



The Persephone Biannually

N°5 Spring & Summer 2009

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'Dreams' 1896 by the Florentine Vittorio Matteo Corcos, Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Moderna, Rome



OUR SPRING & SUMMER 2009 BOOKS

The first of our Spring/Summer books is Arthur Hugh Clough's *Amours de Voyage*, a long poem, or a novella, in verse. But don't be put off! We are afraid that some readers of this *Biannually* will turn the page in order to read instead about *Making Conversation*, a witty 1931 novel, and *The Other Elizabeth Taylor*, the first biography of the twentieth-century novelist. If they do, they will be missing something really special.

Consider why we have chosen to reissue *Amours de Voyage* as a 128 page book with a new Preface by Julian Barnes, nine contemporary illustrations from the London Illustrated News and an endpaper which reproduces an 1850s dress silk woven in Spitalfields which we can imagine the girls in the poem having made up as a dress to wear to Italy a century and a half ago.

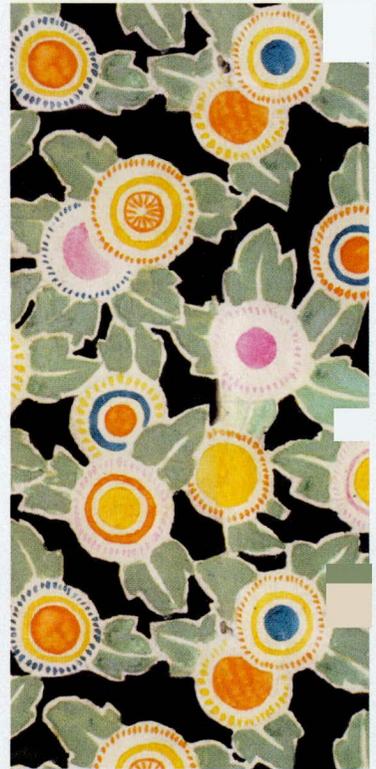
We are in fact sure that Persephone readers will enjoy reading *Amours de Voyage* very much indeed, and this is the first time it has been published on its own in this way, rather than in an edition for academics or in a beautifully but incredibly

expensive version (£220). Indeed, when, at a talk in Sheffield last autumn, we announced that we were publishing it this spring, one of the women in the audience called out, 'Oh, I love *Amours de Voyage*.' She also adores Dorothy Whipple and *Miss Pettigrew Lives for a Day*, yet instantly saw the point of our redoing it.

The poem, which was written in 1849 but not published until 1858, and then in America (it was too modern for English readers), is in hexameters and is arranged in five cantos, or chapters, as a sequence of letters. It is about a group of English travellers in Italy in the spring of 1849. Claude, and the Trevellyn family, are caught up in the political turmoil of that time. The poem mixes the political ('Sweet it may be, and decorous, perhaps, for the country to die; but,/On the whole, we conclude the Romans won't do it, and I sha'n't') and the personal ('After all, do I know that I really cared so about her?/Do whatever I will, I cannot call up her image'). The political is important – hence the nine *Illustrated News* drawings of the battlefield, for example 'One of Garibaldi's lancers carrying a



1850s woven dress silk by Campbell, Harrison and Lloyd, manufactured in Spitalfields, London



1931 dress silk, in a private collection

dispatch' opposite – but the personal dilemmas are the crucial ones. Claude, about to declare himself, retreats, then regrets his failure to speak. It is this retreat, his scruples and fastidiousness, that, like a conventional novel, is the core of *Amours de Voyage*.

The poem thus contributed something important to the modern sensibility; it is a portrait of an anti-hero; it is about love and marriage (the difficulties of); and it is about Italy (hence the Italian theme of this *Biannually* with the cover, some of the other illustrations, and the short story, set there). To put the poem in context: it is 160 years since Clough, who was then 30, told his mother, on 18 April 1849: 'I am at Rome'. 'He was to stay for the

further three months, during which the Republic defended itself against a French army, Rome came under siege and bombardment, and the Republic finally fell', as we write in the Publisher's Note to this edition (before going on to explain why the French army appeared and what the legendary Garibaldi was doing).

Clough wrote to his mother: 'St Peter's disappoints me: the stone of which it is made is a poor plastery material; and indeed, Rome in general might be called a rubbishy place... The weather has not been very brilliant.' As Julian Barnes points out in his new *Persephone* Preface: 'If you want a one-word introduction to the tone,

sensibility and modernity of Arthur Hugh Clough, you have it in that single, italicised (by him, not me) word: rubbishy.' Clough was unimpressed by Rome and so is his hero, Claude, 'a very unGrand Tourist'. Whereas Shelley had admired 'the sublime desolation of the scene' at the Forum, Claude asks rhetorically, 'What do I find in the Forum? An archway and two or three pillars.'

Clough has often been treated as a marginal figure, both on the university English syllabus and in the English canon,' Julian Barnes continues. 'Yet what his friend Arnold perceived to be the weaknesses of Clough's poetry are precisely what over time have come to seem its strengths – a



prose colloquiality which at times verges on awkwardness, a preference for honesty and sarcasm over suavity and tact, a direct criticism of modern life, a naming of things as themselves.' In addition, *'Amours de Voyage'* is full of unArnoldian personnel – Mazzini [a friend of Jane Carlyle's], Garibaldi, General Oudinot – and paraphernalia: a copy of Murray's guide and a cry to the waiter for a *caffè-latte*. It is absolutely contemporary... It is also a highly contemplative and argumentative poem, about history, civilisation and the individual's duty to act. And it is, as the title tells us, a love story – or, this being Clough, a sort of modern, near-miss, almost-but-not-quite love story ("I am in love you say; I do not think so, exactly") with mismatching, misunderstanding, tortuous self-searching, and a mad, hopeful, hopeless pursuit leading us to a kind of ending.'

Julian Barnes points out that Claude begins by being dislikeable, snobbish, world-weary, but has his complacent presumptions and foppish idleness overthrown. 'Claude as a lover relates less to any Byronic predecessors than to those indecisive, self-conscious paralysed creatures who inhabit nineteenth-century Russian fiction. Claude is "too *shilly-shally*," observes Georgina, while he himself comes to regret his "fiddle-faddling". So *Amours de Voyage* – this great long poem which is also a great short *novella*

– is in the end about failure, about not seizing the day, about misreading and over-analysing, about cowardice.'

The reason we asked Julian Barnes to write the preface to *Amours de Voyage* was because he chose it as one of his ten favourite books in a 2007 anthology called *The Top Ten: Writers pick their Favourite Books*. His other favourites were *Madame Bovary*, *Don Juan*, *Persuasion*, *Anna Karenina*, *Candide*, *The Custom of the Country*, *The Good Soldier*, *The Leopard* and John Updike's *Rabbit* novels.



Persephone book No. 83 is *Making Conversation* (1931) by Christine Longford (1900-80). She was at Oxford during the 1920s and here met Edward, Lord Longford (the elder brother of Frank, who succeeded him as Lord Longford). They lived in Ireland and between 1930 and 1935 Christine wrote four novels. In the review by Compton Mackenzie quoted opposite he

also said about Christine: 'She is a kind of Jane Austen with shingled hair and a cigarette between her lips... The possibilities of her future as a writer seem to me immense and I shall open every new book of hers that comes my way with the confident hope that she will never make me regret that so early in her career as a novelist I have rashly mentioned her name in the same sentence as Jane Austen's.' But, Rachel Billington observes in her new Persephone Preface (comparing Christine with Nancy Mitford), 'Jane Austen was not married. Edward's demands on her were total and she was his willing acolyte. After 1935 she devoted herself to their shared passion for Dublin's Gate Theatre.'

Making Conversation was first reprinted in 1970 after the novelist Pamela Hansford Johnson reassessed it in the *Times Literary Supplement*. She wrote: 'This ought to be regarded as an English comic classic, which I suppose, unlike the ravishing *Cold Comfort Farm*, it is not. I hope time will redress the neglect.' She continued: 'Martha Freke lives with her mother on the outskirts of a town in Somerset. Her mother takes in paying guests; Martha goes to the nearest genteel school. All is refined, oblique, poverty-stricken. The time is just before, and including, WWI. Martha is plain, with curly hair, small eyes which she tries to enlarge in a soulful manner by stretching them in front of the looking glass, and very little chin.'

She is extremely clever and totally innocent. Her besetting trouble is that she either talks too much, or too little: she can never get right the balance of conversation.

The genteel school Martha goes to is run by Miss Spencer and Miss Grossmith. Martha doesn't mind them. Indeed, she doesn't really mind anything; she is a most detached girl, letting even their idiotic sarcasms slide off her back. "Now Martha," said Miss Spencer, "what is adultery?" Martha had not the faintest idea. "It is a sin," she said, "committed by adults," putting the accent on the second syllable. "That is a parrot's answer. You think you are very clever, Martha, attempting to conceal your ignorance and your lack of thought. The attempt at concealment is not better than a lie. Adultery is self-indulgence. It is the extra lump of sugar in your tea. It is the extra ten minutes in bed in the morning. It is the extra five minutes a girl wastes by dawdling up the High Street and gazing at the shop windows...." Martha accepts this Chadbandery in the same way as she accepts the constant nagging that she should be keen on netball, and the gossip she hears around her concerning her preceptors.

Meanwhile, war has broken out and Mrs Freke's boarders have increased: whatever her racial prejudices, the place is beginning to look like the UN. This plays its part in helping Martha to grow up a little, and

when she goes to Oxford she is supported by academic confidence and a certain amount of sophistication. Men begin to loom large, though it cannot be said that she is a good picker.

This witty book, crisp and dry as a fresh biscuit, is a book of astonishing subtlety and of a subtlety that is not at all "worked out". It is native and assured. It is this subtlety that saves *Making Conversation* from the imputation of triviality, of being just a "funny novel". It is about a real girl, for whom we ought to be sorry, but for whom, because of her strength of nature, we are not sorry in the

least. She would raise her eyebrows at us if we were.'

