



The Persephone Biannually

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Detail from 'Women's Canteen at Phoenix Works, Bradford' 1918 by Flora Lion © Imperial War Museum



OUR BOOKS FOR SPRING/SUMMER 2024

This spring we celebrate 150 books and 25 years of publishing. And so we are bringing out Persephone Book No. 150, *The Third Persephone Book of Short Stories* which celebrates this milestone. The first two volumes were *The Persephone Book of Short Stories*, PB No. 100, which marked our 100th book, and *The Second Persephone Book of Short Stories*, PB No. 132, which celebrated 20 years of publishing.

The first two short story volumes have, we are pleased to say, been very much enjoyed by Persephone readers. They also make extremely good presents because they provide a ‘taster’ of our books; and they are so varied that the recipient cannot possibly be bored. As before, there are thirty stories, ten from recent *Biannuals*, ten from Persephone short story collections (we have published twelve volumes of stories by eg. Dorothy Whipple, Mollie Panter-Downes and Margaret Bonham, to name but three) and ten stories which will, we hope, be new to our readers. They range in date from 1911 (‘Turned’ by Charlotte Perkins Gilman) to 1996 (‘Soup du Jour’ by Carol Shields) and vary widely in theme. There are also stories by, for example, Phyllis Bentley,

Irène Némirovsky (author of *Suite Française*) and Siân James (author of PB No. 149 *One Afternoon*). They are thought-provoking stories which focus on men and women’s lives in the twentieth century and are variously funny, tragic and perceptive; the tone and style varies enormously between them, while the settings shift from wartime Paris to suburban California to the foothills of an Italian mountain range. Some reveal the tensions that emerge when comfortable lives are thrown into turmoil by global disasters like war.

The writer Clare Harman has asked the question in her biography of Katherine Mansfield: ‘Why does the short story form appeal to readers, and why has there been a marked resurgence of it in the twenty-first century? Is it to do with changes in the way texts are composed and published? Attention span? For it’s certainly not just entertainment that the great short story writers provide, but infinite food for thought, asking the biggest questions in the smallest spaces, producing myriad variations on the human comedy and the peculiarities of human nature... Yet it’s a demanding form; it gives a writer nowhere to hide, for everything in a short story has to have earned its place, even if what you’re reading looks fleeting and insubstantial – perhaps



‘Greenfinch’, a 1911 block-printed furnishing fabric designed by Lotte Frömel-Fochler (1884-1972) for the Wiener Werkstatte, exported to the USA.



Late 1980s/early 1990s cotton print designed by Furphy Simpson and exported to the USA.

