled: The Dark History of the Food Cheats*. She also writes a weekly food column ('The Kitchen Thinker') in the *Sunday Telegraph's Stella* magazine, for which she has twice been named the Guild of Food Writers food journalist of the year. The lecture will be held at the Artworkers Guild in Queen Square WC1 on **Tuesday December 1st** at 6.30; the price (£20) includes wine and cheese straws beforehand (doors open at 6) and afterwards.

Apologies to those who have been waiting in vain for the Reading Groups pages to go live on the website. But we are thinking of starting The Persephone Forum, an online reading group which would incorporate a Reading Groups page. When we tried this before not enough people participated. But now so

many people are online we are having another try. If more than a hundred people express interest, we will start a site where some of our readers can discuss our books, make comments, recommend other books, discuss the Persephone Post – and so on.

PERSEPHONE BOOKS
020 7242 9292



PERSEPHONE BOOKSHOP
020 7221 2201

On **Tuesday December 15th** there will be Open House at **59 Lamb's Conduit Street** and **109 Kensington Church Street** when mulled wine and mince pies will be served all day and all our eighty-six books will be available gift-wrapped at no extra charge.

On **Thursday January 21st** Jane Brocket, who has written the preface to *High Wages*, will talk at a Lunch. And on **Wednesday February 24th** Juliet Gardiner, who has written the Preface to *To Bed with Grand Music*, will also talk at a Lunch. The Lunches are from 12.30-2.30 and cost £30.

On **Thursday March 11th** we shall be showing two films at the BFI, 21 Stephen Street W1: a 70 minute film by Hilda Bernstein's daughter Toni Strasburg called 'Memories of Dreams' about Hilda Bernstein's life; and a Channel 4 dramatised documentary about Tilli Wolf-Monckeburg, author of *On the Other Side*. Both these films are very rare; it is hoped that one of Hilda's daughters, and Tilli's granddaughter, will be present. The first film will be at 2, the second at 3.30, with tea inbetween; the cost is £25.

The *Persephone Book Groups*: there are two in Lamb's Conduit Street, one on the first Wednesday of the month at 6.30 and one on the second Thursday of the month at 3.30. The Kensington Church Street group is on the third Monday of the month at 6.30. All three are flourishing, with a good mixture of longstanding and new participants each time. Other book groups are planned. We charge £10; please ring to book.

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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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