The new Persephone Preface to *Making Conversation* is by Rachel Billington, who is Christine Longford's niece by marriage. She eloquently describes the *ménage* at Tullynally Castle where the Longfords lived and describes why, despite the wonderful reviews Christine received for the book, she gave up writing. Rachel Billington concludes: 'I laughed out loud more during my third reading of *Making Conversation* than I have reading any comic novel written over the last thirty years.'

MAKING CONVERSATION

"A novel of delicious humour . . . I have been going about lately reading extracts from this delicious book to anybody who would lend me his ears."—COMPTON MACKENZIE (*Daily Mail*)

"One of the wittiest books published for a very long time."—JAMES AGATE (*Daily Express*)

"As funny as anything I have read for a long time."—L. P. HARTLEY (*Week-end Review*)

"Young, high-spirited, extremely entertaining."—GERALD BULLETT (*New Statesman & Nation*)

"A first novel of exceptional wit and originality."—HAROLD NICOLSON (*Action*)

"Highly entertaining. . . . A joyous affair with a little gallery of droll portraits, and I imagine that many readers will find it very much to their taste."—RALPH STRAUS (*Sunday Times*)

"Full of free wit which is very attractive."—FRANK SWINNERTON (*Evening News*)

"A book to be grateful for, because it is so unexpectedly funny and makes one suddenly laugh out aloud to oneself."—*Times Literary Supplement*

"It is one of the best pieces of entertainment that have appeared for a long time."—*The Spectator*

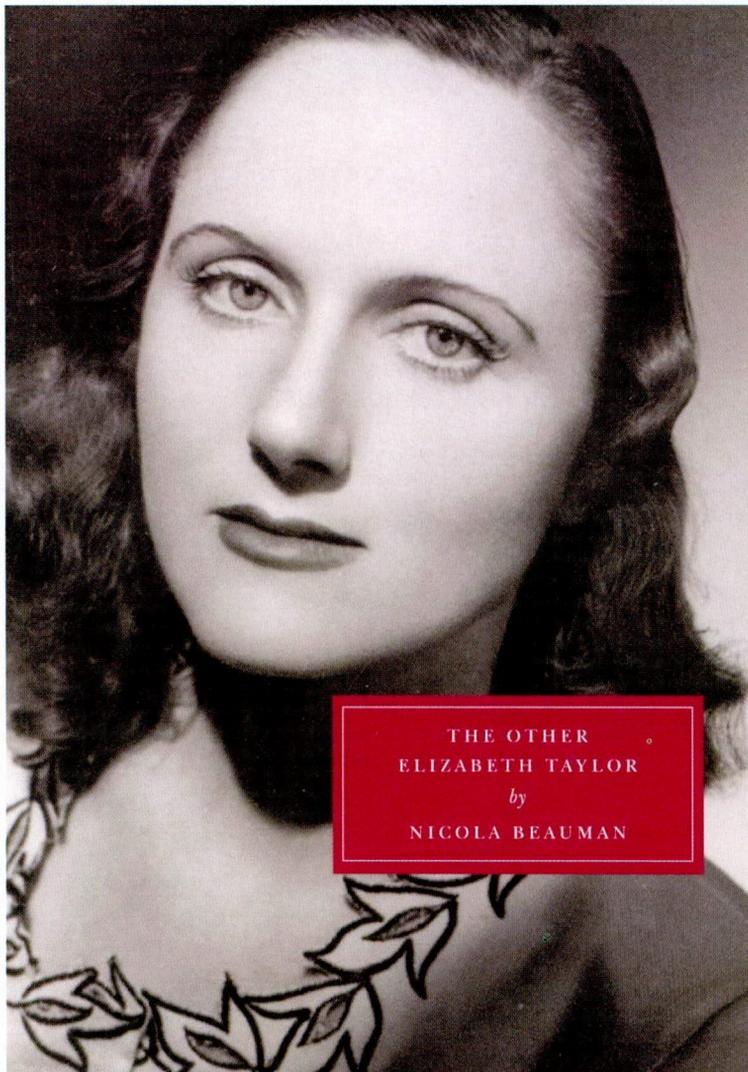
We are often asked how we find our books. We found this one by reading a 1936 essay by Cyril Connolly called 'The Novel-Addict's Cupboard', republished in *The Condemned Playground* in 1945. After listing his favourite writers he said: 'It would seem that I do not collect any women writers, but that is not the case.' He listed Virginia Woolf, Elizabeth Bowen, Ivy Compton-Burnett, Rosamond Lehmann, Antonia White, Rose Macaulay, Jean Rhys, Willa Cather and

Dorothy Edwards and said: 'Gay but less haunting are Christine Longford's *Country Places* and Julia Strachey's *Cheerful Weather for the Wedding*.' Then he returned (exclusively) to the men.

Connolly has a link with the third book we are publishing this season because he refused ever to publish the novelist Elizabeth Taylor (1912-75), one of the outstanding English writers of the last century. She is the subject of the first Persephone Life, by

Nicola Beauman (the Lives will be £15 instead of £10). Betty Coles became Elizabeth Taylor upon her marriage in 1936. Her first novel appeared in the same year, 1945, as the actress Elizabeth Taylor was appearing in *National Velvet* and began her ascent to stardom. Meanwhile, over the next thirty years, 'the other Elizabeth Taylor' lived and worked in Buckinghamshire and published eleven more novels and four volumes of short stories.

Elizabeth Taylor would have greatly disliked the idea of a biography and destroyed most of her papers in the last months before her death in 1975. She kept the original notebooks into which she copied the second draft of her novels. She kept letters of any obviously literary significance (from other writers, from her publisher). And of course she kept letters from her family. But an enormous amount was thrown away. She professed to be, and wanted to be seen as, a very private person, and would have abhorred the biographer's intrusion into her personal life. She anticipated its horror in a 1969 short story called 'Sisters'. This is about Mrs Mason, who has led a life of impeccable respectability and few disappointments, 'nothing much more than an unexpected shower of rain, or a tough cutlet, or the girl at the hairdresser's getting her rinse wrong.' Then she is visited by someone writing the biography of her ractory sister. 'He had small, even teeth... They glinted, like his



THE OTHER
ELIZABETH TAYLOR
by
NICOLA BEAUMAN

spectacles, the buttons on his jacket and the signet ring on his hand'; as he tries to tease out revelations he settles back in his chair 'clasping his ladylike hands'. But 'during all the years of public interest, Mrs Mason had kept her silence, and lately had been able to bask indeed, in the neglect which had fallen upon her sister, as it falls upon most great writers at some period after their death'. Although she gives little away to the biographer, she nevertheless feels shaken and exposed. A 1972 reviewer of the collection in which this story appeared wrote that it 'suggests the kind of betrayal and violation described by Henry James in *The Aspern Papers*.'

Indeed it does, and it was to fend off this violation that Elizabeth threw so much away. She wanted to preserve the reputation built up so assiduously of the Home Counties wife of the sweet manufacturer to whom nothing much, 'thank heavens' ever happens, who managed *out of her imagination* to write her heartfelt, emotionally charged novels about anguish, loneliness and despair. After she died her remaining papers were sold; she had also insisted that her correspondence with the writer Robert Liddell, which had been a long, extremely intimate one, should be destroyed, and this he apparently respected. But many would agree with the critic John Carey when he expressed the wish that the letters 'had fallen into less scrupulous hands', adding that Robert Liddell's account (in his book about Elizabeth and Ivy Compton-Burnett) of 'the pleasures

he has no intention of sharing with us strikes an unfortunately prim and possessive note.' Hilary Spurling, Ivy Compton-Burnett's biographer, who saw the letters relating to her, also thought that the destruction of the letters meant Elizabeth 'will not now have the reputation she otherwise surely would have had as a great letter-writer.' But Robert Liddell insisted that 'her chief wish was that nothing should survive that could hurt anyone about whom she had been funny – and very funny she was' – and that he had to respect this.

However, in 1936, Elizabeth had met Ray Russell, a young man of her own age who was a fellow member of the High Wycombe branch of the Communist Party. They fell in love. And as important as their affair, over the next twelve years, during four of which Ray was a prisoner of war in Austria and Elizabeth was a young mother at home in High Wycombe, she wrote him some of the most remarkable letters of the twentieth century. What she did not realise, or we have to assume she did not realise, was that the letters still exist. It is these letters that allow us to understand her development as a person and as a writer.

So the question accompanied the writer of this biography throughout the long haul – is the intrusion justified? The answer has to be that it is, and for the following reason: modern literary biography throws light on the work and leads the reader to a deeper understanding of it. A selective chronicle of the

writer's life might be pleasant but it would be completely irrelevant to the twenty-first century. For the last forty years literary biography as a genre has been, above all things, an attempt to be accurate. To leave out the truth, if it can be established as truth, is simply not possible.

Not possible, and also disastrous for Elizabeth's reputation. She was one of the most important English novelists writing in the middle years of the last century; and yet has not been considered as such. A literary biography which describes her influences, her milieu, her working methods, how her work was received, can only enhance the way her work is perceived; and the discovery of five hundred extraordinary letters, a hitherto unpublished novel, and several unpublished short stories, is part of this process.

Certainly, the name did not help. And Elizabeth's perceptions, her interests, her awareness, were essentially feminine; unfashionably, she was a miniaturist. Then there was her reticence, the domestic subject matter, the lending-library aura that hangs round her work, her slightly unmemorable titles, the assumption that her work is predictable instead of full of surprises. And although she was a modernist, she was not seen as one: too many reviewers found her style too feminine, too domestic, and then condemned the entire oeuvre. *The Other Elizabeth Taylor* tries to give this marvellous novelist her due while describing her life as truthfully as possible.

