



The Persephone Biannually

N°7 Spring & Summer 2010

Tel: +44 20 7242 9292

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'Napping on the Beach at Monte Carlo' 1934

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OUR BOOKS FOR SPRING & SUMMER 2010

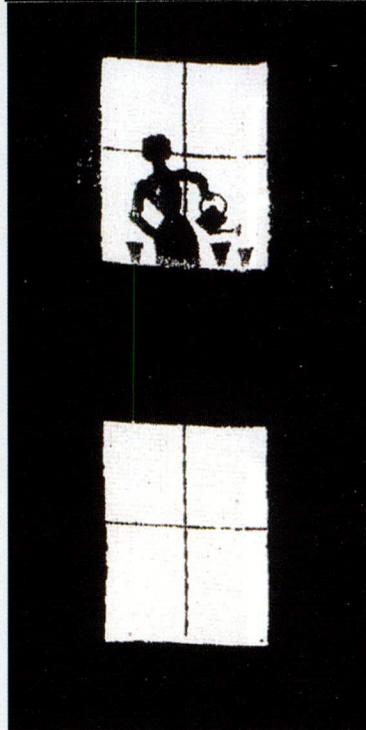
Irène Némirovsky, b.1903, has become one of France's most famous writers. But after her death in 1942 when, because she was Jewish, she was deported by the French police to Drancy and thence to Auschwitz, she was virtually forgotten. It was only with the rediscovery of the manuscript of *Suite Française* in a suitcase and its publication in France in 2004 and in the UK and USA in 2006 that her name started to become as well-known as it is today.

After the success of that book (which, for those who have not read it, is an epic novel – projected to be in five parts but only two were written – about the Fall of France and its aftermath) her English publishers brought many of her other novels back into print. But they did not want to translate Némirovsky's short stories, believing, like so many publishers, that short stories do not sell. They do of course at Persephone Books! We have sold more than 16,000 copies of *Good Evening, Mrs Craven*: The Wartime Stories of Mollie Panter-Downes, and although none of our other volumes of short stories do as well as this (*The Closed Door and Other Stories* by Dorothy Whipple is its nearest

rival) they are all respectable sellers. So we were eager to take on Némirovsky's short stories and commissioned Bridget Patterson to translate *Dimanche and Other Stories*, Persephone Book No. 87. This was then sold to Vintage in America and is appearing there at the same time as our edition.

Némirovsky's first short story was published in 1921 when she was 18; thirty more appeared in her lifetime. Fifteen were republished in 2000 in *Dimanche et autres nouvelles*, of which we have selected ten; thirteen were republished in *Destinée et autres nouvelles*; and in 2009 twelve, including seven that had never appeared before, were published in *Les Vierges et autres nouvelles*. There are thus thirty more stories awaiting translation.

Némirovsky was brought up in Tsarist Russia, but after the Revolution her family escaped to France, where they lived a comfortable bourgeois life in Paris and in Biarritz. Hence the picture of two young women at Monte Carlo on the cover, the image that has been used on the American edition of *Dimanche and Other Stories*; it was found by Megan Wilson who designs the Persephone Classics.



'Rear Window' 1938, an artificial silk satin made by Coudurier, Fructus & Descher, Lyons, private collection.



A late 1970s ribbed knit fabric: silk slub, durene and polyester sprinkled with gold metallic, private collection.

When Némirovsky's first novel, *David Golder*, came out, she was 26 and became instantly famous. The book was a penetrating glimpse of a world she knew well, the circle of successful or not-so successful Russian Jewish businessmen, speculating ruthlessly in oil and minerals. David Golder is appallingly treated by his wife: she owes something to Némirovsky's mother (from whom she was estranged most of her adult life). The book's enormous success was based on the directness of its language, including crudities unusual in good literature. It ran into criticism for being anti-semitic but Némirovsky always said that she simply wrote about what she knew. Later (in 1935) she told an interviewer that 'if there had been Hitler (in 1929) I would have greatly toned down *David Golder* and I wouldn't have written it in the same fashion.' (She added: 'And yet I would have been wrong, it would have been a weakness unworthy of a real writer.')

None of the later novels were as successful as *David Golder* and the short stories were written in large part because Némirovsky and her husband had two daughters and both needed to earn in order to help support what was by now quite a lavish way of life. Yet the ten pieces in *Dimanche* are everything that a short story should be: beautifully written, novels in miniature, fascinating, profound, all this and more. As in a Chekhov short story, little happens but

everything happens. Whether describing the impatience of a girl waiting for her lover, the tortured relationships of a large family, or the emotions of someone fleeing the Nazis, Némirovsky is always an extremely astute observer, delicate, perceptive and ironic.

There have been three advance reviews of *Dimanche and Other Stories* in America and one in the (London) *Times*. Kate Saunders said in the latter: 'These short stories are finished down to the last full stop – and form the most ravishing collection I have read for years. The title story describes a mother and



Irène Némirovsky c.1926, the year of her marriage, in Paris © IMEC

burrowed against her sleeping boy with his nose in his armpit, still as a statue except for the wistful eyes that tracked her approach and begged, "Pretend you don't see me."

'Alex Selky, going on seven, so eager to grow up, kissed his mother good-bye on their front steps on the hot bright morning of May 15 1980, and marched himself down the street on his way to the New Boston School of Back Bay, two blocks from his corner. He never arrived at school, and from the moment he turned the corner, he apparently disappeared from the face of the earth.'

S*till Missing* was widely reviewed, was made into a film (*Without a Trace*), was a bestseller and is still in print in America: inexplicably, it had not been in print in the UK since the 1990s. This is what the *New York Times*'s reviewer wrote: 'Love is hard enough to write about, but a parent's love for a child is almost inexpressible in its universality and in the uneventfulness of its nature under ordinary circumstances. When Alex disappears, Susan, his mother, doesn't just lose a little boy. She loses the most essential part of herself, a piece of her own person-hood; without Alex she has no purpose and no future. Perhaps this can only be understood through a child's absence – an unnatural cessation like a stopped heart. Given the novel's painful beginning I wondered how Miss Gutcheon could keep up such an intense

emotional pitch. But keep it up she does, and, most impressively, without ever letting Susan slip from our sympathies by believing too much or too little in the likelihood of Alex's reappearance. She keeps believing, without caring what anybody else thinks, simply because nothing else is possible to her.

'Susan is strong and warm, the mother we all wish we had or could be. Her friends, relatives and ex-husband, Graham, Alex's father, show their true natures – some not so pleasant – as grief isolates and distorts her. Susan, obsessed, listens to every psychic, subjects her friends to lie-detector tests and embraces the media - television crews camp outside her Boston house – with the clear tunnel vision of the mad: never mind that she is being exploited, because somewhere some reader or viewer might help her find her son.

'Desperate to find him, his mother begins a vigil that lasts for days, then weeks, then months. She is treated first as a tragic figure, then as a grief-crazed hysteric, then as an unpleasant reminder of the bad fortune that can befall us all. Against all hope, despite false leads and the desertions of her friends and allies, she believes with all her heart that somehow, somewhere, Alex will be found alive.'

And in the *US Publisher's Weekly* said: 'Haunting, harrowing and highly effective... a stunning shocker of an ending... It strings out the suspense to the almost unendurable.'

This is what the *Times Literary Supplement* wrote: 'The intense brooding quality of the narrative is a result of Beth Gutcheon's conviction that what happens in her fiction could happen in fact to any American mother living in a big city. The anguish inflicted on Susan Selky is something even all-American moms must be prepared for.

'Alex is, though diminutive, the Big Man, and his conspicuous absence is what determines the tone of the book. As just another schoolkid Alex attracted little attention but as a potential victim he is transformed, he becomes a celebrity worthy of the attention of the media and of so-called friends. Susan finds there are other males in her life besides Alex and all of them inadequate. Although in no sense a feminist novel, this book is littered with asides which suggest an intelligent woman being taken for granted in a society that still demands a degree of conformity from a damsel or even career-woman in distress. Enough, as Susan Selky is repeatedly advised, is enough. Beth Gutcheon has borrowed the crude framework of the thriller and used it as the basis of an elaborately patterned study of an individual response to extreme psychological pressure. This novel has a disturbing theme and a strange cast of characters: the humanity of the finished product is a tribute to Beth Gutcheon's considerable artistry.'

THE SUMMER ISLAND

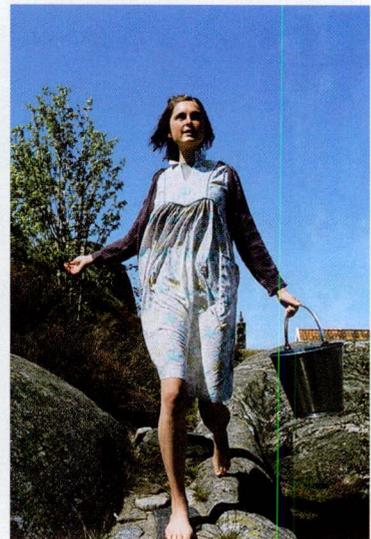
Tillie Culme-Seymour (below right), who works at our Notting Hill Gate shop, published this article in *Waitrose Food Illustrated*; it inspired the book she is now writing: 'Between Smaholmene on the south coast of Norway and an outer, rocky protrusion known as Raspberry Island, runs a narrow channel of water. During a storm, it looks almost black and flows so rapidly only a fool would bathe here, but on a calm day, it is possible to launch into the silky cool of the North Sea and swim towards a narrow, weedy landing bank, about ten strokes away from the natural gully we call The Velvet Steps. On one such day, years ago, my Norwegian grandmother Olga Olsen stepped into the water with a bag clenched between her teeth, to collect raspberries from the island: the wild raspberries that grow on the south coast of Norway taste quite different from any other rasp-

berries I've eaten... impossibly fragile – jam before they were fruit; a disordering of nature.