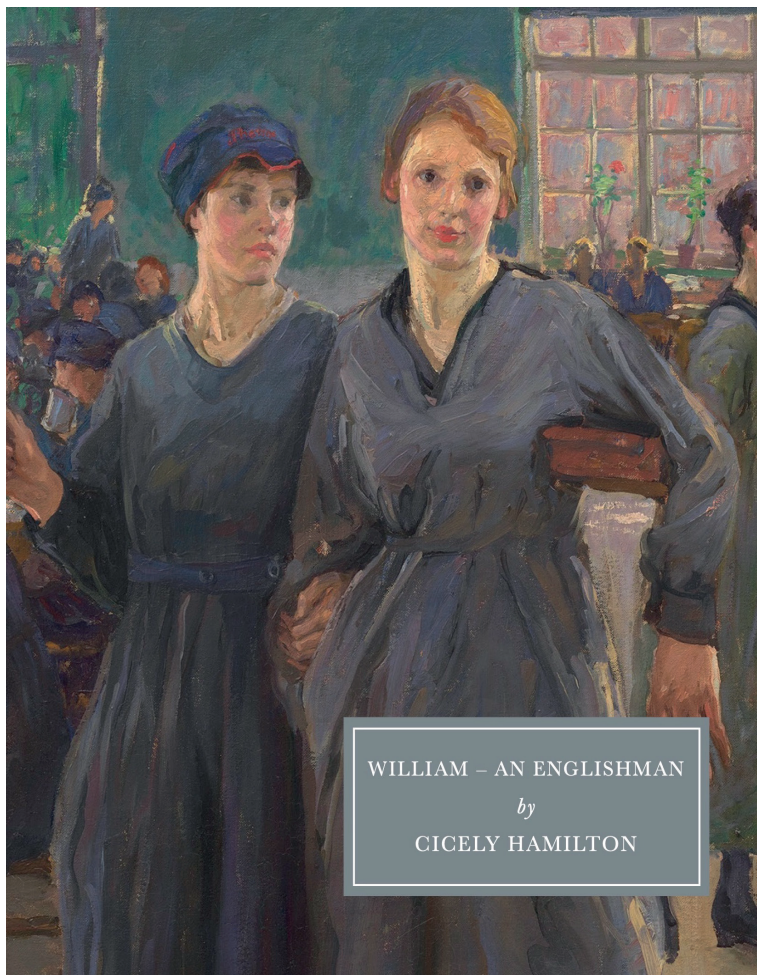
especially then. Shortness is the least important thing about it and “story” itself is less important than other qualities such as intensity and insight.’ This seems to us an excellent summing up of the joy of a short story: in a very small space it offers entertainment, food for thought, intensity and insight. Try the thirty stories in PB No. 150 and see if you agree with it.

W*illiam – an Englishman* was the first book we published in 1999 and is in our view one of the greatest novels ever written about WW1. Obviously this is not a majority opinion (or the book would be ‘up there’ with *Testament of Youth* or *Strange Meeting*) but we stick by it and are now giving it renewed life by reissuing it as a Persephone Classic.

The plot of the novel is simple. A suffragette and a clerk meet: their focus is on themselves and on the struggle for the vote. They marry in July 1914 and spend their honeymoon in a cottage in the Belgian Ardennes. Then, one day in August, they hear what they think is thunder (it’s gunfire) and after the local farmer and his family disappear, decide to leave the cottage and walk down the valley in order to travel back to England. But they become horrifyingly caught up in the war (of which they had of course been completely unaware). Griselda dies and William, shattered, starts to revise his previously implacable pacifist attitude.

So the book is very measured, being neither fiercely for or against war, but it shows us how William’s slowly changing attitude leads to him becoming involved in the fighting. The author, Cicely Hamilton, had herself spent the years 1914-18 in France, not in fact as a nurse but in an organisational capacity, and in the final year of the war she organised concerts for the troops (she was an actress before the war). *William – an Englishman* was written in 1918, either in the Scottish Women’s

Hospital at Royaumont where Cicely Hamilton worked or in a tent when she was travelling around organising the concerts. It was published in 1919 and won the Prix Femina Vie Heureuse, at the time the best-known and most prestigious prize for a book (E M Forster would win it for *A Passage to India* in 1924). Then *William – an Englishman* vanished, until brought back to life by Persephone Books 80, and now 105, years after first publication. We recommend it very, very highly.



The cover of this new Persephone Classic shows another detail from 'Women's Canteen', seen on p.1 of this Biannually

THE RECTOR'S DAUGHTER

When F M Mayor's first novel was published in 1913 the *New Statesman* said: 'She is in the tradition, though her performance is not yet on the level of Jane Austen and Mrs Gaskell.' After reading this, Flora Mayor wrote: 'Following the steps of Mrs Gaskell is what I should most like to do.'

Eleven years later came her masterpiece. *The Rector's Daughter* (1924), PB no. 140, focuses on the myriad varieties of love, being the story of an unconsummated and therefore lifelong passion between a man and a woman. This central relationship is related to three other kinds of love – that between parent and child, that within marriage, and the love that is possible between woman and woman. All these loves are as fragmentary and as imperfect as is that between the heroine Mary Jocelyn and the man she loves, Mr Herbert, but each contributes its part to the book's total revelation of what, in a positive sense, it can mean to be human.