OUR READERS WRITE

I have just devoured RC Sherriff's *The Fortnight in September* and am starting to read it over again for the sheer pleasure of it. How can a book about an ordinary family going away on holiday be such a page-turner? Why did I care so much that the Stevens would have a good holiday? Because they are such nice, good people, so kind and sensitive and loyal, and because they really deserve their holiday. Every triumph was so beautifully evoked, every anxiety so painfully shared by the reader.' CC, Galway

Bricks and Mortar is the story of a man who is, ultimately, more interested in architecture than anything else. And why blame him? He is bamboozled into marriage by a pretty young girl and her formidable mother and retreats into regular house-moves and his business in order to escape. Beautifully drawn, bitter-sweet and moving. A lovely read.' LyzzyBee's Books 'n'Exercise

The New House was gentle and moving and, I thought, profound. It is all about one family, the day that some of them move house, but the author has wound so much into this one day that you care hugely for them towards the end. *Hostages to Fortune* has the best opening chapter ever, best birth ever, and I enjoyed the practicality of it all.

Amusing, and a nice fat book! *Miss Buncke's Book* has to be in my top twenty favourite books already, it is hilarious and made me laugh out loud. In the best tradition of gentle English humour, marvellous.' Brownie22

Operation Heartbreak is about a professional soldier's failure to see action during his long service. Duff Cooper's prose is as spare as his protagonist's life. There is no fuss and no fireworks here, no clever tricks with narrator, time, tense, gender, or author-reader relationship, no ostentation, just neat words like a well brushed uniform, and a carefully planned plot. It is not a book I would have leaped to buy, but one I was very glad to read.' Juxtapook

Someone at a Distance blew me away. Its simple premise, the dissolution of a marriage, is drawn in a subtle, skillful way. Dorothy Whipple draws you into post-War rural England with an artist's hand, taking you into the lives of the North family with deft, compassionate insight. She explores family relationships, human motives and happiness with the kind of compassion and finesse that you don't see nearly as readily in contemporary fiction.' BookGroupBuzz

The Fortnight in September is a really lovely read. It follows the Stevens family from

the day before they leave for their holiday to their journey home a fortnight later and while it may sound mundane, truly it is never boring. Sherriff writes with a simplicity that is never "simple". I have yet to read a Persephone title that I didn't like. With each new book I pick up I discover yet another treasure to be savoured and read again and again and this was no exception.' A Work in Progress

Having bought myself a copy of *Miss Buncke's Book* I kept it for a Christmas treat and read it all the way through on Boxing Day afternoon. I have read it numerous times and it never fails to cheer me up (if necessary) and keep me entertained. Everyone should have a copy of *Miss Buncke* in their present drawer for when they have a friend who needs cheering!' SP London SE12

Alas Poor Lady is not the happiest of stories but rather a fascinating one. Rachel Ferguson examines the fate of Victorian gentlewomen who failed to marry and whose families failed to leave them adequately provided for: a very poignant novel but very readable and enjoyable. *They Knew Mr Knight* is the third of the four Whipple novels that I have read; my favourite was *They Were Sisters*, but this one is almost as good.' Heaven-Ali's Journal

‘I finished *Doreen* a few days ago and thought it quite wonderful. Barbara Noble writes beautifully and with great insight about the mind of a child torn between her mother and the couple who take her in. Doreen is likeable and utterly believable. Indeed, all of the characters are wonderfully drawn and you can empathise with every one. There is much detail about life in Britain during the war, both in the Blitz in London and in the quiet countryside. A wonderful story and much food for thought.’
FleurFisherReads

‘Mollie Panter-Downes wrote nearly two dozen short stories about English life during World War II. *Good Evening, Mrs. Craven* collects these for the first time, and it is a funny, poignant book. 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. In this book history isn’t history yet. It’s simply life, still being written. And in Mollie Panter-Downes, we find a writer who knew its every measured inch.’ Mark David Bradshaw on watermark-books.com

‘I am so moved by the stories in *Minnie’s Room* and indeed by all of Mollie Panter-Downes’s writings, but these are remarkably

touching. I so admire her writing style; it seems so perfectly tuned to telling you just as much as you need to know in the most perfectly restrained but absolutely never clipped way. It is wonderfully natural.’ VW, Ham

‘The blurb on *Good Evening, Mrs Craven* promised a set of short stories with “wit, perception and incisiveness”. It delivered. With a few words Mollie Panter-Downes manages to draw instantly recognisable characters who spring to life off the page. All of them are British to a T. The style is sharp, witty, down-to-earth and so realistic that one could well have been reading memoirs. This is one of those few cases where the blurb’s description of the author as “one of our very best C20th writers” turned out to be accurate.’ ABookEverySixDays

‘*Miss Pettigrew* is not only a fun little tale, the adventures of a woman who finally decides to live, it is also a peak into a past era. Set in the late ’30s, the reader is treated to a fascinating glimpse of the society of women in a time when ‘talkies’ are a new, exciting thing and telegrams are still sent, and where the ‘upstairs-downstairs’ mentality still abounded. I cannot say that this book was profound or changed me, if all books were like that I’d probably stop reading, but it was a treat and a joy to escape in.’ IntheshadowofMtTBR

‘I bought EM Delafield’s *Consequences* from you recently, and I write to say how much I admire it. A very dark piece of writing, but a masterpiece.’ AR, Cork

‘*A Very Great Profession* is such a terrific introduction to women’s writing of the inter-war period. Organised into subject headings such as ‘War’, ‘Surplus Women’, ‘Feminism’, and ‘Domesticity’ and making clear distinctions between ‘Romance’, ‘Love’ and ‘Sex’, the book introduces dozens of writers and clearly places them in historical and literary contexts. I have discovered so many great and enjoyable books from this critical study and from Persephone Books which I collect.’ BlitheSpirit

‘Edith Henrietta Fowler had a privileged childhood, but she was still very much aware of the innocence and vulnerability of children. In her concern for appearances, she is especially unsympathetic to plain, chubby little Babs who is the centre of *The Young Pretenders*. She charmingly reveals Babs’s childish point-of-view and has fun with her innocent lack of tact. The wonderful thing about the novel for an adult reader is how it turns the didacticism of Victorian children’s books on its head. Fowler’s purpose seems less to train her child readers in good behaviour than to encourage her adult readers to understand children and their unique needs and perspectives.’ RoughDraft

ROUND ABOUT £1 A WEEK

‘So you’ve cancelled the gym subscription, traded in the Range Rover, swapped from Waitrose to Sainsbury’s and turned down the central heating,’ said *The Times*. ‘These may feel like hardships, but read *Round About a Pound a Week* by Maud Pember Reeves and you’ll feel sorry for yourself no longer. The book is direct and intriguing from the start: “Take a tram from Victoria to Vauxhall Station. Get out under the railway arch which faces Vauxhall Bridge, and there you will find Kennington Lane.” Sometimes it is funny. Sometimes it is terribly sad. “The death of the child was so sudden and unexpected that an inquest was held. The mother ... wrung her hands and repeated over and over, ‘I done all I could!’” Through it all is the agony of scrimping for survival. And these were respectable, hard-working people, not drinkers, gamblers or wife beaters.’

‘Between 1909 and 1913, the members of the Fabian Women’s Group visited 42 families of manual workers in and around Lambeth Walk to record how they survived on low incomes,’ *The Independent on Sunday* wrote. This reprinted 1913 book tirelessly and humanely examines the causes and

effects of poverty, and chronicles the hardship of working-class life in the early 20th century in meticulous and moving detail. It combines the radical but practical approach of the Fabians with a new 20th-century feminism directed at the lives of working-class women. The researchers deliberately avoided special cases



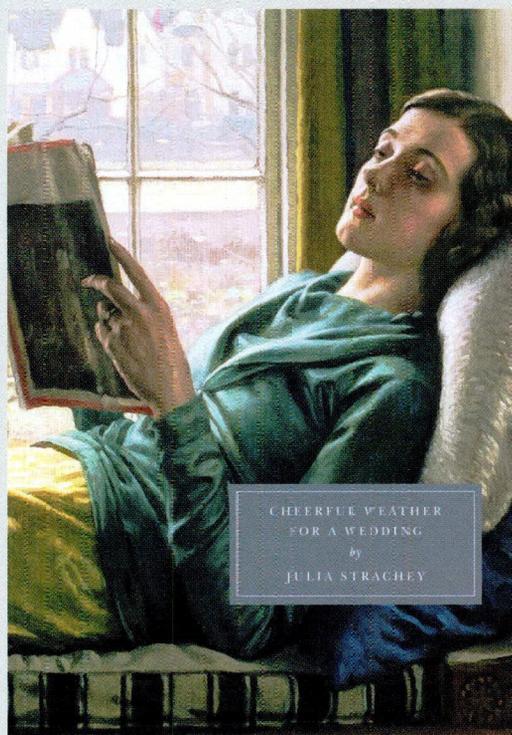
*‘The Kitchen’ Harold Gilman 1908
National Museums and Galleries of Wales*

of penury in an attempt to show how the general standard of living among ordinary manual workers was below a level that could support good health and nutrition. The men worked in such occupations as bus conductor, packer of pottery, fry-fisher and butcher’s assistant. The book chronicles what a family

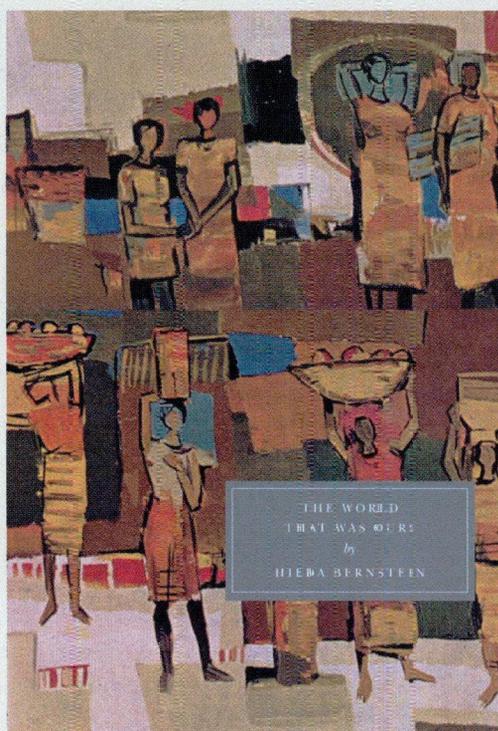
needs to survive materially (food and furniture) but also emotionally, listing “wisdom and loving-kindness... cleanliness and order” as qualities needed to raise a family on about £1 a week. What would Maud Pember Reeves make of society now, muses Polly Toynbee in her provocative introduction: she might despair at the near-death of the political spirit of Fabianism and the rise and rise of individualism.’