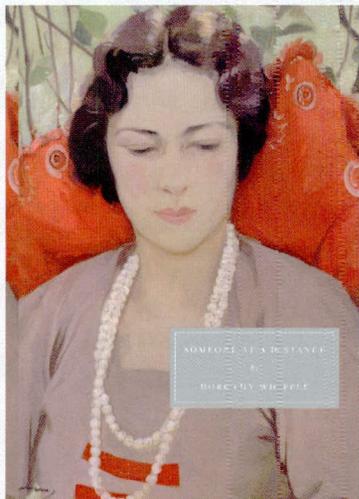
Olga, or Mor-Mor (meaning mother's mother), bought the island in 1948, from a man whose wife had set her heart on a mink coat. With the help of my grandfather Peto, she designed and built the oxblood-red wooden hut that stands to this day, and called the island Smaholmene, or 'Little Islands' – an endearment for the place where first my mother and her siblings, then my own sisters and brothers and I spent long childhood summers fishing for hermit crabs and toasting milk chocolate pieces over a candle's flame until they sizzled and turned a dark, cratered brown.

The island is now my family's luxury. We share it, dividing the prime weeks in July and

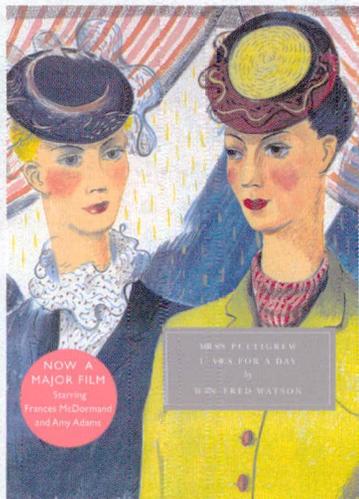
August, according to the school holidays. My childhood was measured in summers of mackerel-fishing with my father or dancing with my older brothers' school friends to 'Mack the Knife' on the warm stone of the jetty at the back of the house. Then there was the festive occasion of my birthday in early August. A *blotkake* – an absurdly creamy affair; a sandwich of whipped cream, jam, sponge and toasted nuts – would be ordered from the bakery in Lillesand, with 'Happy Birthday Mathilde' (they would spell my name the Norwegian way) piped in chocolate over the paper-thin marzipan. Occasionally, the few Norwegian friends we knew invited us for waffles and jam, served at a pristine table set with ornamental china tea sets; yet these contrasted unfavourably with the chipped excuses for crockery we used on the island...'



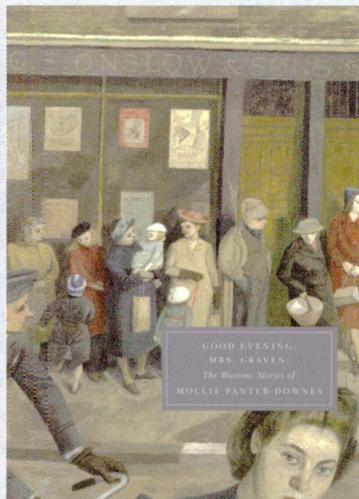
THE PERSEPHONE CLASSICS



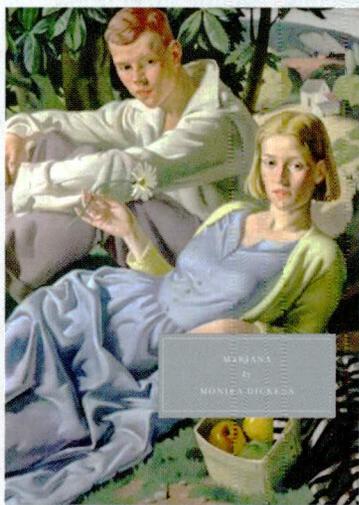
SOMEONE AT A DISTANCE
by
DOROTHY WHIPPLE



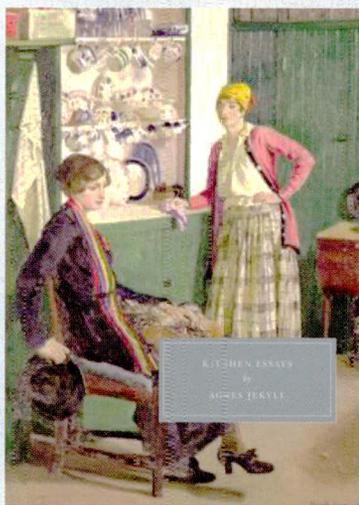
MRS PETTIGREW
TAKES FOR A DAY
by
WINIFRED WATSON



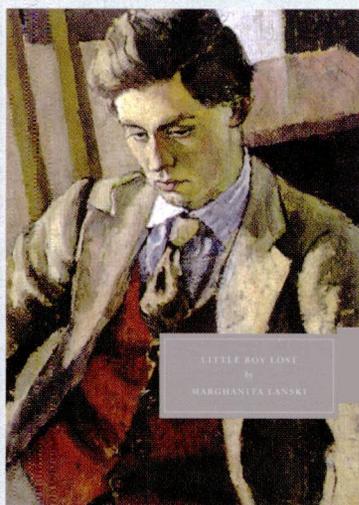
GOOD EVENING,
MRS. CRAVEN
The Wartime Stories of
MOLLIE PANTER-DOWNES



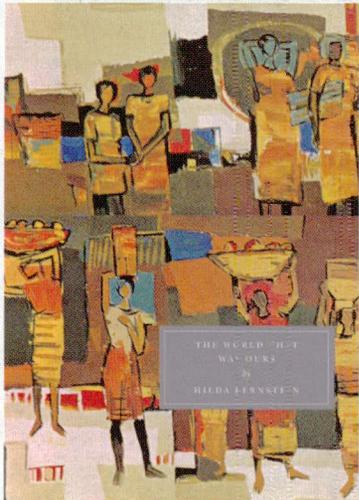
MARJAMA
by
MONICA SJÖÖ



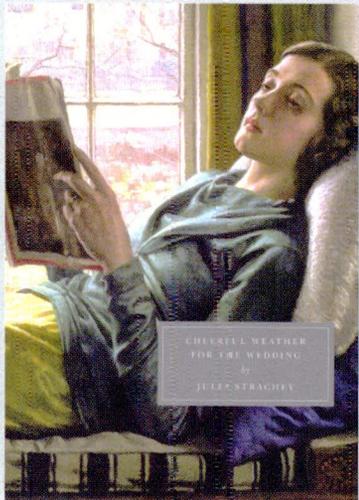
KITCHEN ESSAYS
by
ALICE JEWELL



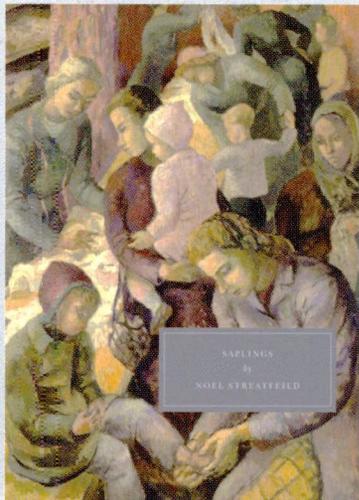
LITTLE BOY LOVE
by
MARGHANITA LASKI



THE WORLD THAT
WAS OURS
by
HILDA FERRIS



CHEERFUL WEATHER
FOR THE WEDDING
by
JULIET STRACHEY



SAPLINGS
by
NOEL STRATFIELD

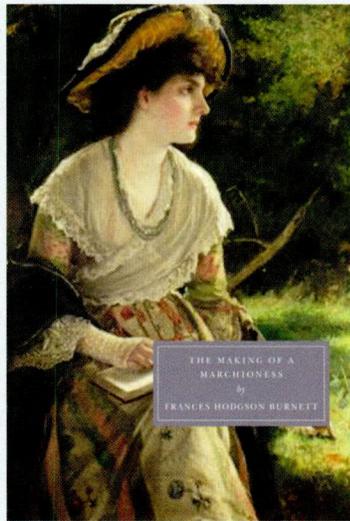
OUR REVIEWERS WRITE

‘As a fan of Noel Streatfeild’s children’s books, I came to *Saplings* – one of her fifteen novels for adults – with great interest. The novel starts with the Wiltshires enjoying a family holiday on the beach and soon we start to become familiar with each child, and understand a little about their parents, Alex and Lena. As the novel unfolds, their comfortable family life begins to unravel with the onset of the Second World War. Children have to be evacuated, schools changed, grief endured and new relationships formed. Lena struggles to cope with her changing role, and with the absence of her husband her own flaws are exposed. The idyllic and secure seaside holidays seem incredibly distant, almost dreamlike. Essentially this novel is about the disintegration of a middle-class family during the war. Streatfeild keeps you hooked with her aptitude for close, and often witty, observation of children, and her warmth for them shines through. I hope the wonderful Persephone Books will consider reprinting more of her novels.’ Emma Milne-White *The Bookseller*