The longest-lasting relationship in the book is that between father and daughter. Canon Jocelyn has passed on both his literary intelligence and his own inner intensity, even 'wildness' to Mary, and although she genuinely venerates him, she is too uncharming to be his ideal of a daughter or a woman, so in her eyes he is

more merciless judge than father. However, at the very end of her father's life Mary receives what she has always wanted from him – affirmation and tenderness – though she still knows that she never meant as much to him as he to her.

Mr Herbert resembles Canon Jocelyn; therefore he not only resembles Mary herself but is (inevitably) loved by her. Unlike Canon Jocelyn, however, Mr Herbert is able to share his secret self-doubts and anxieties with Mary and therefore she is enabled to share her every thought with him – each loves the other's intense capacity to feel. Yet much of the book is concerned with how Mary can go on both living and loving 'when existence or when hope is gone' (Anne Elliot in *Persuasion* Chapter 23).

For some readers *The Rector's Daughter* is a depressing novel, but I find it deeply sustaining. In part this is precisely because Flora Mayor does not pretend that the awfulness of life is not awful – the lying awake at night, the wanting to die, the grieving over irreparable loss – so I can believe her when she says that hope returned, or Mary 'began to feel again'. Certainly it is a mistake to overstress the sombreness of the book at the expense of appreciating its marvellous life-mocking and self-mocking wit: 'Mrs Redland's tales

were of kind landladies, grateful parishioners, devoted cooks. If her mind had not been so sleepy, Mary might have preferred now and then, as a treat, a tale of moral failure; it was almost too treacly.' 'As a treat' is Flora Mayor at her formidable driest.

In essence, the whole book is irradiated by Mary's capacity to love and be loved. Her emotional world does not just consist of the unattainable Canon Jocelyn, and the equally unattainable Mr Herbert, even when she thinks it does, for she also loves and is loved by her invalid sister Ruth, her adored neighbour Lady Meryton, her 'best friend' Dora Redland – Horatio to her Hamlet – and the whole village of Dedmayne. But the greatest of them all is Cook. This small, thin working-class woman of 63 is motherless Mary's *de facto* mother: 'Mary poured out freely to her. When Mary cried in Cook's arms, Cook did not reject her. "Let me help you into bed, Miss," she said. They sat and talked till dawn.' And it is Cook's skinny shoulder Mary hugs when Mr Herbert forgets her and it is Cook's tearless elegy that moves us to tears when Mary dies. "I know ladies, and there never will be anyone like her again."

This unpublished tribute to F M Mayor was written by Sybil Oldfield some years ago. She later wrote a joint biography of her and of Mary Sheepshanks: *Spinsters of this Parish*.

SARAH SCOTT IN EDGAR ROW

We have reprinted the Persephone Literary Map of Bath and added two more names, Sarah Scott and Mary Wollstonecraft. Sarah Scott, whose sister Elizabeth Montagu was a prominent 'bluestocking', published her most famous novel Millenium Hall, about a female utopia, in 1762. She lived in several different lodgings in Bath and from 1762-5 in the newly-built Edgar Buildings with Lady Barbara Montagu.

To her sister Mary 5th June 1762, from Batheaston

We have taken a very good house in a new built street in Bath in the best situation in the whole Town, being high, airy and yet convenient. It can not be ready for us to inhabit until sometime in September, which is rather longer than I fear Lady B's constitution will unhurt [sic] bear an absence from Bath but it cannot be avoided. The consequence of having a tolerable house in Bath where they are very dear is being obliged to part with this, for we cannot keep both. We are to give 60 gns. per year for that we have taken, tho' it only has two good rooms on a floor the garden is excellent and very fully stocked with shrubs and flowers.