‘Maud Pember Reeves writes with the methodical eye of a social scientist, but is also a fine storyteller,’ wrote the *Observer*. ‘Her particular concern is for local children, who begin well but are worn down by the conditions round them.’ Examination of family budgets is illuminating. For many families, the third biggest outgoing each week, after rent and fuel, was burial insurance; few mothers saw all their children live to adulthood and a pauper’s funeral was the worst indignity. As Polly Toynbee writes: “The area where Reeves carried out her project remains one of Britain’s poorest, with the opportunities for local children to rise to the ranks of the middle classes still sorely limited, despite our far vaster collective material wealth.”’

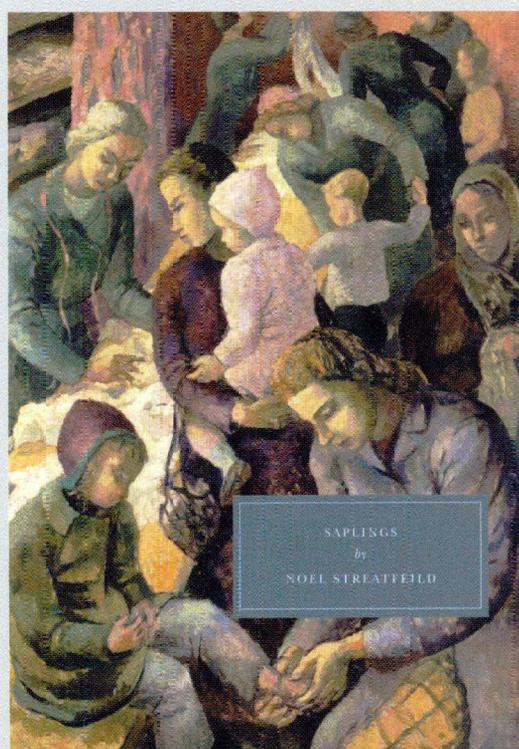
THE PERSEPHONE CLASSICS



CHEERFUL WEATHER
FOR A WEDDING
by
JULIA STRACHEY



THE WORLD
THAT WAS OURS
by
HILDA BERNSTEIN



SAPLINGS
by
NOEL STREATFIELD

The artwork on the front of *Cheerful Weather for the Wedding* is *Girl Reading* 1932 by Harold Knight, on *The World that was Ours* is a painting by Walter Bottiss (1906-82) painted in the 1960s, and on *Saplings* is *WVS Clothing Exchange* 1943 by Evelyn Gibbs.

The *Persephone Classics* were launched a year ago. There are now nine of our bestselling titles in a more bookshop-friendly format (but also available from us by mail order or in either of our shops). They cost £9 each, the typeface and paper are the same, the covers have flaps, and the endpaper used on each grey book can be seen on the back of the Classic cover in grey. The books are printed by GGP in Germany and bound so that they lie flat (Dispersion Binding), something new in the UK. The next two Classics, to be published in October, will be *Good Things in England* by Florence White and *The Making of a Marchioness* by Frances Hodgson Burnett.

VS PRITCHETT ON 'AMOURS'

The best evocation of the tourist's Rome, indeed of the tourist himself, is the *Amours de Voyage* of Arthur Hugh Clough. He is one of the few Victorians who seem to belong to our time rather than their own. The lack of the histrionic air, the lack of that imported and obligatory sense of greatness, so characteristic of the chief and, no doubt, excelling writers of the age, is what makes him accessible to us. He makes no bones about calling himself a tourist in Italy; and although all the English writers who went to Italy from the time of the Romantic movement were tourists, Clough is the only one to admit the role. He was the only one to seize the tourist as a subject and to suggest him as a key figure of his time.

Uncommitted, detached, languid, Clough does not strain, as Browning does, to pass himself off as an Italian; there is no effort to 'get to know the people' or to be 'off the beaten track'. As so often happens, the sceptic who is unable to make up his mind about the ultimate, drifts doggedly into the conventional. It has been said that Clough's weakness as a poet comes from shortness of imagination; but if the isolation of a subject drains the spirit out of it, there are the advantages of freshness, truthfulness and exactitude. Clough has a naturalness which is a relief, almost a revelation, after

the usual manner of the Victorian stage. Not until the novels of EM Forster do we meet anything like it; and not until Forster, either, do we meet with the distinguishing portrait of the English tourist in our literature.

In *Amours de Voyage* Claude, the intellectual, writes to Eustace his friend. The English are the Trevellyns 'with the seven and seventy boxes, Courier, Papa and Mamma, the children, and Mary and Susan.' George is there too with moustachios, as grossly bent on marriage, as Claude is refined in evading it. But Claude is vulnerable. Alas, for the effect of days passed in the contemplation of statuary and in considering the highest questions – 'the Coliseum is large; but is this an idea?' – one is inclined to sink into self-indulgence. Claude hangs round Mary Trevellyn, snubs her, charms her, coolly relies on a mixture of *laissez faire* and *laissez aller*, or having his cake and not eating it, and at last, lets her go. Then of course he wakes up to what he has lost and chases her all the way to Como in vain and returns wretchedly to 'the great massy strengths of abstraction' once more in Pisa, in time for the awful Italian rains.

While Claude thinks and philanders, the still landscape starts to rumble and to move. Smoke can be seen boiling up, from the Pincio. There is rifle

fire. There are riots in the street. The tourist takes on a contemporary torture. Is he going to rush to the Embassy, become a reporter or even commit himself to the incitement of a patriotic war for liberty? He does not fight, of course. But he is excitedly out for the news. Brilliantly his eye for reality, the gift of a mind so fatally adroit at changing its position, captures the absurd, tragic, confused scene in the streets; the comic flicker of the tourists, the reactionary cries of the dear, bourgeois girls who spread wild tales about Garibaldi's Negro. And the episode has the perfect tourist ending; he has not killed, he has not been killed but he has *seen* someone killed.

Clough was really in advance of his time; his unofficial manner, his truthfulness about personal feeling, his nonchalance, his curiosity, even his bitterness and his use of anti-climax are closer to the poets of the 1930s than they were to his contemporaries. His line is clean. His lack of pretence is austere. The account of Rome is a wonderful evocation of the Rome that is in our minds, mixed up with our private life and business, our incapacity to answer the numerous questions that come from the city that has more of human fate in each of its stories than any city on earth.

VS Pritchett in the *New Statesman* in 1951

THE PERSEPHONE 83

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 **Now a Persephone Classic**
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). Book at Bedtime in 2008. Preface: Nina Bawden **Now a Persephone Classic**
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 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 **Now a Persephone Classic**
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 in 2005. Afterword: Jeremy Holmes **Now a Persephone Classic**
17. **Marjory Fleming** by Oriol Malet A deeply empathetic novel about the real life of the Scottish child prodigy who lived from 1803-11; published in France; a play on Radio Scotland in 2004.
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; a 2008 film with Frances McDormand and Amy Adams. Preface: Henrietta Twycross-Martin **Now a Persephone Classic** 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 patriarchs 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 of the stories 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 **Now a Persephone Classic**
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 then reprinted as a book in 1922. 'One of the best reads outside Elizabeth David' wrote *gastropoda.com* **Now a Persephone Classic**
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 which describes 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. Preface: Frances Partridge. **Now a Persephone Classic**
39. **Manja** by Anna Gmeyner
A 1938 German novel, translated by Kate Phillips, 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 sympathetically describing the life of a 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 **Now a Persephone Classic**
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 Memmory** by Ruby Ferguson
A 1937 novel, beloved of the Queen Mother, about Lady Rose, who inherits a great house, marries well – and then meets the love of her life on a park bench. 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 pertinent) 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** 1947 novel by a Canadian writer 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 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 1938 novel about a daughter of the aristocracy who marries an Oxford don; her three children are bewilderingly different from her hopes.
- 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 pot pourri of miniature 1938 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 No. 57 *The Hopkins Manuscript* 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. No. 25 *The Montana Stories*) assembled this journal from unposted letters and scraps of writing 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 No.29 *The Making of a Marchioness* about Rosalie Vanderpoel, an American heiress who marries an English aristocrat, whose 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: 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 superb short stories drawn from the three now hard-to-find collections 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 Beaman
- 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. A R4 serial in 2007. 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,
- 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, herbs and game.
- 81. *Miss Bunclie's Book* by DE Stevenson** A middle-aged woman writes a book, as 'John Smith', about her village. A delightful and funny novel by a best-selling author. Preface: Aline Templeton.
- 82. *Amours de Voyage* by Arthur Hugh Clough** A novel in verse, set in Rome in 1849, about Claude, unable to decide whether or not to propose to one of the Trevellyn girls. Preface: Julian Barnes
- 83. *Making Conversation* by Christine Longford** A very funny 1931 novel about a girl growing up which is in the vein of *Cold Comfort Farm*, *The Pursuit of Love* and No.38 *Cheerful Weather for the Wedding*. Preface: Rachel Billington

'ROMAN FEVER' (1934)

BY EDITH WHARTON

From the table at which they had been lunching two American ladies of ripe but well-cared-for middle age moved across the lofty terrace of the Roman restaurant and, leaning on its parapet, looked first at each other, and then down on the outspread glories of the Palatine and the Forum, with the same expression of vague but benevolent approval.