‘This was a year full of good things. Two first-rate literary biographies, Blake Bailey’s amazing, scandalous and hilarious life of John Cheever and one that I’ve been waiting decades for, Nicola Beauman’s

The Other Elizabeth Taylor. This was a labour of love, angrily disowned and rejected, alas, by Elizabeth Taylor’s children on the basis of some upsetting personal revelations. (They should read Bailey’s *Cheever* and count themselves lucky.)’ Philip Hensher *Spectator* Christmas Books

‘Mrs Rundell was the Nigella of her day – a domestic



goddess whose book sold thousands in Regency England. This Persephone edition of *A New System of Domestic Cookery* is a great chance to discover what mattered in the kitchen in 1806. Many of the recipes still appeal – “shrimp pie, excellent”, apple jelly, quaking pudding, pound cake. Even more fascinating are the oddities such as jellied pigeons and artificial ass’s milk (good for invalids, apparently),

showing how much has changed in British kitchens in the last two hundred years.’ Bee Wilson *The Daily Telegraph*

‘*To Bed with Grand Music* is... a corrosively authentic and daring novel about the goings on of a silly young wife in wartime London. In it we are very far from the sagas of rationing, chicken-keeping and evacuees that have earlier figured in Persephone’s list, and even further from lachrymose tales of wronged womanhood. Deborah, whose amiable husband is stationed in the Middle East, gets bored looking after her small child in a wartime country village and when the temptation of a job in London is dangled in front of her she takes it. Her naivety initially leads her to be angry because the first man she falls into bed with won’t pretend to be in love with her. But the first Yank leads to another one, and then to the next lover and the next, the transient nature of most wartime London postings forming a toxic mixture with Deborah’s own greed and lack of character. Soon she is living in a heady world far beyond her means, not only financially but also in terms of her own fragile sense of reality. Leaving much food for thought... much of this utterly convincing book makes for hilarious reading...’ Gillian Tindall in the *Literary Review*

THE PERSEPHONE 88

1. **William – an Englishman** by Cicely Hamilton Prize-winning 1919 novel about the effect of WW1 on a socialist clerk and a suffragette. Preface: Nicola Beuman
2. **Mariana** by Monica Dickens First published in 1940, this funny, romantic first novel describes a young girl's life in the 1930s. Preface: Harriet Lane
3. **Someone at a Distance** by Dorothy Whipple 'A very good novel indeed' (*Spectator*) about the tragic destruction of a formerly happy marriage (pub. 1953). Preface: Nina Bawden
4. **Fidelity** by Susan Glaspell 1915 novel by a Pulitzer-winning writer brilliantly describing the long-term consequences of a girl in Iowa running off with a married man. Preface: Laura Godwin
5. **An Interrupted Life** by Etty Hillesum From 1941-3 a woman in Amsterdam, 'the Anne Frank for grown-ups', wrote diaries and letters: they 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 read on R4 twice, and on R7. Preface: Gregory LeStage
9. **Few Eggs and No Oranges** by Vere Hodgson A 600-page diary, written from 1940-45 in Notting Hill Gate, full of acute observation, wit and humanity. Preface: Jenny Hartley
10. **Good Things in England** by Florence White This comprehensive 1932 collection of recipes inspired many, including Elizabeth David.
11. **Julian Grenfell** by Nicholas Mosley A biography of the First World War poet, and of his mother Ettie Desborough. Preface: the author
12. **It's Hard to be Hip over Thirty and Other Tragedies of Married Life** by Judith Viorst Funny, weary and wise 1960s poems about marriage, children and reality. Preface: the author
13. **Consequences** by EM Delafield By the author of *The Diary of a Provincial Lady*, this 1919 novel is about a girl entering a convent after she fails to marry. Preface: Nicola Beuman
14. **Farewell Leicester Square** by Betty Miller Novel (by Jonathan Miller's mother) about a Jewish film-director and 'the discreet discrimination of the bourgeoisie' (*Guardian*). Preface: Jane Miller
15. **Tell It to a Stranger** by Elizabeth Berridge Funny, observant and bleak 1947 short stories, twice in the *Evening Standard* bestseller list. Preface: AN Wilson
16. **Saplings** by Noel Streatfeild A novel by the well-known author of *Ballet Shoes*, about the destruction of a family during WW2; a R4 ten-part serial. Afterword: Jeremy Holmes
17. **Marjory Fleming** by Oriol Malet A deeply empathetic novel about the real life of the Scottish child prodigy who lived from 1803-11; published in France; was a play on Radio Scotland.
18. **Every Eye** by Isobel English An unusual 1956 novel about a girl travelling to Spain, highly praised by Muriel Spark: a R4 'Afternoon Play' in 2004. Preface: Neville Braybrooke
19. **They Knew Mr Knight** by Dorothy Whipple An absorbing 1934 novel about a man driven to committing fraud and what happens to him and his family; a 1943 film. Afterwords: Terence Handley MacMath and Christopher Beuman
20. **A Woman's Place** by Ruth Adam A survey of women's lives from 1900-75, 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 nightclub singer. Read on R4 by Maureen Lipman; now a film with Frances McDormand and Amy Adams. Preface: Henrietta Twycross-Martin Also available as an unabridged Persephone audiobook read by Frances McDormand and available on audible.co.uk and .com
22. **Consider the Years** by Virginia Graham Sharp, funny, evocative WW2 poems by Joyce Grenfell's closest friend and collaborator. Preface: Anne Harvey
23. **Reuben Sachs** by Amy Levy A fierce 1880s satire on the London Jewish community by 'the Jewish Jane Austen' who was a friend of Oscar Wilde. Preface: Julia Neuberger
24. **Family Roundabout** by Richmal Crompton By the *William* books author; 1948 family saga contrasting two matriarchs and their very different children. Preface: Juliet Aykroyd
25. **The Montana Stories** by Katherine Mansfield Collects together the short stories written during the author's last year; with a detailed publisher's note and the contemporary illustrations. Five were read on R4 in 2002.
26. **Brook Evans** by Susan Glaspell A very unusual novel, written in the same year as *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, about the enduring effect of a love affair on three generations of a family.

- 27. The Children who Lived in a Barn by Eleanor Graham** A 1938 classic about five children fending for themselves; starring the unforgettable hay-box. Preface: Jacqueline Wilson
- 28. Little Boy Lost by Marghanita Laski** Novel about a father's search for his son in France in late 1945, chosen by the *Guardian's* Nicholas Lezard as his 2001 Paperback Choice. A 'Book at Bedtime' on R4 read by Jamie Glover. Afterword: Anne Sebba
- 29. The Making of a Marchioness by Frances Hodgson Burnett** A very entertaining 1901 novel about the ensuing melodrama after a governess marries a Marquis. A R4 Classic Serial in 2007. Preface: Isabel Raphael, Afterword: Gretchen Gerzina
- 30. Kitchen Essays by Agnes Jekyll** Witty and useful essays about cooking, with recipes, published in *The Times* and reprinted as a book in 1922. 'One of the best reads outside Elizabeth David' wrote gastropoda.com
- 31. A House in the Country by Jocelyn Playfair** An unusual and very interesting 1944 novel about a group of people living in the country during WW2. Preface: Ruth Gorb
- 32. The Carlyles at Home by Thea Holme** A 1965 mixture of biography and social history which very entertainingly describes Thomas and Jane Carlyle's life in Chelsea.
- 33. The Far Cry by Emma Smith** A beautifully written 1949 novel about a young girl's passage to India: a great Persephone favourite. R4 'Book at Bedtime' in 2004. Preface: author
- 34. Minnie's Room: The Peacetime Stories of Mollie Panter-Downes 1947–1965:** Second volume of short stories first published in *The New Yorker*, previously unknown in the UK.
- 35. Greenery Street by Denis Mackail** A delightful, very funny 1925 novel about a young couple's first year of married life in a (real) street in Chelsea. Preface: Rebecca Cohen
- 36. Lettice Delmer by Susan Miles** A unique 1920s novel in verse describing a girl's stormy adolescence and path to redemption; much admired by TS Eliot. A novel in verse sounds unappealing – but we highly recommend this book.
- 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. **Also available on audible.co.uk as an unabridged Persephone audiobook read by Miriam Margolyes.**
- 39. Manja by Anna Gmeyner** A 1938 German novel, newly translated, about five children conceived on the same night in 1920, and their lives until the Nazi takeover. Preface: Eva Ibbotson (the author's daughter)
- 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 shielding her daughter from a blackmailer. Filmed as *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 written for Aga owners which can 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 into a new house, and the resulting adjustments and tensions. Preface: Jilly Cooper.
- 48. The Casino by Margaret Bonham** Short stories by a 1940s writer with a unique voice and dark sense of humour; they were read on BBC Radio 4 in 2004 and 2005. Preface: Cary Bazalgette.
- 49. Bricks and Mortar by Helen Ashton** An excellent 1932 novel by a very popular pre- and post-war writer, chronicling the life of a hard-working, kindly London architect and his wife over thirty-five years.
- 50. The World that was Ours by Hilda Bernstein** An extraordinary memoir that reads like a novel of the events before and after the 1964 Rivonia Trial. Mandela was given a life sentence but the Bernsteins escaped to England. Preface and Afterword: the author
- 51. Operation Heartbreak by Duff Cooper** A soldier misses going to war – until the end of his life. 'The novel I enjoyed more than any other in the immediate post-war years' (Nina Bawden). Afterword: Max Arthur
- 52. The Village by Marghanita Laski** This 1952 comedy of manners describes post-war readjustments in village life when love ignores the class barrier. Afterword: Juliet Gardiner
- 53. Lady Rose and Mrs Memmary by Ruby Ferguson** A 1937 novel about Lady Rose, who inherits a great house, marries well – and then meets the love of her life on a park bench. A great favourite of the Queen Mother. Preface: Candia McWilliam