To Elizabeth M, also 5th June 1762 from Batheaston

You will be glad to hear we have suited ourselves extremely well with a house in

Bath. The house is just such as we could wish, the situation far the best in Bath, extremely airy without being exposed to any draughts of wind, considerably higher than the square yet convenient in regard to the Town. The street is new to you therefore you will not know where I mean when I tell you it is called Edgar Row.



The house will be ready for us in the beginning of September and we shall move in as quick as may be. The rent is the only bad circumstance it is 60 gn. a year but a good one cannot be had for less in Bath. However this reduces us to the disagreeable necessity of parting with this for tho the rent here is small Every window in our Bath house looks on the country and the aspect is North and South, therefore we may change our

abode from one side to the other at different seasons of the year. The front is South but the back rooms are sufficiently good to inhabit with convenience.

To her brother William 27th July 1762

We have likewise a garden an hundred foot long, a size that will not be very expensive and yet will be some pleasure. I am afraid the convenience of our situation will not appear for the first year as they are going to build a street from our Row to the Bear which will make some noise and dirt but we must comfort ourselves by anticipating in thought the amends it will make when built.

Barbara died in August 1765

October '65: I quitted my house yesterday, however with what success time must show...for a lodging is mighty disagreeable to me. I have however got a warm one; where the sun is shining in at every window. It is the house of my good friend Mrs Cutts, indeed it is her apartment, she having moved into the parlour floor because I thought I should not get much by the change if I were to be on the ground floor, which is always cold.

PRAISE FOR *THE FORTNIGHT*

‘Just about the most uplifting, life-affirming novel I can think of right now. Published in 1931, this is an exquisitely subtle account of an ordinary lower-middle class family from south London, preparing for, travelling to, then enjoying their modest summer holiday in Bognor Regis. At one level totally undramatic, Sherriff magically re-calibrates our norms of what is and isn’t wonderfully exciting till we become utterly tuned into the rise and fall of this family’s emotions. Sherriff never patronises, nor does he attempt to exalt these people beyond what they are. He respects them for all the right reasons – for their instinctive decency towards one another and to those they encounter, and for the unselfconscious – perhaps unconscious – way they function as a happy family, despite their individual insecurities and frustrations. The Great English Seaside Holiday in its heyday, and the beautiful dignity to be found in everyday living, have rarely been captured more delicately.’ Kazuo Ishiguro

‘The best book I’ve discovered in the pandemic.’ Tracy Chevalier

‘This is a masterpiece of gentle understatement, an insight into quiet people living unassuming lives. Almost nothing happens, yet it is the most absorbing book I have read in a long while.’ Michael Morpurgo

‘A beautifully observed, quietly touching novel in which, ostensibly, not very much happens. Despite its seemingly undramatic premise, the way Sherriff unpacks each delicate nuance of social interaction is unfathomably compelling. It’s a warm, very human book.’ Elizabeth Day

‘No matter their circumstances, Sherriff’s characters remain steadfastly familiar, common or garden heroes (and villains). And it’s this that makes his novels so strangely enthralling. He writes without fanfare or affectation, but most importantly, with sympathy and compassion.’ *The Paris Review*

‘There’s more than a dash of resemblance between *The Fortnight in September* and Virginia Woolf’s time-conscious masterpieces, *Mrs Dalloway* and *To The Lighthouse*, which were published a few years earlier. But, there’s also a dash of Winnie-the-Pooh’s Hundred Acre Wood magic here. Like R C Sherriff, Pooh’s creator, A A Milne, served and was badly wounded in WW1. Little wonder then that, after the war, both traumatised men wound up creating tales set in time-out-of-time havens, where the small pleasures of everyday life – like honey, a hot bath and a clear blue early autumn sky – are seen for the gifts they are.’ National Public Radio, USA