As they leaned there a girlish voice echoed up gaily from the stairs leading to the court below. 'Well, come along, then,' it cried, not to them but to an invisible companion, 'and let's leave the young things to their knitting,' and a voice as fresh laughed back: 'Oh, look here, Babs, not actually knitting –' 'Well, I mean figuratively,' rejoined the first. 'After all, we haven't left our poor parents much else to do. . . .' and at that point the turn of the stairs engulfed the dialogue.

The two ladies looked at each other again, this time with a tinge of smiling embarrassment, and the smaller and paler one shook her head and coloured slightly.

'Barbara!' she murmured, sending an unheard rebuke after the mocking voice in the stairway.

The other lady, who was fuller, and higher in colour, with a small determined nose supported by vigorous black eyebrows, gave a good-humoured laugh. 'That's

what our daughters think of us.'

Her companion replied by a deprecating gesture. 'Not of us individually. We must remember that. It's just the collective modern idea of Mothers. And you see –' Half guiltily she drew from her handsomely mounted black handbag a twist of crimson silk run through by two fine knitting needles. 'One never knows,' she murmured. 'The new system has certainly given us a good deal of time to kill; and sometimes I get tired just looking – even at this.' Her gesture was now addressed to the stupendous scene at their feet.

The dark lady laughed again, and they both relapsed upon the view, contemplating it in silence, with a sort of diffused serenity which might have been borrowed from the spring effulgence of the Roman skies. The luncheon hour was long past, and the two had their end of the vast terrace to themselves. At its opposite extremity a few groups, detained by a lingering look at the outspread city, were gathering up guidebooks and fumbling for tips. The last of them scattered, and the two ladies were alone on the air-washed height.

'Well, I don't see why we shouldn't just stay here,' said Mrs Slade, the lady of the high colour and energetic brows. Two derelict basket chairs stood near, and she pushed them into the angle of

the parapet, and settled herself in one, her gaze upon the Palatine. 'After all, it's still the most beautiful view in the world.'

'It always will be, to me,' assented her friend Mrs Ansley, with so slight a stress on the 'me' that Mrs Slade, though she noticed it, wondered if it were not merely accidental, like the random underlinings of old-fashioned letter writers.

'Grace Ansley was always old-fashioned,' she thought; and added aloud, with a retrospective smile: 'It's a view we've both been familiar with for a good many years. When we first met here we were younger than our girls are now. You remember!'

'Oh, yes, I remember,' murmured Mrs Ansley, with the same undefinable stress – 'There's that head-waiter wondering,' she interpolated. She was evidently far less sure than her companion of herself and of her rights in the world.

'I'll cure him of wondering,' said Mrs Slade, stretching her hand toward a bag as discreetly opulent-looking as Mrs Ansley's. Signing to the headwaiter, she explained that she and her friend were old lovers of Rome, and would like to spend the end of the afternoon looking down on the view – that is, if it did not disturb the service! The headwaiter, bowing over her gratuity, assured her that the

ladies were most welcome, and would be still more so if they would condescend to remain for dinner. A full moon night, they would remember....

Mrs Slade's black brows drew together, as though references to the moon were out of place and even unwelcome. But she smiled away her frown as the headwaiter retreated. 'Well, why not! We might do worse. There's no knowing, I suppose, when the girls will be back. Do you even know back from where? I don't!'

Mrs Ansley again coloured slightly. 'I think those young Italian aviators we met at the Embassy invited them to fly to Tarquinia for tea. I suppose they'll want to wait and fly back by moonlight.'

'Moonlight – moonlight! What a part it still plays. Do you suppose they're as sentimental as we were?'

'I've come to the conclusion that I don't in the least know what they are,' said Mrs Ansley. 'And perhaps we didn't know much more about each other.'

'No, perhaps we didn't.'

Her friend gave her a shy glance. 'I never should have supposed you were sentimental, Alida.'

'Well, perhaps I wasn't.' Mrs Slade drew her lids together in retrospect; and for a few moments the two ladies, who had been intimate since childhood, reflected how little they knew each other. Each one, of course, had a label ready to attach to the other's name; Mrs Delphin Slade, for instance, would have told herself, or anyone who asked her,

that Mrs Horace Ansley, twenty-five years ago, had been exquisitely lovely – no, you wouldn't believe it, would you! though, of course, still charming, distinguished.... Well, as a girl she had been exquisite; far more beautiful than her daughter, Barbara, though certainly Babs, according to the new standards at any rate, was more effective – had more edge, as they say. Funny where she got it, with those two nullities as parents. Yes; Horace Ansley was – well, just the duplicate of his wife. Museum specimens of old New York. Good-looking, irreproachable, exemplary. Mrs Slade and Mrs Ansley had lived opposite each other – actually as well as figuratively – for years. When the drawing-room curtains in No. 20 East 73rd Street were renewed, No. 23, across the way, was always aware of it. And of all the movings, buyings, travels, anniversaries, illnesses – the tame chronicle of an estimable pair. Little of it escaped Mrs Slade. But she had grown bored with it by the time her husband made his big coup in Wall Street, and when they bought in upper Park Avenue had already begun to think: 'I'd rather live opposite a speakeasy for a change; at least one might see it raided.' The idea of seeing Grace raided was so amusing that (before the move) she launched it at a woman's lunch. It made a hit, and went the rounds – she sometimes wondered if it had crossed the street, and reached Mrs Ansley. She hoped not, but didn't much mind. Those were

the days when respectability was at a discount, and it did the irreproachable no harm to laugh at them a little.

A few years later, and not many months apart, both ladies lost their husbands. There was an appropriate exchange of wreaths and condolences, and a brief renewal of intimacy in the half shadow of their mourning; and now, after another interval, they had run across each other in Rome, at the same hotel, each of them the modest appendage of a salient daughter. The similarity of their lot had again drawn them together, lending itself to mild jokes, and the mutual confession that, if in old days it must have been tiring to 'keep up' with daughters, it was now, at times, a little dull not to.

No doubt, Mrs Slade reflected, she felt her unemployment more than poor Grace ever would. It was a big drop from being the wife of Delphin Slade to being his widow. She had always regarded herself (with a certain conjugal pride) as his equal in social gifts, as contributing her full share to the making of the exceptional couple they were: but the difference after his death was irremediable. As the wife of the famous corporation lawyer, always with an international case or two on hand, every day brought its exciting and unexpected obligation: the impromptu entertaining of eminent colleagues from abroad, the hurried dashes on legal business to London, Paris or Rome, where the entertaining was so handsomely reciprocated;

the amusement of hearing in her wakes: 'What, that handsome woman with the good clothes and the eyes is Mrs Slade – *the* Slade's wife! Really! Generally the wives of celebrities are such frumps.'

Yes; being *the* Slade's widow was a dullish business after that. In living up to such a husband all her faculties had been engaged; now she had only her daughter to live up to, for the son who

seemed to have inherited his father's gifts had died suddenly in boyhood. She had fought through that agony because her husband was there, to be helped and to help; now, after the father's death, the thought of the boy had become unbearable.

There was nothing left but to mother her daughter; and dear Jenny was such a perfect daughter that she needed no

excessive mothering. 'Now with Babs Ansley I don't know that I should be so quiet,' Mrs Slade sometimes half-enuviously reflected; but Jenny, who was younger than her brilliant friend, was that rare accident, an extremely pretty girl who somehow made youth and prettiness seem as safe as their absence. It was all perplexing – and to Mrs Slade a little boring. She wished that Jenny would fall in love – with the wrong man, even; that she might have to be watched, out-manoeuvred, rescued. And instead, it was Jenny who watched her mother, kept her out of drafts, made sure that she had taken her tonic...

Mrs Ansley was much less articulate than her friend, and her mental portrait of Mrs Slade was slighter, and drawn with fainter touches. 'Alida Slade's awfully brilliant; but not as brilliant as she thinks,' would have summed it up; though she would have added, for the enlightenment of strangers, that Mrs Slade had been an extremely dashing girl; much more so than her daughter, who was pretty, of course, and clever in a way, but had none of her mother's – well, 'vividness,' someone had once called it. Mrs Ansley would take up current words like this, and cite them in quotation marks, as unheard-of audacities. No; Jenny was not like her mother. Sometimes Mrs Ansley thought Alida Slade was disappointed; on the whole she had had a sad life. Full of failures and mistakes; Mrs Ansley had always been rather sorry for her...



"I never loved, and never shall love, but one woman—she who was once my wife." At his words, Rosing staggered as though he had struck her, and passed her hand over her forehead.

So these two ladies visualised each other, each through the wrong end of her little telescope.

For a long time they continued to sit side by side without speaking. It seemed as though, to both, there was a relief in laying down their somewhat futile activities in the presence of the vast Memento Mori which faced them. Mrs Slade sat quite still, her eyes fixed on the golden slope of the Palace of the Caesars, and after a while Mrs Ansley ceased to fidget with her bag, and she too sank into meditation.

Like many intimate friends, the two ladies had never before had occasion to be silent together, and Mrs Ansley was slightly embarrassed by what seemed, after so many years, a new stage in their intimacy, and one with which she did not yet know how to deal.

Suddenly the air was full of that deep clangour of bells which periodically covers Rome with a roof of silver. Mrs Slade glanced at her wristwatch. 'Five o'clock already,' she said, as though surprised.