- 54. They Can't Ration These by Vicomte de Mauduit** A 1940 cookery book about 'food for free', full of excellent (and now timely) recipes.
- 55. Flush by Virginia Woolf** A light-hearted but surprisingly feminist 1933 'life' of Elizabeth Barrett Browning's spaniel, 'a little masterpiece of comedy' (*TLS*). Preface: Sally Beaman
- 56. They Were Sisters by Dorothy Whipple** A 1943 novel by this wonderful writer, contrasting three different marriages. Preface: Celia Brayfield
- 57. The Hopkins Manuscript by RC Sherriff** What might happen if the moon crashed into the earth in 1946: a 1939 novel 'written' by a delightful anti-hero, 'Mr Hopkins'. Preface: Michael Moorcock, Afterword: George Gamow
- 58. Hetty Dorval by Ethel Wilson** First novel (1947) set in the beautiful landscape of British Columbia; a young girl is befriended by a beautiful and selfish 'Menace' – but is she? Afterword: Northrop Frye
- 59. There Were No Windows by Norah Hoult** A touching and funny novel, written in 1944, about an elderly woman with memory loss living in Kensington during the blitz. Afterword: Julia Briggs.
- 60. Doreen by Barbara Noble** A 1946 novel about a child who is evacuated to the country during the war. Her mother regrets it; the family that takes her in wants to keep her. Preface: Jessica Mann
- 61. A London Child of the 1870s by Molly Hughes** A classic memoir, written in 1934, about an 'ordinary, suburban Victorian family' in Islington, a great favourite with all ages. Preface: Adam Gopnik.
- 62. How to Run Your Home Without Help by Kay Smallshaw** A 1949 manual for the newly servantless housewife full of advice that is historically interesting, useful nowadays and, as well, unintentionally funny. Preface: Christina Hardymont
- 63. Princes in the Land by Joanna Cannan** A novel published in 1938 about a daughter of the aristocracy who marries an Oxford don; her three children fail to turn out as she had anticipated.
- 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, polemical but intensely readable, about the unthinking cruelty with which Victorian parents gave birth to daughters without anticipating any future for them apart from marriage.
- 66. Gardener's Nightcap by Muriel Stuart** A 1938 pot pourri: a huge variety of miniature essays on gardening – such as *Dark Ladies* (fritillary), *Better Gooseberries*, *Phlox Failure* – which will be enjoyed by all gardeners, keen or lukewarm.
- 67. The Fortnight in September by RC Sherriff** Another novel by the author of *Journey's End*, and of *The Hopkins Manuscript*, Persephone Book No. 57, about a family on holiday in Bognor in 1931; a quiet masterpiece.
- 68. The Expendable Man by Dorothy B Hughes** A 1963 thriller set in Arizona by the well-known American crime writer; it was chosen by the critic HRF Keating as one of his hundred best crime novels. Afterword: Dominic Power
- 69. Journal of Katherine Mansfield** The husband of the great short story writer (cf. *The Montana Stories*, Persephone Book No. 25) assembled this journal from unposted letters, scraps of writing etc, to give a unique portrait of a woman writer.
- 70. Plats du Jour by Patience Gray and Primrose Boyd** A 1957 cookery book which was a bestseller at the time and a pioneering work for British cooks. The black and white illustrations and the coloured endpapers are by David Gentleman.
- 71. The Shuttle by Frances Hodgson Burnett** A 1907 page-turner about Rosalie Vanderpoel, an American heiress who marries an English aristocrat, whose beautiful and enterprising sister Bettina sets out to rescue her. Preface: Anne Sebba
- 72. House-Bound by Winifred Peck** This 1942 novel describes an Edinburgh woman deciding, radically, to run her house without help and do her own cooking; the war is in the background and foreground. Afterword: Penelope Fitzgerald
- 73. The Young Pretenders by Edith Henrietta Fowler** An 1895 novel for adults and children about Babs, who lives with her uncle and aunt and has not yet learnt to dissemble. Preface: Charlotte Mitchell
- 74. The Closed Door and Other Stories by Dorothy Whipple** Ten short stories drawn from the three collections (now extremely hard to find) that Dorothy Whipple published during her lifetime. Read on BBC R4 in 2007.
- 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
- 76. The Crowded Street by Winifred Holtby** A 1924 novel about Muriel's attempts to escape from small-town Yorkshire, and her rescue by Delia, alias Vera Brittain. Preface: Marion Shaw
- 77. Daddy's Gone A-Hunting by Penelope Mortimer** This 1958 novel is about the 'captive wives' of the pre-war women's liberation era, bored and lonely in suburbia. Preface: Valerie Grove
- 78. A Very Great Profession: The Woman's Novel 1914-39 by Nicola Beauman** A mixture of literary criticism and historical evocation, first published 25 years ago, about the women writers of the inter-war period.

79. Round About a Pound a Week by **Maud Pember Reeves** A study of working-class life in Lambeth in the early years of the C20th that is witty, readable, poignant and fascinating – and relevant nowadays. Preface: Polly Toynbee

80. The Country Housewife's Book by **Lucy H Yates** A useful 1934 book, suggested to us by the owner of a working farm, on topics such as the storeroom and larder, using garden produce, and game.

81. Miss Buncle's Book by **DE Stevenson** A middle-aged woman writes a novel, as 'John Smith', about the village she lives in. A delightful and funny 1934 book by an author whose work sold in millions. Preface: Aline Templeton.

82. Amours de Voyage by **Arthur Hugh Clough** A novel in verse, set in Rome in 1849, funny and beautiful and profound, and extraordinarily modern in tone. Preface: Julian Barnes

83. Making Conversation by **Christine Longford**. An amusing, unusual 1931 novel about a girl growing up which is in the vein of *Cold Comfort Farm* and *Persephone Book No. 38 Cheerful Weather for the Wedding*. Preface: Rachel Billington

84. A New System of Domestic Cookery by **Mrs Rundell** An 1806 cookbook – we have reprinted the 1816 edition in facsimile – which is long, detailed and fascinating. Preface: Janet Morgan

85. High Wages by **Dorothy Whipple** Another novel by *Persephone's* bestselling writer about a girl setting up a dress shop just before the First World War. Preface: Jane Brocket

86. To Bed with Grand Music by **Marghanita Laski** A couple are separated by the war. She is serially unfaithful, a quite new take on 'women in wartime'. Preface: Juliet Gardiner

87. Dimanche and Other Stories by **Irene Némirovsky** The ten short stories in this volume, especially translated by Bridget Patterson for *Persephone Books*, were written between 1934 and 1941. Some of

them are dry runs in miniature for *Suite Française*; some are about mothers and daughters; some are about sibling relationships; and one is set in Russia in homage to Chekhov.

88. Still Missing by **Beth Gutcheon** A 1981 novel about a woman whose six year-old son sets off on his own for school and does not return. But his mother never gives up hope...



SUMMER'S JOY.
....."The cool silver shock
of the plunge in a pool's living water"

1921 poster by *Laura Knight* for the *London Underground*

© *London Transport Museum*

'DIMANCHE' A SHORT STORY BY IRÈNE NÉMIROVSKY

In Rue Las Cases it was as quiet as during the height of summer, and every open window was screened by a yellow blind. The fine weather had returned: it was the first Sunday of spring, a warm and restless day that took people out of their houses and out of the city. The sky glowed with a gentle radiance. The birds in Place Sainte-Clotilde chirped lazily, while the raucous screeching of cars leaving for the country echoed in the peaceful streets. The only cloud in the sky was a delicately curled white shell that floated upwards for a moment, then melted into the ether. People raised their heads with surprise and anticipation; they sniffed the air and smiled.

Agnès half closed the shutters: the sun was hot and the roses would open too quickly and die. Nanette ran in and stood hopping from one foot to the other.

'May I go out, Mother? It's such nice weather.'

Mass was almost over. The children were already coming down the street in their bright sleeveless dresses, holding their prayer books in their white-gloved hands and clustering round a little girl who had just taken her first communion. Her round cheeks were pink and shining under her veil. A procession of bare legs, all pink and gold, as downy as the skin of

a peach, sparkled in the sunshine. The bells were still ringing, slowly and sadly as if to say: 'Off you go, good people, we are sorry not to be able to keep you any longer. We have sheltered you for as long as we could, but now we have to give you back to the world and to your everyday life. Time to go. Mass is over.'

The bells fell silent. The smell of hot bread filled the street, wafting up from the open bakery; you could see the freshly washed floor gleaming, and the narrow mirrors on the walls glinting faintly in the shadows. Then everyone had gone home.

Agnès said: 'Nanette, go and see if Papa is ready, and tell Nadine that lunch is on the table.'