‘I am loving *The Fortnight in September*.’ Clare Chambers

‘Pure joy.’ Harriet Evans

‘Sherriff introduces elements of small-scale tragedy. He does so with a completely assured touch, without sentiment, archness or coyness, lacing the novel with passages of pathos that are almost unbearably moving. The Stevenses are wholly believable and, as intended by their creator, wholly ordinary. But their goodness and decency – revealed consistently in little things – raise them to heroic status... It remains a masterpiece – and one that surprises through its understated but irresistible power to move.’ *The Spectator*

‘The best holiday read’ Nina Stibbe

‘R C Sherriff was a miniaturist of genius, a poet of the ordinary and the banal. He captured a lower-middle-class family’s annual summer holiday to perfection in *The Fortnight in September*’ Juliet Gardiner

‘This mesmerising literary treasure about an ordinary family is almost beyond praise. Dad may be a loveable bore, Mum a timid worrier, but their small adventures, private ponderings and regrets, their contentment and enjoyment, are almost heartbreaking.’ *Daily Mail*

DOMESTIC FEMINISM

In 2023 Nicola Beauman gave a talk about what Persephone Books calls 'domestic feminism' and we reproduce the talk in its entirety in this PB.

The purpose of this talk is really to work something out. What is domestic feminism and is it a thing?

Well, at Persephone Books it is a thing in that we use the phrase often. Occasionally I have been heard to say that if I ever write another book it would be about domestic feminism.

But what is it? This afternoon I shall put forward some hypotheses and then we can discuss if there is any validity or usefulness in the phrase.

To go back. In 1983 I published *A Very Great Profession*: The Woman's Novel 1914-39. Curiously, because unexpectedly, the title comes from a 1919 novel by Virginia Woolf called *Night and Day*: 'Katherine, thus, was a member of a very great profession which has, as yet, no title and very little recognition... She lived at home.' What did Virginia Woolf mean by a great profession – did she mean outstandingly good, admirable, or did she mean large ie. overcrowded? Or was she being ironic? It's hard to say.

But she was right that living at home had and has very little recognition, as does the everyday (although it has far, far more recognition than it did forty years ago when my book was

published). Nevertheless, for the married woman with children (as opposed to the unmarried daughter forced, through want of offers of marriage, to stay at home with her parents) domestic life once had all the recognition she could ever want.

When Monica in E M Delafield's *Thank Heaven Fasting* finally, finally catches a husband:

She was to have a life of her own, after all.

A home, a husband, a recognised position as a married woman – an occupation. At last she would have justified her existence.

Up to the very last moment she had been afraid, and had known that her mother was afraid, lest something should happen to prevent her marriage.

Nothing had happened: she was safe for ever.

There was no further need to be afraid, or ashamed, or anxious, any more.

She prayed that she might be a good wife to Herbert, and that if they had a child it might be a son.

These lines encapsulate what we are talking about: until the 1960s the aim of most women's lives was to marry. Obviously it wasn't the aim of the very few career women, the early doctor or civil servant or journalist, women who did not need a man to lend them credibility. But for the vast majority it was

the case. And what Delafield is saying, by implication and through the irony of her tone ('at last she would have justified her existence') is that this was a wretched state of affairs and society had to change. Naturally, like all outstanding writers, she was decades ahead of her time in recognising the changes that would have to happen. And yet she could not be too overtly feminist, or angry, or difficult, without alienating her readers (she was in fact an essential breadwinner in her family). So one definition of domestic feminism might be that it is the kind of feminism that a) warmly recognises the importance of home life; while b) rejecting the idea that it justified a woman's whole existence.

Five years after *Night and Day* came out, across the Atlantic Dorothy Canfield Fisher published *The Home-Maker* (a great Persephone favourite) praised by Carol Shields who said that it was a 'remarkable and brave novel about being a house husband.' It describes a couple who role-swap and the central question is whether small-town Vermont can cope with this, how in fact will things pan out? Here is what someone says to the husband, now looking after the house while his wife is happy and fulfilled at work in a clothes shop.

'Oh, Lester, let me do that! The idea of your darning stockings. It's dreadful

enough your having to do the housework!