Mrs Ansley suggested interrogatively: 'There's bridge at the Embassy at five.' For a long time Mrs Slade did not answer. She appeared to be lost in contemplation, and Mrs Ansley thought the remark had escaped her. But after a while she said, as if speaking out of a dream: 'Bridge, did you say! Not unless you want to.... But I don't think I will, you know.'

'Oh, no,' Mrs Ansley hastened to assure her. 'I don't care to at

all. It's so lovely here; and so full of old memories, as you say.' She settled herself in her chair, and almost furtively drew forth her knitting. Mrs Slade took sideways note of this activity, but her own beautifully cared-for hands remained motionless on her knee.

'I was just thinking,' she said slowly, 'what different things Rome stands for to each

generation of travelers. To our grandmothers, Roman fever; to our mothers, sentimental dangers – how we used to be guarded! – to our daughters, no more dangers than the middle of Main Street. They don't know it – but how much they're missing!'

The long golden light was beginning to pale, and Mrs Ansley lifted her knitting a little closer to her eyes. 'Yes, how we



"It isn't true!" gasped Mary. "It's a lie! Roger married me because he loved me."
"Ask him," said Mollie, curtly. And at that moment Roger himself appeared and faced the two women.

were guarded'

'I always used to think,' Mrs Slade continued, 'that our mothers had a much more difficult job than our grandmothers. When Roman fever stalked the streets it must have been comparatively easy to gather in the girls at the danger hour; but when you and I were young, with such beauty calling us, and the spice of disobedience thrown in, and no worse risk than catching cold during the cool hour after sunset, the mothers used to be put to it to keep us in – didn't they!'

She turned again toward Mrs Ansley, but the latter had reached a delicate point in her knitting. 'One, two, three – slip two; yes, they must have been,' she assented, without looking up.

Mrs Slade's eyes rested on her with a deepened attention. 'She can knit – in the face of *this!* How like her...'

Mrs Slade leaned back, brooding, her eyes ranging from the ruins which faced her to the long green hollow of the Forum, the fading glow of the church fronts beyond it, and the outlying immensity of the Coliseum. Suddenly she thought: 'It's all

very well to say that our girls have done away with sentiment and moonlight. But if Babs Ansley isn't out to catch that young aviator – the one who's a Marchese – then I don't know anything. And Jenny has no chance beside her. I know that too. I wonder if that's why Grace Ansley likes the two girls to go



The Forum in Rome seen from the Capitol

everywhere together! My poor Jenny as a foil – !' Mrs Slade gave a hardly audible laugh, and at the sound Mrs Ansley dropped her knitting.

'Yes – ?'

'I – oh, nothing. I was only thinking how your Babs carries everything before her. That Campolieri boy is one of the best matches in Rome. Don't look so innocent, my dear – you know he is. And I was wondering, ever so

respectfully, you understand... wondering how two such exemplary characters as you and Horace had managed to produce anything quite so dynamic.' Mrs Slade laughed again, with a touch of asperity.

Mrs Ansley's hands lay inert across her needles. She looked straight out at the great accumulated wreckage of passion and splendour at her feet. But her small profile was almost expressionless. At length she said, 'I think you overrate Babs, my dear.'

Mrs Slade's tone grew easier. 'No; I don't. I appreciate her. And perhaps envy you. Oh, my girl's perfect; if I were a chronic invalid I'd – well, I think I'd rather be in Jenny's hands. There must be times... but there! I always wanted a

brilliant daughter... and never quite understood why I got an angel instead.'

Mrs Ansley echoed her laugh in a faint murmur. 'Babs is an angel too.'

'Of course – of course! But she's got rainbow wings. Well, they're wandering by the sea with their young men; and here we sit... and it all brings back the past a little too acutely.'

Mrs Ansley had resumed her

knitting. One might almost have imagined (if one had known her less well, Mrs Slade reflected) that, for her also, too many memories rose from the lengthening shadows of those august ruins. But no; she was simply absorbed in her work. What was there for her to worry about! She knew that Babs would almost certainly come back engaged to the extremely eligible Campolieri. 'And she'll sell the New York house, and settle down near them in Rome, and never be in their way... she's much too tactful. But she'll have an excellent cook, and just the right people in for bridge and cocktails... and a perfectly peaceful old age among her grandchildren.'

Mrs Slade broke off this prophetic flight with a recoil of self-disgust. There was no one of whom she had less right to think unkindly than of Grace Ansley. Would she never cure herself of envying her! Perhaps she had begun too long ago.

She stood up and leaned against the parapet, filling her troubled eyes with the tranquilising magic of the hour. But instead of tranquilising her the sight seemed to increase her exasperation. Her gaze turned toward the Coliseum. Already its golden flank was drowned in purple shadow, and above it the sky curved crystal clear, without light or colour. It was the moment when afternoon and evening hang balanced in midheaven.

Mrs Slade turned back and laid her hand on her friend's

arm. The gesture was so abrupt that Mrs Ansley looked up, startled.

'The sun's set. You're not afraid, my dear?'

'Afraid - ?'
'Of Roman fever or pneumonia! I remember how ill you were that winter. As a girl you had a very delicate throat, hadn't you?'

'Oh, we're all right up here. Down below, in the Forum, it does get deathly cold, all of a sudden... but not here.'

'Ah, of course you know because you had to be so careful.' Mrs Slade turned back to the parapet. She thought: 'I must make one more effort not to hate her.' Aloud she said: 'Whenever I look at the Forum from up here, I remember that story about a great-aunt of yours, wasn't she? A dreadfully wicked great-aunt?'

'Oh, yes; Great-aunt Harriet. The one who was supposed to have sent her young sister out to the Forum after sunset to gather a night-blooming flower for her album. All our great-aunts and grandmothers used to have albums of dried flowers.'

Mrs Slade nodded. 'But she really sent her because they were in love with the same man - '

'Well, that was the family tradition. They said Aunt Harriet confessed it years afterward. At any rate, the poor little sister caught the fever and died. Mother used to frighten us with the story when we were children.'

'And you frightened me with it, that winter when you and I were here as girls. The winter I was engaged to Delphin.'

Mrs Ansley gave a faint laugh. 'Oh, did I! Really frightened you? I don't believe you're easily frightened.'

'Not often; but I was then. I was easily frightened because I was too happy. I wonder if you know what that means?'

'I - yes...'

Mrs Ansley faltered. 'Well, I suppose that was why the story of your wicked aunt made such an impression on me. And I thought: "There's no more Roman fever, but the Forum is deathly cold after sunset - especially after a hot day. And the Coliseum's even colder and damper."'

'The Coliseum - ?'

'Yes. It wasn't easy to get in, after the gates were locked for the night. Far from easy. Still, in those days it could be managed; it was managed, often. Lovers met there who couldn't meet elsewhere. You knew that?'

'I - I daresay. I don't remember.'

'You don't remember? You don't remember going to visit some ruins or other one evening, just after dark, and catching a bad chill! You were supposed to have gone to see the moonrise. People always said that expedition was what caused your illness.'

There was a moment's silence; then Mrs Ansley rejoined: 'Did they? It was all so long ago.'

'Yes. And you got well again - so it didn't matter. But I suppose it struck your friends - the reason given for your illness. I mean - because everybody knew you were so prudent on account of your throat, and your mother took

such care of you.... You had been out late sightseeing, hadn't you, that night'

'Perhaps I had. The most prudent girls aren't always prudent. What made you think of it now?'

Mrs Slade seemed to have no answer ready. But after a moment she broke out: 'Because I simply can't bear it any longer - '

Mrs Ansley lifted her head quickly. Her eyes were wide and very pale. 'Can't bear what?'

'Why - your not knowing that I've always known why you went.'

'Why I went - ?'

'Yes. You think I'm bluffing, don't you? Well, you went to meet the man I was engaged to - and I can repeat every word of the letter that took you there.'

While Mrs Slade spoke Mrs Ansley had risen unsteadily to her feet. Her bag, her knitting and gloves, slid in a panic-stricken heap to the ground. She looked at Mrs Slade as though she were looking at a ghost.

'No, no - don't,' she faltered out.

'Why not? Listen, if you don't believe me. 'My one darling, things can't go on like this. I must see you alone. Come to the Coliseum immediately after dark tomorrow. There will be somebody to let you in. No one whom you need fear will suspect' - but perhaps you've forgotten what the letter said?'

Mrs Ansley met the challenge with an unexpected composure. Steadying herself against the chair she looked at her friend, and replied: 'No; I know it by heart too.'

'And the signature? 'Only *your* D.S.' Was that it? I'm right, am I? That was the letter that took you out that evening after dark?'

Mrs Ansley was still looking at her. It seemed to Mrs Slade that a slow struggle was going on behind the voluntarily controlled mask of her small quiet face. 'I shouldn't have thought she had herself so well in hand,' Mrs Slade reflected, almost resentfully. But at this moment Mrs Ansley spoke. 'I don't know how you knew. I burned that letter at once.'

'Yes; you would, naturally - you're so prudent!' The sneer was open now. 'And if you burned the letter you're wondering how on earth I know what was in it. That's it, isn't it?'

Mrs Slade waited, but Mrs Ansley did not speak.

'Well, my dear, I know what

was in that letter because I wrote it!'

'You wrote it?'

'Yes.'

The two women stood for a minute staring at each other in the last golden light. Then Mrs Ansley dropped back into her chair. 'Oh,' she murmured, and covered her face with her hands.

Mrs Slade waited nervously for another word or movement.

None came, and at length she broke out: 'I horrify you.'

Mrs Ansley's hands dropped to her knees. The face they uncovered was streaked with tears. 'I wasn't thinking of you. I was thinking - it was the only letter I ever had from him!'

'And I wrote it. Yes; I wrote it! But I was the girl he was engaged to. Did you happen to remember that?'

Mrs Ansley's head drooped again. 'I'm not trying to excuse myself... I remembered...'