Guillaume came in, radiating the scent of lavender water and good cigars which always made her feel slightly nauseated. He seemed even more high-spirited, healthy and plump than usual.

As soon as they had sat down, he announced: 'I'll be going out after lunch. When you've been suffocating in Paris all week, it's the least . . . Are you really not tempted?'

'I don't want to leave the little one.'

Nanette was sitting opposite him and Guillaume smiled at her and tweaked her hair. The previous night she had had a

temperature, but so slight that her fresh complexion showed no sign of pallor.

'She's not really ill. She has a good appetite.'

'Oh, I'm not worried, thank God,' said Agnès. 'I'll let her go out until four o'clock. Where are you going?'

Guillaume's face visibly clouded over. 'I . . . oh, I don't know yet . . . you always want to organise things in advance . . . somewhere around Fontainebleau or Chartres, I'll see, wherever I end up. So? Will you come with me?'

'I'd love to see the look on his face if I agreed,' thought Agnès. The set smile on her lips annoyed her husband. But she answered, as she always did: 'I've got things to do at home.'

She thought, 'Who is it this time?'

Guillaume's mistresses: her jealousy, her anxiety, the sleepless nights, were now in the long distant past. He was tall and overweight, going bald, his whole body solidly balanced, his head firmly planted on a thick, strong neck. He was forty-five, the age at which men are at their most powerful, dominant and self-confident, the blood coursing thickly through their veins. When he laughed he thrust his jaw forward, to reveal a row of nearly perfect white teeth.

'Which one of them told him,

"You look like a wolf or a wild animal when you smile?" wondered Agnès. 'He must have been incredibly flattered. He never used to laugh like that.'

She remembered how he used to weep in her arms every time a love affair ended, gulping as if he was trying to inhale his tears.

Poor Guillaume . . .

'Well, I . . . ' said Nadine.

She started each sentence like that. It was impossible to detect a single word or a single idea in anything she thought or said that did not relate to herself, her clothes, her friends, the ladders in her stockings, her pocket money, her own pleasure. She was . . . triumphant. Her skin had the pale, velvety brightness of jasmine and of camellias, and you could see the blood beating just beneath the surface: it rose girlishly in her cheeks, swelling her lips so that it looked as though a pink, heady wine was about to gush from them. Her green eyes sparkled.

'She's twenty,' thought Agnès, trying, as so often, to keep her eyes closed and not to be wounded by her daughter's almost overwhelming beauty, the peals of laughter, the egoism, the fervour, the diamond-like hardness. 'She's twenty years old, it's not her fault . . . Life will tame her, soften her, make her grow up.'

'Mother, may I take your red scarf? I won't lose it. And, Mother, may I come back late?'

'And where are you going?'

'Mother, you know perfectly well! To Chantal Aumont's house in Saint-Cloud. Arlette is coming

to fetch me. May I come home late? After eight o'clock, anyway? You won't be angry? Then I won't have to go through Saint-Cloud at seven o'clock on a Sunday evening.'

'She's quite right,' said Guillaume.

Lunch was nearly over. Mariette was serving the meal quickly. Sunday . . . As soon as the washing-up was done, she too would be going out.

They ate orange-flavoured crêpes; Agnès had helped

Mariette make the batter.

'Delicious,' said Guillaume appreciatively.

The clattering of dishes could be heard through the open windows: it was only a faint sound from the dark ground-floor flat where two spinsters lived in the gloom, but was louder and livelier in the house across the way where there was a table laid for twelve with the place settings gleaming on the neat folds of the damask tablecloth, and a basket of white

CONSIDER YOUR COLOUR SCHEME



roses for a first communion decorating the centre.

'I'm going to get ready, Mother. I don't want any coffee.'

Guillaume swallowed his quickly and silently. Mariette began to clear the table.

'What a hurry they're in,' thought Agnès, as her thin, skilful hands deftly folded Nanette's napkin. 'Only I . . .'

She was the only one for whom this wonderful Sunday held no attraction.

'I never imagined she'd become so stay-at-home and dull,' thought Guillaume as he looked at her. He took a deep inward breath and, proudly conscious of the sense of vigour that surged through his body, felt his chest expand with the fine weather. 'I'm in rather good shape, holding up surprisingly well,' he thought, as his mind turned to all the reasons (the political crisis, money worries, the taxes he owed, Germaine – who cramped his style, devil take her) why he could justifiably feel as miserable and depressed as anyone else. But on the contrary! 'I've always been the same. A ray of sunshine, the prospect of a Sunday away from Paris, a nice bottle of wine, freedom, a pretty woman at my side – and I'm twenty again! I'm alive,' he congratulated himself, looking at his wife with veiled hostility; her cold beauty and the tense, mocking line of her lips irritated him. He said aloud: 'Of course, I'll telephone you if I spend the night in Chartres. In any case, I'll be back tomorrow morning, and I'll drop in at home before I go

to the office.'

Agnès thought, with a strange, weary detachment, 'One day, after a lavish lunch, just as he's kissing the woman he's with, the car he's driving will crash into a tree. I'll get a phone call from Senlis or Auxerre.' Will you suffer? she demanded curiously of the mute, invisible image of herself waiting in the shadows. But the image, silent and indifferent, did not reply, and the powerful silhouette of Guillaume came between it and her.

'See you soon, darling.'

'See you soon, dear.'

Then Guillaume was gone.

'Shall I lay tea in the drawing-room, madame?' asked Mariette.

'No, I'll do it. You may go as soon as you've tidied the kitchen.'

'Thank you, madame,' said the girl, blushing fiercely as if she was near a blazing fire. 'Thank you, madame,' she repeated, with a dreamy expression that made Agnès shrug sardonically.

Agnès stroked Nanette's smooth, black hair, as the little girl first hid in the folds of her dress and then poked her head out giggling.

'We'll be perfectly happy, just the two of us, sweetheart.'

Meanwhile, in her room, Nadine was quickly changing her clothes, powdering her neck, her bare arms, and the curve of her breast where, unseen in the car, Rémi had placed his dry, passionate lips, caressing her with quick, burning kisses. Half-past two . . . Arlette had still not arrived. 'With Arlette here, Mother won't suspect anything.'

The rendezvous was at three. 'To think that Mother doesn't notice anything. And she was young once . . .' she thought, trying in vain to imagine her mother's youth, her engagement and her early married life.

'She must always have been like this. Everything calm, orderly, wearing those white lawn collars . . . "Guillaume, don't spoil my roses." Whereas, I . . .'

She shivered, gently biting her lips as she looked at herself in the mirror. Nothing gave her more pleasure than her body, her eyes, her face, and the shape of her young, white neck as straight as a column. . . . Rémi . . . 'I'm in love,' she told her reflection, smiling into the mirror. 'But I must be careful of him – he's so good-looking and so sure of himself, he's been spoiled by women, by flattery. He must like making people suffer.'

'But then, we'll see who'll be the strongest,' she muttered, as she nervously clenched her fists, feeling her love pounding in her heart, making her long to take part in this game of cruelty and passion.

She laughed out loud. And her laugh rang out so clearly and arrogantly in the silence that she stopped to listen, as if enchanted by the beauty of a rare and perfect musical instrument.

'There are times when I think I'm in love with myself more than anything else,' she thought, as she put on her green necklace, every bead of which gleamed and reflected the sun. Her smooth, firm skin had the brilliant glow of young animals, flowers, or

blossom in May, a glossiness that is fleeting but completely perfect. 'I shall never be as beautiful again.'

She sprayed perfume on her face and shoulders, deliberately wasting it; today anything sparkling and extravagant suited her! 'I'd love a bright red dress and gypsy jewellery.' She thought of her mother's tender, weary voice: 'Moderation in all things, Nadine!'

'The old!' she thought contemptuously.

In the street Arlette's car had stopped outside the house. Nadine grabbed her bag and, cramming her beret on her head as she ran, shouted 'Goodbye, Mother' and disappeared.

'I want you to have a little rest on the sofa, Nanette. You slept so badly last night. I'll sit next to you and do some work,' said Agnès. 'Then you may go out with mademoiselle.'

Nanette rolled her pink smock in her fingers for a while, rubbed her face against the cushions as she turned over and over, yawned, and went to sleep. She was five and, like Agnès, had the pale, fresh complexion of someone fair-haired, yet had black hair and dark eyes.

Agnès sat down quietly next to her. The house was sleeping silently. . . 'How lovely it is here,' she thought.

Her house was a refuge, a warm enclosed shell sealed against the noise outside. When, in the wintry dusk, she walked along the Rue Las Cases, an island of shadows, and saw the

stone sculpture of the smiling woman above the door; that sweet, familiar face decorated with narrow, carved ribbons, she felt oddly relaxed and peaceful, floating in waves of happiness and calm. Her house . . . how she loved the delicious silence, the slight, furtive creaking of the furniture, the delicate inlaid tables shining palely in the gloom. She sat down; although she normally held herself so

erect, now she curled up in an armchair.

'Guillaume says I like objects more than human beings . . . That may be true.'

Objects enfolded her in a gentle, wordless spell. The copper and tortoiseshell clock ticked slowly and peacefully in the silence. . .

'Let me out here, Arlette, will you?' Nadine asked. It was three



1923 dress design by Sonia Delaunay

o'clock. 'I'll walk for a bit,' she said to herself, 'I don't want to get there first.'

Arlette did as she asked. Nadine jumped out of the car. 'Thank you, *chérie*.'

Arlette drove off. Nadine walked up the Rue de l'Odéon, forcing herself to slow down and suppress the excitement spreading through her body. 'I like being out in the street,' she thought, happily looking round at everything. 'I'm stifled at home. They can't understand that I'm young, I'm twenty years old, I can't stop myself singing, dancing, laughing, shouting. It's because I'm full of joy.' Families were happily sitting outside the cafés, drinking fruit juice as they clustered round a little girl fresh from communion, her cheeks flushed, her eyes shining. Soldiers strolled slowly along,

blocking the pavement, walking beside women dressed in black with large, red, bare hands.

'Nice,' said a boy walking past, blowing a kiss to Nadine as he eyed her. She laughed...

The café was empty. The sun was shining. A clock on the wall ticked. The small inside room where she sat down smelt of wine and the dank air from the cellar.

He was not there. She felt her heart tighten slowly in her chest. 'I know it's quarter past three, but surely he would have waited for me?'

She ordered a drink.

Each time the door opened, each time a man's shadow appeared, her heart beat faster and she was filled with happiness; each time it was a stranger who came in, gave her a distracted look and went to sit down in the shadows. She

clasped and unclasped her hands nervously under the table.

'But where can he be? Why doesn't he come?'

Then she lowered her head and continued to wait.

Inexorably, the clock struck every quarter of an hour. Staring at its hands, she waited without moving a muscle, as if complete silence, complete stillness, would somehow slow the passing of time. Three thirty. Three forty-five. That was nothing, one side or the other of the half hour made little difference, even when it was three forty, but if you said 'twenty to four, quarter to four', then you were lost, everything was ruined, gone for ever. He wasn't coming, he was laughing at her! Who was he with at that very moment? To whom was he saying: 'That Nadine Padouan? I've really taken her for a ride!'



Venice - the Square in Summer wood engraving 1924 by Gwen Ravera

She felt sharp, bitter little tears prick her eyes. 'No, I'm not going to cry,' she thought, savagely clenching her teeth together. With shaking hands she took out her lipstick and outlined her lips, then powdered the satin-smooth, bluish hollow under her eyes where, one day, the first wrinkle would appear. 'Why has he done this? Did he just want a kiss one evening, is that all?' For a moment she felt despairing and worthless. All the painful memories that are part of even a happy and secure childhood flooded into her mind: the undeserved slap her father had given her when she was twelve; the unfair teacher; those little English girls who, so long in the past, so long ago, had laughed at her and said, 'We won't play with you. We don't play with kids.'

'It hurts. I never knew it could hurt so much.'

She gave up watching the clock but stayed where she was, quite still. Where could she go? She felt safe here and comfortable. How many other women had waited like her, swallowing their tears like her, unthinkingly stroking the old imitation-leather banquette, warm and soft as an animal's coat? Then, all at once, she felt proud and strong again. What did any of it matter? 'I'm in agony, I'm unhappy.' Oh, what fine new words these were: love, unhappiness, desire. She rolled them silently on her lips.

'I want him to love me. I'm young and beautiful. He will love me, and if he doesn't, others will,' she muttered as she

nervously clenched her hands, her nails as shining and sharp as claws.

Five o'clock . . . The dim little room suddenly shone like a furnace. The sun had moved round. It lit up the golden liqueur in her glass and the telephone booth opposite her.

'A phone call?' she thought feverishly. 'Maybe he's ill?'

'Oh, come on,' she said, with a furious shrug. She had spoken out loud; she shivered. 'What's the matter with me?' She imagined him lying bleeding, dead in the road; he drives like a madman . . .

'Supposing I telephoned? No!' she murmured, acknowledging for the first time how weak and downcast she felt.

At the same time, deep down, a mysterious voice seemed to be whispering: 'Look. Listen. Remember. You'll never forget today. You'll grow old. But at the instant of your death you'll see that door opening, banging in the sunshine. You'll hear the clock chiming the quarters and the noise in the street.'

She stood up and went into the telephone booth, which smelt of dust and chalk; the walls were covered with scribbles. She looked for a long time at a drawing of a woman in the corner. At last she dialled Jasmin 10-32.

'Hello,' said a woman's voice, a voice she did not recognise.

'Is that Monsieur Rémi Alquier's apartment?' she asked, and she was struck by the sound of her words: her voice shook.

'Yes, who is it?'

Nadine said nothing; she could

clearly hear a soft, lazy laugh and a voice calling out:

'Rémi, there's a young girl asking for you . . . What? Monsieur Alquier isn't in, mademoiselle.'

Slowly, Nadine hung up and went outside. It was six o'clock and the brightness of the May sunshine had faded; a sad, pale dusk had taken over. The smell of plants and freshly watered flowers rose from the Luxembourg gardens. Nadine walked aimlessly down one street, then down another. She whistled quietly as she walked. The first lights were coming on in the houses, and although the streets were not yet dark, the first gas lamps were being lit: their flickering light shone through her tears.

In Rue Las Cases Agnès had put Nanette to bed; half-asleep, she was still talking quietly to herself, shyly confiding in her toys and the shadows in the room. As soon as she heard Agnès, however, she cautiously stopped.

'Already,' Agnès thought.

She went into the drawing-room. She walked across it without turning on the lights, and leant by the window. It was getting dark. She sighed. The spring day concealed a latent bitterness which seemed to emerge as evening came, just as sweet-smelling peaches can leave a sour taste in the mouth. Where was Guillaume? 'He probably won't come back tonight. So much the better,' she said to herself, as she thought of her cool, empty bed. She touched the

cold window. How many times had she waited like this for Guillaume? Evening after evening, listening to the clock ticking in the silence and the creaking of the lift as it slowly went up, up, past her door, and then back down. Evening after evening, at first in despair, then with resignation, then with a heavy and deadly indifference. And now? Sadly, she shrugged her shoulders.

The street was empty and a bluish mist seemed to float over everything, as if a fine shower of ash had begun to fall gently from the overcast sky. The golden star of a street lamp lit up the shadows, and the towers of Sainte-Clotilde looked as if they were retreating and melting into the distance. A little car full of flowers, returning from the country, went past; there was just enough light to see bunches of daffodils tied onto the headlights. Concierges sat outside on their wicker chairs, hands folded loosely in their laps, not talking. Shutters were being closed at every window and only the faint pink light of a lamp could be glimpsed through the slats.

'In the old days,' remembered Agnès, 'when I was Nadine's age, I was already spending long hours waiting in vain for Guillaume.' She shut her eyes, trying to see him as he was then, or at least how he had seemed to her then. Had he been so handsome? So charming? My God, he had certainly been thinner than he was now, his face leaner and more expressive, with a beautiful mouth. His kisses . . . she let out

a sad, bitter little laugh.

'How I loved him . . . the idiot I was . . . stupid idiot . . . He didn't say anything loving to me. He just used to kiss me, kiss me until my heart melted with sweetness and pain. For eighteen months he never once said "I love you", or "I want to marry you" . . . I always had to be there, at his feet. "At my disposal," he would say. And, fool that I was, I found pleasure in it. I was at that age when even defeat is intoxicating. And I would think: "He will love me. I will be his wife. If I give him enough devotion and love, he will love me."'

All of a sudden she had an extraordinarily precise vision of a spring evening long ago. But not a fine, mild one like this evening; it was one of those rainy, cold Parisian springs when heavy, icy showers start at dawn, streaming through the leafy trees. The chestnut trees in blossom, the long day and the warm air seem like a cruel joke. She was sitting on a bench in an empty square, waiting for him; the soaking box hedges gave off a bitter smell; the raindrops falling on the pond slowly, sadly marked the minutes drifting inexorably by. Cold tears ran down her cheeks. He wasn't coming. A woman had sat down next to her, looked at her without speaking, hunching her back against the rain and tightly pinching her lips together, as if thinking, 'Here's another one.'

She bowed her head a little, resting it on her arms as she used to do in the old days. A deep sadness overcame her.

'What is the matter with me? I

am happy really; I feel very calm and peaceful. What's the good of remembering things? For heaven's sake, it will only make me resentful, and so pointlessly angry!'

And a picture came into her mind of her sitting in a taxi driving along the dark, wet avenues of the Bois de Boulogne; it was as if she could once again taste and smell the pure, cold air coming in through the open window, as Guillaume gently and cruelly felt her naked breast, as if he were squeezing the juice from a fruit. All those quarrels, reconciliations, bitter tears, lies, bad behaviour, and then that rush of sweet happiness when he touched her hand, laughing, as he said: 'Are you angry? I like making you suffer a bit.'

'That's all gone, it will never happen again,' she said aloud despairingly. And all at once, she was aware of tears pouring down her face. 'I want to suffer again.'

'To suffer, to despair, to long for someone! I have no one in the world left to wait for! I'm old. I hate this house,' she thought feverishly, 'and this peace and calm! But what about the children? Oh yes, the illusion of motherhood is the strongest and yet the most futile. Of course I love them, they're all I have in the world. But that's not enough. I want to rediscover those lost years, the suffering of the past. But at my age love would be unpleasant. I'd like to be twenty! Lucky Nadine! She's in Saint-Cloud, probably playing golf! She doesn't have to worry about love! Lucky Nadine!'