'And still you went?'

'Still I went.'

Mrs Slade stood looking down on the small bowed figure at her side. The flame of her wrath had already sunk, and she wondered why she had ever thought there would be any satisfaction in inflicting so purposeless a wound on her friend. But she had to justify herself.

'You do understand? I'd found out - and I hated you, hated you. I knew you were in love with Delphin - and I was afraid; afraid of you, of your quiet ways, your sweetness... your... well, I wanted you out of the way, that's all. Just for a few weeks; just till I was sure of him. So in a blind



Portrait of a woman found at Hawara, Egypt, Roman era 55-70 AD

fury I wrote that letter... I don't know why I'm telling you now.'

'I suppose,' said Mrs Ansley slowly, 'it's because you've always gone on hating me.'

'Perhaps. Or because I wanted to get the whole thing off my mind.' She paused. 'I'm glad you destroyed the letter. Of course I never thought you'd die.'

Mrs Ansley relapsed into silence, and Mrs Slade, leaning above her, was conscious of a strange sense of isolation, of being cut off from the warm current of human communion. 'You think me a monster!'

'I don't know... It was the only letter I had, and you say he didn't write it?'

'Ah, how you care for him still!'

'I cared for that memory,' said Mrs Ansley.

Mrs Slade continued to look down on her. She seemed physically reduced by the blow – as if, when she got up, the wind might scatter her like a puff of dust. Mrs Slade's jealousy suddenly leaped up again at the sight. All these years the woman had been living on that letter. How she must have loved him, to treasure the mere memory of its ashes! The letter of the man her friend was engaged to. Wasn't it she who was the monster?

'You tried your best to get him away from me, didn't you? But you failed; and I kept him. That's all.'

'Yes. That's all.'

'I wish now I hadn't told you. I'd no idea you'd feel about it as you do; I thought you'd be amused. It all happened so long

ago, as you say; and you must do me the justice to remember that I had no reason to think you'd ever taken it seriously. How could I, when you were married to Horace Ansley two months afterward? As soon as you could get out of bed your mother rushed you off to Florence and married you. People were rather surprised – they wondered at its being done so quickly; but I thought I knew. I had an idea you did it out of pique – to be able to say you'd got ahead of Delphin and me. Kids have such silly reasons for doing the most serious things. And your marrying so soon convinced me that you'd never really cared.'

'Yes. I suppose it would,' Mrs Ansley assented.

The clear heaven overhead was emptied of all its gold. Dusk spread over it, abruptly darkening the Seven Hills. Here and there lights began to twinkle through the foliage at their feet. Steps were coming and going on the deserted terrace – waiters looking out of the doorway at the head of the stairs, then reappearing with trays and napkins and flasks of wine. Tables were moved, chairs straightened. A feeble string of electric lights flickered out. A stout lady in a dustcoat suddenly appeared, asking in broken Italian if anyone had seen the elastic band which held together her tattered Baedeker. She poked with her stick under the table at which she had lunched, the waiters assisting.

The corner where Mrs Slade

and Mrs Ansley sat was still shadowy and deserted. For a long time neither of them spoke. At length Mrs Slade began again: 'I suppose I did it as a sort of joke –'

'A joke?'

'Well, girls are ferocious sometimes, you know. Girls in love especially. And I remember laughing to myself all that evening at the idea that you were waiting around there in the dark, dodging out of sight, listening for every sound, trying to get in – of course I was upset when I heard you were so ill afterward.'

Mrs Ansley had not moved for a long time. But now she turned slowly toward her companion. 'But I didn't wait. He'd arranged everything. He was there. We were let in at once,' she said.

Mrs Slade sprang up from her leaning position. 'Delphin there! They let you in! Ah, now you're lying!' she burst out with violence.

Mrs Ansley's voice grew clearer, and full of surprise. 'But of course he was there. Naturally he came –'

'Came? How did he know he'd find you there? You must be raving!'

Mrs Ansley hesitated, as though reflecting. 'But I answered the letter. I told him I'd be there. So he came.'

Mrs Slade flung her hands up to her face. 'Oh, God – you answered! I never thought of your answering...'

'It's odd you never thought of it, if you wrote the letter.'

'Yes. I was blind with rage.'

Mrs Ansley rose, and drew her

fur scarf about her. 'It is cold here. We'd better go.... I'm sorry for you,' she said, as she clasped the fur about her throat.

The unexpected words sent a pang through Mrs Slade. 'Yes; we'd better go.' She gathered up her bag and cloak. 'I don't know why you should be sorry for me,' she muttered.

Mrs Ansley stood looking away

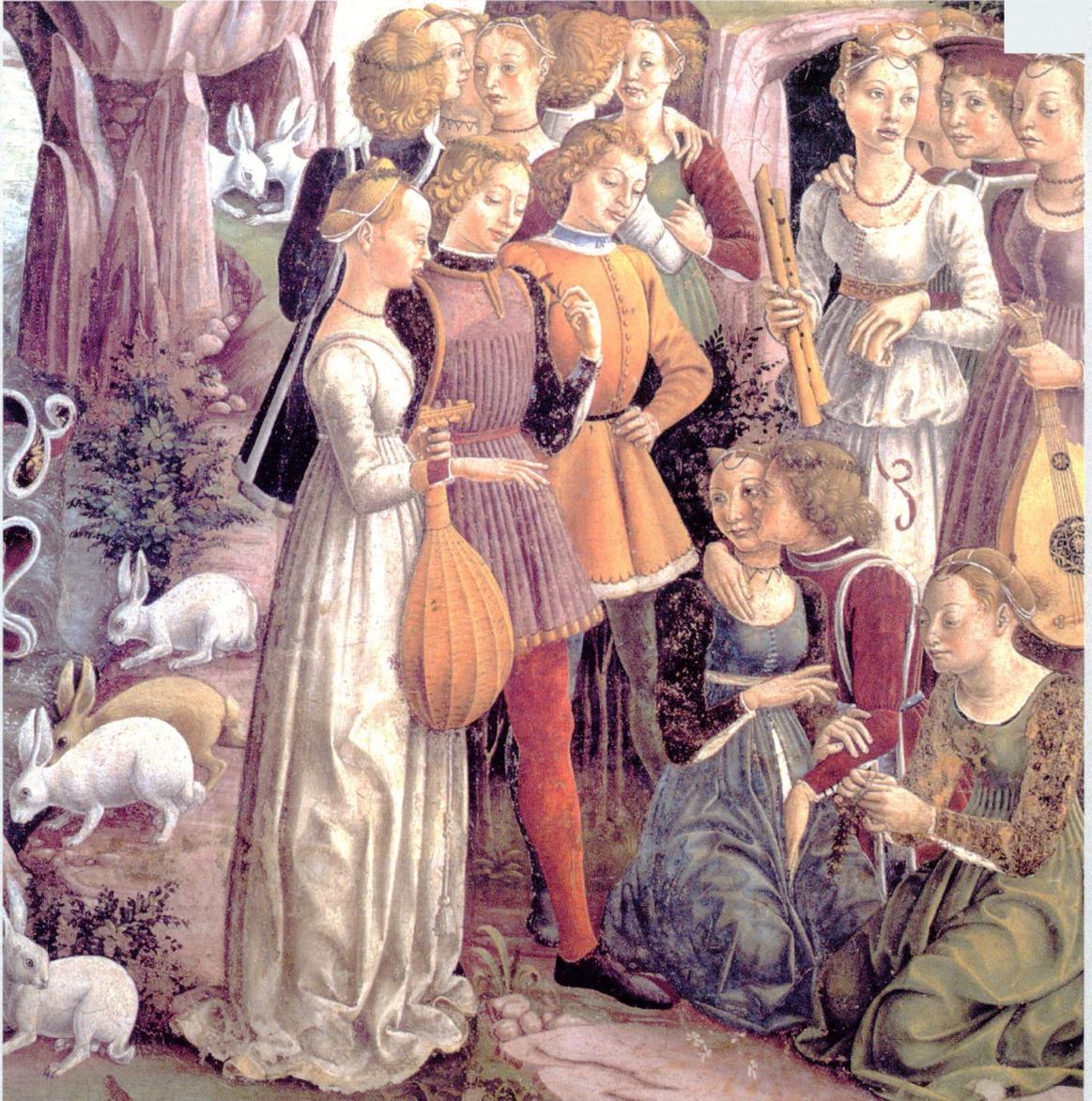
from her toward the dusky secret mass of the Coliseum. 'Well – because I didn't have to wait that night.'

Mrs Slade gave an unquiet laugh. 'Yes, I was beaten there. But I oughtn't to begrudge it to you, I suppose. At the end of all these years. After all, I had everything; I had him for twenty-five years. And you had nothing

but that one letter that he didn't write.'

Mrs Ansley was again silent. At length she turned toward the door of the terrace. She took a step, and turned back, facing her companion.

'I had Barbara,' she said, and began to move ahead of Mrs Slade toward the stairway.



'Pairs of musicians' from April in the Hall of the Months, Palazzo Schifanoia, Ferrara

BOOKS FOR THE RECESSION

There are four novels we particularly recommend for recession reading: *Hostages to Fortune* (1933) is about a doctor's wife in Oxfordshire bringing up three children in the period between the wars. It is a surprisingly hard existence. Yet although there is never a penny to spare for frivolities, theirs is a fulfilled life and this is a brave and unusual novel about the realities of parenthood. *They Knew Mr Knight* (1934) is about a man who runs an engineering business in Leicester who is disastrously encouraged to borrow too much money, partly because his wife would like a nicer

house. His undoing is Mr Knight, a Madoff figure based on Ivar Kreuger the 'match king': he was a financier who, having swindled dozens of investors, killed himself in 1932. (Ironically, in the Persephone catalogue we wrote that Mr Knight is 'as crooked as any on the front pages of our newspapers nowadays' – yet we wrote this long before the days of Madoff.) *A House in the Country* is again about living in straitened circumstances in the country, this time about Cressida cooking for

her lodgers during the worst years of WWII. The book, written in 1943, captures a moment when crisis is leading to a transformation of values. Finally, *Miss Buncl's Book* (1934), is a light-hearted novel about Barbara

uncomplaining (it is because of Vere's indomitable spirit that people love this book, which is one of our bestsellers) although there are severe shortages of everything – including eggs and oranges. And we publish two

cookery books that are particularly relevant during a credit crunch, *They Can't Ration These* (1940) is about food that costs nothing but can be gathered for free from fields and hedges (who nowadays knows that nettles and yarrow are among the healthiest thing you can eat?) and *The Country Housewife's Book* which is about bottling fruit and using up every last bit of a glut of beans.

Foods from the Fields, Moorlands, and Marshes 21



Yarrow

Yarrow, or milfoil, is a hardy perennial which is encountered at almost every step in the English countryside, for it thrives on any kind of soil. It is very nutritious and quite palatable.

YARROW PURÉE

Pick, wash, and dry handfuls of yarrow leaves. Put them in a saucepan in salt water, bring to the boil, and simmer for 20 minutes. Strain (keeping the liquid

for drinking purposes when cold), then chop the leaves and return them to the saucepan with a little butter, salt, pepper, a little milk, and toss and stir over the fire for 5 minutes.

Buncl, whose dividends have collapsed, deciding to write a novel about her village which she publishes under the name John Smith. There are all sorts of shenanigans when the villagers discover that the author of a newly-published bestseller must be living amongst them.

Then there is a 600 page diary: *Few Eggs and No Oranges* was a daily diary kept by Vere Hodgson in Notting Hill Gate during the war. She is

All eight of these books may be bought from us for the special price of £64 instead of £74 (£78 instead of £90 with UK postage) either in the shop or on the website (please order seven books as normal and then write in the box that you would like the eighth one free). You may not want all eight for yourself, but each would make a fantastic present, far more useful and better value, and much more fun, than chocolates or flowers!

OUR REVIEWERS WRITE

‘*Little Boy Lost* has the potential to be a soap opera and a sentimental shine would have distanced the action; instead, we feel so close to the characters we can hear them breathing. Hilary is wonderfully complex and a dead-on depiction of a certain type of cold intellectual. Laski’s writing is so deft, we empathise with Hilary while wanting to reach into the book and smack him. This is the third Laski novel that Persephone has had to save from out-of-print obscurity and this lapse in availability is a shame, as Laski belongs in the company of Graham Greene and Elizabeth Bowen. *Little Boy Lost* is a gem that should, and now can, be sought out and taken home.’
Jessa Crisp on npr.org

‘In Dorothy B Hughes’s 1963 *The Expendable Man*, a young doctor drives from Los Angeles to Phoenix and along the way picks up a teenage hitchhiker. Though he never makes an untoward gesture, he quickly becomes anxious to be free of her. The paranoia that we think is troubling him turns out to be rooted in something very different. “A nigger doc driving a big white Cadillac brought Bonnie Lee to Phoenix,” says one of the cops and we understand that the young doctor (whom we’ve assumed to be white) isn’t paranoid at all: he’s simply black in America where, no matter how

successful, sober, and moral you are, you are never good enough. Now, however, America has turned away from that mindset with the election of Barack Obama.’ Charles Taylor in *Dissent*

‘In the opening pages of *House-Bound* we are plunged into a vein of rich social-class comedy in the tradition of EM Delafield. The novel traces Rose’s initiation into the domestic arts, as she grapples with such questions as whether one cleans potatoes with soap or not. But, although comedy runs through the book, this extraordinary war novel is also about ageing, grief, friendship, how to survive disasters, how to cope with change. Rose has no illusions. She has “no hopes that her old world would ever return”. She finds housework roughens her hands, but need not toughen her gentle heart.’ Terence Handley MacMath *The Church Times*

‘*Miss Buncle* is a long-term resident of a cosy English village. Waking one day to discover a sharp dip in her dividends, she writes a novel. It lays bare the lives, loves and eccentricities of a certain, badly disguised English village and the mayhem that ensues when the locals take umbrage at portrayals they deem “spicy descriptions of well-known persons”. Never once does the village realise that the pleasant little brown wren in their

midst is the cause of all their scandals. Great literature this isn’t. But the frothy romance is great entertainment, a bit like “reading” an episode of ITV’s *Miss Marple*. Barbara Buncle and her neighbours have charm in spades, making them ideal companions for even the most wet weekend.’ Lee Randall *The Scotsman*

‘Persephone struck gold when *Miss Pettigrew* was made into a Hollywood film. Frances McDormand reads the unabridged audiobook of this charming piece of literary escapism, in which the tart with the heart of gold and the uptight crone reach a happy understanding.’ Karen Robinson in the *Sunday Times*, choosing *Miss Pettigrew Lives for a Day* as one of her eight favourite audiobooks of the year.

‘What a wonderful book! *Good Evening, Mrs Craven* conjures up a compelling glimpse of the lives of middle-class women left at home during the war years. Men appear, but are not central to the themes of love, longing and loss. There is a lot to think about and certainly a great deal to talk about in these skilfully crafted stories. Although brief, they really do draw brilliant pictures of the time.’ *New Books Mag*

FINALLY

Miss *Pettigrew Lives for a Day* (the Classic edition) was number 6 in the *Bookseller's* list of Top 20 Fiction Titles 2008, Small Publishers. The DVD of the film starring Frances McDormand, Amy Adams and Ciaran Hinds has just been released and we thoroughly recommend a viewing.

The audiobook of *Miss Pettigrew* is also available from us for £18 and as a download from audible.co.uk and audible.com. *Cheerful Weather for the Wedding*, read by Miriam Margolyes, will soon be available on audible.

Next autumn's books are our sixth book by Dorothy Whipple, the 1932 *High Wages* about a girl who first of all works in a dress shop and then sets up on her own; *To Bed with Grand Music*, Marghanita Laski's first novel written under a pseudonym, which is about the breakdown of morality during the war: a girl whose husband is posted overseas who proceeds to have one lover after another. The new Preface is by the historian Juliet Gardiner. And our third book next autumn will be *A New System of Domestic Cookery by a Lady*, actually Mrs Maria Rundell. This book, first published in 1806, was into its sixty-fifth edition by the 1840s; we will republish the 1816 edition. Mrs Rundell's book was the household bible first of all for Jane Austen's

contemporaries and then for the early Victorian bourgeoisie – until replaced by Mrs Beeton. *A New System of Domestic Cookery* is mostly recipes but also tells readers how to cure baldness, make ink and yeast, and brew beer.

Our *new website* has now gone live. It has not changed a great deal but looks

more modern and has a search facility which will make finding a book quicker. Do let us know what you think about the site and please tell us if you would like to be alerted when the *Fortnightly Letter* has gone up. Also, we can now put up 'content' ourselves and are planning to have more photographs and, for example, a page for reading groups.



A Lady with her Son by Bronzino 1503-72, painted in Florence c.1540, National Gallery of Art, Washington

EVENTS

The next Persephone event will be on **Wednesday 20th May** when we will show the film of *They Were Sisters* at the British Film Institute 21 Stephen Street W1. Lunch will be served before the film between 1 and 2 pm and afterwards there will be tea.

On **Wednesday 10th June** Jenny Hartley will talk about her book *Charles Dickens and the House of Fallen Women*. Claire Tomalin wrote about it in the *Guardian*: 'Vivid, intelligent and enthralling, Jenny Hartley's brilliant book is about Dickens setting up in Shepherd's Bush a house in which girls from the streets, the prisons and the workhouses might be changed through kindness and discipline, and so prepared for new lives in the colonies.'

On **Thursday 2nd July** Rachel Billington will talk at a Lunch about her aunt (by marriage) Christine Longford and the latter's novel *Making Conversation*, Persephone Book No.83. She will also talk about her own most recent novel *Lies and Novelties*.

On **Tuesday 15th September** we will show the film of Elizabeth Taylor's *Mrs Palfrey at the Claremont*, which was made in 2005 but has not been on general release in this country.

And on **Thursday 8th October** a dramatisation of *Lettrice Delmer*, Persephone book No.36, will be read by a group of actors assembled by Anne Harvey. This event will be from 6-8 to suit people who cannot manage lunchtime. It costs £20, the lunches and film are £30, the book groups are £10. Please ring the Lambs Conduit street shop to book for any of these events.



PERSEPHONE BOOKS
020 7242 9292

Book Groups: we already run flourishing groups on the first Wednesday of the month in Lamb's Conduit Street and the third Monday of the month in

Notting Hill Gate. Also Claudia Fitzherbert is starting a group on the **fourth Thursday of every month** at 7.30 at Liscious 125 Walton Street, the Oxford shop where she is selling the entire range of Persephone books. Please ring either of the shops to be put in touch with Claudia. And we are starting a *Classics* teatime **Book Group** in Lamb's Conduit Street from 3.30-5. This will take place, obviously, over a cup of tea and a slice of cake and will be on the second Thursday of the month, starting on May 14th with *Someone at a Distance*.

The Notting Hill Gate Persephone Bookshop at 109 Kensington Church Street telephone **0207 221 2201** is open from 10-6 every day except Sunday and sells all the Persephone books and a good selection of books by other publishers. We also order books and try to obtain them within twenty-four hours.

It is our tenth birthday this year – the first books were published in March 1999 – but like the Queen we will celebrate our birthday in June. Please try and drop in to the Lamb's Conduit Street shop on **Thursday 18th June** – there will be lunch, tea, canapés and wine all day and into the evening, and a very special birthday offer on the books.

Printed by the Lavenham Press, Lavenham, Suffolk.

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

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