She started. She had not heard the door open, nor Nadine's footsteps on the carpet. Wiping her eyes, she said abruptly: 'Don't put the light on.'

Without replying, Nadine came to sit next to her. It was dark now. They did not look at each other.

After a while Agnès asked: 'Did you have a nice time, sweetheart?'

'Yes, thank you, Mother,' said Nadine.

'What time is it?'

'Almost seven, I think.'

'You've come back earlier than you thought,' Agnès said absent-mindedly.

Nadine did not answer, wordlessly tinkling the thin gold bracelets on her bare arms.

'How quiet she is,' Agnès thought, slightly surprised. She said aloud: 'What is it, sweetheart? Are you tired?'

'A bit.'

'You must go to bed early. Now go and wash, we're going to eat in five minutes. Don't make a noise in the hall, Nanette is asleep.'

As she spoke the telephone started ringing. Nadine suddenly looked up. Mariette appeared:

'It's for Miss Nadine.'

Nadine left the room, her heart pounding, conscious of her mother's eyes on her. She silently closed the door of the little office where the telephone was kept.

'Nadine? ... It's me, Rémi . . . Oh, we are angry, are we? Look, forgive me ... Don't be horrid ... Well I'm saying sorry! There, there,' he said, as if coaxing a restive animal. 'Be kind to me,

my sweet... What could I do? She was an old flame, I was being charitable... How about tomorrow? Do you want to meet tomorrow at the same time?

What? I swear I won't stand you up... What? You're not free? What a joke! Tomorrow? Same place, same time. I've said, I swear...

Tomorrow?' he said again.

Nadine said:

'Tomorrow.'

He laughed:

'There's a good girl', he said in English. 'Good little girlie. Bye bye.'

Nadine ran into the drawing-room. Her mother had not moved.

'What are you doing, Mother?' she cried, and her voice, her burst of laughter, made Agnès feel bitter and troubled, almost envious. 'It's dark in here!'

She put all the lights on. Her eyes, still wet with tears, were sparkling; a dark flush had spread over her cheeks. Humming to herself, she went up to the mirror and tidied her hair, smiling at her face, which was now alight with happiness, and at her quivering, parted lips.

'Well, you're happy all of a sudden,' Agnès said. She tried to laugh, but only a sad, grating little sound escaped her. She thought: 'I've been blind! The girl's in love! Ah, she has too much freedom, I'm too weak, that's what worries me.' But she recognised the bitterness, the suffering in her heart. She greeted it like an old friend: 'My God, I'm jealous!'

'Who was that on the

telephone? You know perfectly well that your father doesn't like telephone calls from people we don't know, or these mysterious meetings.'

'I don't understand what you mean, Mother,' Nadine said, as she looked at her mother with bright, innocent eyes that made it impossible to read the secret thoughts within them: mother, the eternal enemy, pathetic in her old age, understanding nothing, seeing nothing, withdrawing into her shell, her only aim to stop youth from being alive! 'I really don't understand. It was only that the tennis match which should have happened on Saturday has been postponed until tomorrow. That's all.'

'That's all, is it!' Agnès said, and she was struck by how dry and harsh her own voice sounded.

She looked at Nadine. 'I'm mad. It must have been my remembering the past. She's still only a child.' For a moment she had a vision of a young girl with long black hair sitting in a desolate square in the mist and rain; she looked at her sadly and then banished her for ever from her mind.

Gently she touched Nadine's arm.

'Come along,' she said.

Nadine stifled a sardonic laugh. 'Will I be as...gullible, when I'm her age? And as placid? Lucky mother,' she thought with gentle scorn. 'It must be wonderful to be so naive and to have such an untroubled heart.'

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OUR BLOGGERS WRITE

‘*The Shuttle* is the story of two American beauties. It is Rosalie’s tremendous misfortune to be married off in the early chapters of the novel to the true villain of the piece, Sir Nigel Anstruthers, or what we might call a Regular Bad Lot. Twelve years later and her sister Bettina, who is brave and fearless and firm, crosses the Atlantic, determined to find Rosy after so many years of unaccountable silence. This is another book that I loved enormously for its admirable heroine and its equally admirable intent – weak, twisted men are trounced by lionhearted women.’
Tales from the Reading Room

‘*Miss Bunclie’s Book* is a MUST read, especially for those who have read and enjoyed *Miss Pettigrew* or *The Making of a Marchioness*. It is unusual and intriguing, it is also charming, witty, and romantic with a rich tapestry of quirky, lovable, and even despicable characters. And yet, it is a story of Miss Bunclie too. When the story begins she is a drab timid woman living a rather dull life, but by the end she has blossomed into a sparkling and beautiful woman whose life is filled with excitement, adventure, and love.’
A Library is a Hospital for the Mind

‘*The World that was Ours* is not a comfort read. Rather it is a worrying and thrilling real-life account of Hilda Bernstein’s

life in South Africa in the early 1960s, telling the story of the 1964 Rivonia Trial. I found the book both thrilling and absolutely fascinating, I learnt a huge amount about a situation of which I knew very little, and at the same time saw how it affected everyday life. I was hugely impressed by the resilience of the couple and their determination to stay on and fight for a cause when they could very easily have left the country.’
The B Files

‘I can’t remember the last time I took so much real delight in reading a book as I did this one. If *Greenery Street* occasionally stumbles into tweeddom – a few too many apostrophising asides for modern taste – it still never fails to be utterly charming. Almost nothing happens in it, but there are intriguing hints of a wider vision. The portrait in the introduction of the author as “a rather lonely young man who cannot believe the happiness that is allowed him when he gets married and comes to live in his own house with his own wife whom he adores” is heartbreaking on the one hand and pathetic on the other - the two-fisted “terrible honesty” aesthetic of modernism just then ascendant would cast all such sensitivity as unpardonable weakness. *Greenery Street*, by embracing it, becomes an unlikely champion for the “feminine” virtues of domesticity and placidity.’
Don’t Stay Up Too Late

‘*Lady Rose and Mrs Memmery* is described, like *Miss Pettigrew*, as a fairytale for grown-ups. I was instantly smitten by the Scottish setting of Keepsfield, the sprawling fictional country estate into which Lady Victoria Elspeth Rose Graham-Rooth-Targanet is born. I won’t dwell on the plot but expect trouble, Rose was not blessed with that excessively exuberant, free-spirited nature to allow life to get the better of her, but expect sadness too. These are class-ridden times when to cross social boundaries was deemed too shocking for words.’

Operation Heartbreak is a book charged with increasing emotion and the final pages just turn those screws steadily as they quietly increase the poignancy of Willie’s life.’
Dovegreyreader

‘*The Shuttle* really does have everything and you cannot help yourself from turning all the 600 pages in nearly one sitting, I was almost unable to put the book down. This is unquestionably one of my very favourite books of the year, it has everything and a slight sensational feel so how could it not be, and may be one of my favourite reads of all time. If you want a book that has mystery, adventure, comedy, darkness, romance and some wonderful, wonderful characters then this is most definitely for you and most definitely a classic novel that should never be forgotten or lost.

'I thought Laski's writing in *Little Boy Lost* was wonderful, emotive, atmospheric, you name it she could probably write it and I definitely want to read much more of her work. This amazing book needs to be read by people as it hammers into your mind the effects of war, whilst also being an emotional tale anyway.' Savidge Reads

'This novella opens with the arresting first words, "I heard today that Cynthia died" and alternately tells the story of Hatty on her honeymoon with her younger husband on a train through Europe to the Spanish island of Ibiza and a younger Hatty who had an older lover, a friend of her Uncle Otway and his wife Cynthia. *Every Eye* is a cleverly crafted and beautifully written work. The stunning prose impressed me and I found it a wonderful book to lose oneself in, in the descriptions of the Iberian landscape, the observations that Hatty makes of the social position of women and to study the hold Cynthia retains on Hatty even in death.' Paperback Reader

'What fascinated me about *To Bed with Grand Music* was the way it highlights how moral values have shifted – that and the double standard between how men and women are judged. *Bed* works both as a little bit of social history and as a cracking attempt to get under the skin of a scarlet woman from a broadly sympathetic (or at least not overtly hostile) view point.' Desperate Reader

'*The Fortnight in September* was a delight from start to finish; as you read it, you feel almost as if you were living that Fortnight in September in Bognor Regis, the first week moving slowly as all good holidays do and then the days ticking by relentlessly faster. This is a book full of kindness and family loyalty.

The World that was Ours is a brilliant read and although it's very different from other Persephone books, in my opinion it's absolutely the best one on their list. What makes the book such a compelling read is the way Mrs Bernstein describes how the political struggle impacts on ordinary family life which must carry on even as her husband faces a possible death sentence.

The tension of their illegal flight to Botswana is unbearable. Impossible to put down and utterly gripping,' Booksetc.

'Although the plot is straightforward, the emotions that Dorothy Whipple skillfully describes and narrates in *Someone at a Distance* are complicated, raw, and heart-rending. Her prose style is unadorned but she manages to say a great deal about the breakdown of a relationship. The simplicity of her writing makes the emotion stand out, all the focus is on the characters and what they are coping with; the reader is spared none of it. The whole thing is utterly captivating, and I read all 413 pages in two sittings, staying up till 2am (and I



Decorated pottery by Clarice Cliff, 1930s, from *A Woman's Touch* by Isabelle Anscombe

had to go to work the next day!) to finish it.' Other Stories

'**T**he *Priory* was an amazingly good read. Its 528 pages joyfully flew by. A book where you are dying to see what happens next but at the same time you don't want it to end. The plot revolves around the decaying Saunby Priory somewhere in the British Midlands and the decaying lives of the cash-poor family who inhabit it. The plot is fascinating and compelling. And like most good novels, the characters have dimensions and never fall strictly into hero or villain categories. This is a fantastic book.' My Porch

'**M**aking *Conversation* is, for me, one of those books, like *Miss Pettigrew* and *Miss Buncl*, that are readily recommendable. And just as these books do have more serious ideas beneath their surface, they can also be read with a light heart, and they sometimes provoke outright giggles or, at least, audible smirks. The title is rooted in the main character's difficulty in doing just that, making conversation. The comedy is not all froth: underneath the spare statements there is a deep current of insecurity that has little to do with dialogue and much more to do with identity.

'The landscape in *Hetty Dorval* is a vitally important part of this novel, but obviously it's the narrator's relationship with Hetty which is the focus. Spanning the years from Frankie's childhood to young womanhood, the story is

told deliberately with an eye to the way in which her relationship with Hetty evolves, and the narrative does not swerve from this purpose except as long as it takes to develop the relationships that are impacted by this unusual woman's presence in Frankie's life.' BuriedinPrint

'I thought *Miss Buncl's Book* was a lot of fun and very endearing. Miss Buncl, though considered an idiot by her neighbours, is in truth a smart and kind woman who also finds love in the novel. A charming, whimsical and easy read perfect for a holiday or a rainy day. Many people have compared it to *Miss Pettigrew Lives for a Day* but I actually enjoyed this one more.

'*Consequences* is a deeply feminist novel because it questions the role and expectations of women of the Victorian era. The heroine, Alex, is unable to break free from the confines of her own personality and yet feels envious at her peers' social successes and attractiveness to the opposite sex. She wants to make her parents happy yet is unable to do so if she stays true to herself. Though a sad novel, I highly recommend this brilliant book. I could not put it down, I was completely riveted from start to finish.

'*Little Boy Lost* is a masterpiece. It's the story of one man's search for his son in a devastated and post-war torn France but it's also the story of one man's search for himself and the lost illusion and guilt of its countrymen. A writer today who writes about

that period is only working from history books and second hand accounts of people who lived then. Laski was there. It will be a hard-hearted reader who isn't swept away by this emotional and wonderful novel.' The Literary Stew

'**T**he *Carlyles at Home* is an account of the years that Thomas and Jane Carlyle lived at 5 (now 24) Cheyne Row in London. The book is short, but it covers a lot of ground, from the animals the couple kept (the story of their dog, Nero, is especially touching), to the clothing they wore both inside and outside the house, to the various repairs and restorations the Carlyles made to the house, to the wacky, noisy neighbours at number 6, to their Servant Problem (34 maids-of-all-work in 32 years). I enjoyed this glimpse into the lives of two intelligent, interesting people, written by an actress who lived in the Carlyles house nearly a hundred years after Jane's death.' A Girl Walks into a Bookstore

'I've never started a book by Dorothy Whipple and been able to put it down. It arrived before Christmas but I'd stopped myself from reading it: *High Wages* is a terrific book and there's so much humour in it. Dorothy Whipple is one of my favourite authors and my favourite Persephone author. She makes me care so much about her characters that I can't go to bed until I know what's going to happen to them.' I Prefer Reading

THIS AND THAT

The *Persephone Forum* will be launched on June 1st and the first book to be discussed will be Persephone Book No. 1, *William – an Englishman*. The *Forum* will be moderated by Eva Spain but everyone in the Persephone office will be contributing to it; and we hope that large numbers of you will also start to do so. The format is as follows: Eva will write three or four (web) pages about the book and will include relevant photographs; she will suggest some topics for discussion; and off we go. On July 1st we shall begin a discussion about *Mariana*. And so on. It will take a little while to work things out exactly; but we hope the *Forum* will prove fun for you, the reader.

It seems appropriate to offer (free) peppermint tea to visitors to Lamb's Conduit Street because mint – unfortunately in a way – was invented by Persephone. Everyone knows the story of her abduction by Hades, and her eating six pomegranate seeds, which caused winter for half the year. What is less well known is that although Persephone would rather not have been in the underworld, she was proud of being the wife of Hades. One day, catching her husband with a beautiful nymph called Minthe, she angrily threw her to the ground and trampled on her; Minthe was then turned into a wonderful-smelling herb. So mint

was, alas, the result of one woman's jealousy towards another. Nevertheless, it is a wonderful drink, which we hope visitors to Lamb's Conduit Street will enjoy. It will be served in Brixton Pottery mugs (these are also for sale).

People often ask how we find our books. And we explain



Signboard for the Rainbow Workshops 1920, designed by Margaret Calkin James

that it is in a whole variety of ways, ranging from someone bringing the book into the office (*Miss Pettigrew*) to our discovering that the rights are unexpectedly available (*Dimanche*). In 1995 Penelope Fitzgerald wrote about Mrs Oliphant that 'she is at her very best in novellas and

short stories. Two of them, which might well be reprinted together, are "The Mystery of Mrs Blencarrow" in which a conventional widow with a large estate falls in love with her coarse-mannered steward; and "Queen Eleanor and Fair Rosamond". Here the wife finds out that her husband has made a bigamous marriage. So this autumn the stories will 'be reprinted together' for the first time, with a Preface by Merryn Williams, who has written a book about Mrs Oliphant.

Our second autumn book is *The Winds of Heaven* by Monica Dickens, the author of *Mariana*. This is a 1955 novel, much praised by John Betjeman and Elizabeth Bowen, about a widow with three deeply unsympathetic daughters; it is a favourite of AS Byatt, who wrote about it in *Nova* in 1975 and has now allowed us to use her piece as a Preface.

Lastly, we are publishing the first Persephone *Diary: The Persephone Ninety* will feature our (by then) ninety endpapers, with details of each fabric – and the first line of each book. It has been designed for us by Kate Lyons.

On Thursday April 29th, in the evening (probably in the concert interval) BBC Radio 3 will be broadcasting a reading of one of the stories from *Dimanche and Other Stories*: 'Monsieur Rose.'

EVENTS

The first event of the summer is a **Lunch on Thursday May 20th**. Vanessa Hannam, whose most recent book is *Rose in Winter*, will talk about writing historical fiction, and will be in conversation with the bestselling contemporary novelist Elizabeth Buchan about the way they both write.

On **Thursday June 17th** Beth Gutcheon, who wrote *Still Missing* as well as several other very successful novels, will be over from New York to talk at a **Lunch** about *Still Missing*.

On **Friday June 18th** there will be a **Tea** in Edinburgh from 3.30-5.30, in honour of DE Stevenson and *Miss Buncle's Book*. It will be at Annabelle's 27 Sciennes Road, Edinburgh. Prior booking is essential as the café does not seat as many people as will undoubtedly wish to attend. Fiona Bevan, who works in the LCS shop, will talk about her great-grandmother. (This event is prompted by the visit to Britain of a group of DES fans.)

On **Wednesday July 7th** there will be a very rare showing of the superb 1928 silent film of *The Constant Nymph* by Margaret Kennedy and Basil Dean.

On **Tuesday July 13th** Hilary Spurling will talk at a **Lunch** about her new biography of Pearl Buck, someone who could so easily be a Persephone author...

On **Thursday September 23rd** there will be a showing of the film of *Still Missing, Without a Trace*, starring Kate Nelligan, for which Beth Gutcheon wrote the script. Films are shown at the British Film Institute 21 Stephen Street W1 at 2.30 and there is tea and a discussion afterwards.



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There will be a **Lunch on Monday October 18th** to celebrate the publication a hundred years ago that day of EM Forster's *Howards End*. The speaker(s) will be announced nearer the time. Lunches (which are at the shop) cost £30, Films £25, and the Tea £10.

The *Persephone Bookshop* in Kensington will close in mid-June; until then we shall only be open on Fridays and Saturdays. We had two good years there, but the combined pressures of the slightly out-of-the-way location; its being surrounded by antique shops; and trying to compete against amazon – all means that although the customers who come in simply love the shop, we cannot justify staying on once the two year lease has expired. But to make something positive out of the return of the bookshop to Lamb's Conduit Street: from April there will be a table of *Fifty New Books we would Like to Read*; we shall resuscitate the *Fifty Books we Wish we had Published*; we will order any book, new or vintage, and either get it in to the shop as rapidly as possible (often in 24 hours) or send it for the normal charge of £2; and we shall serve free peppermint tea (cf. p.27).

The sixth *Persephone Lecture* will be given by David Kynaston, author of the two hugely successful volumes, *Austerity Britain* and *Family Britain*, at the Art Workers Guild 6 Queen Square WC1 on **Wednesday November 24th** at 6.30; the price (£20) includes wine and cheese straws beforehand (doors open at 6) and afterwards. The previous lecturers have been Salley Vickers, Hermione Lee, Penelope Lively, Elaine Showalter and Bee Wilson.

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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TEL: 020 7242 9292 / FAX: 020 7242 9272

sales@persephonebooks.co.uk / www.persephonebooks.co.uk