‘Eva darned them a good many years,’ he said, with some warmth, ‘and did the housework. Why shouldn’t I?’ He looked at her hard and went on, ‘Do you know what you are saying to me...? You are telling me that you really think that home-making is a poor, mean, cheap job beneath the dignity of anybody who can do anything else...’

Mattie shouted indignantly, ‘Lester Knapp, how dare you say such a thing! I never dreamed of having such an awful idea... Home-making is the noblest work anybody can do!’

‘Why pity me then?’ asked Lester with a grin, drawing his needle in and out of the little stocking.

‘Well, but...’ she said breathlessly, and was silent.

The nub of domestic feminism is here, and in fact *The Home-Maker* (which, by the way, will be a 100 years old in 2024) asks all the questions that I might ask in this talk. Was Eva a bad wife and mother simply because she was so bored and harassed at home? Is she equally bad when she manages to escape her home life and be happy working in a shop? And is Lester somehow emasculated by liking being at home with the children? Could society manage if men and women often swapped roles? Well, because this is another

book decades ahead of its time, the answer is that in the 1920s it could not. But Dorothy Canfield Fisher, who like Delafield was a visionary, realised that before too many decades had passed society would have to change.

So we seem now to have two facets of domestic feminism, the fact that thousands and thousands of women like Katherine in *The Voyage Out* stayed at home and were bored, and the fact that being a homemaker was seen as an important occupation but one that wasn’t good enough for a man. (But is still a vital part of life; which is why we, as a feminist publisher, don’t find it paradoxical that we publish cookery books.)

But there is a third facet that used to be so indelibly part of life that it is almost not worth talking about: the priority given to men. It hardly needs mentioning that once women couldn’t go to university (women at Cambridge could not take a degree until 1948, 70 years or more after Amy Levy or Flora Mayor went there) or take out a mortgage on their own or even have their own credit card when these first came in. Who doesn’t shudder at the early part of Dorothy Whipple’s *Young Anne*, where the lack of consideration given by her parents to Anne’s needs and education is in such marked contrast to the reverence with which George’s mother treats ‘the gift of a son’? Interestingly, *Young Anne* was published not

long after *The Call* by Edith Ayrton Zangwill, Persephone Book No. 129. This is mainly about the struggle for the vote before and during the First World War, and in this respect it echoes our 1911 suffragette novel *No Surrender*. A crucial theme in the book is the struggle of a female scientist to be treated as an equal by contemporary male scientists, and thus it pays homage to Marie Curie (who won the Nobel Prize in 1903) and to Edith Ayrton’s own stepmother, the scientist Hertha Ayrton.

So we can see that three movements arose out of all these different aspects of women’s lives. The first was for women to have the vote, as a symbol of their having some say in decision making; and the second was for women to work outside the home. The third, a more modern movement, was for total equality between men and women. This only started to become possible after the advent of the Pill in the 1960s and the concept of foolproof contraception; and most will agree that this kind of equality is speedily becoming the norm.

Thus domestic feminism seems to be two-sided: people (men or women) who choose to stay at home should be happy with their choice; but they should not stay at home if they don’t want to. Equality and choice.

If so, why is the phrase controversial? There are many

reasons. Firstly, it's because post-1960s feminism could not countenance domesticity and it particularly could not countenance motherhood. For years I was rather bruised by the following incident: in 1982 my editor at Virago rang me up in order to get me to come in to talk about edits for *A Very Great Profession*. The time they suggested was 5 o'clock. I remember standing in the kitchen, the phone was on the wall by the fridge and I was clutching the receiver with one hand, and being utterly taken aback when I said, politely, that 5 wasn't a good time to come in for someone with children (unless absolutely vital) and hearing the response, 'don't talk to me about your fucking children'. It's slightly unbelievable but true. I can see the funny side, now. And also how inappropriate that remark was: how truly, madly, deeply inappropriate it was for a feminist publishing house to brush aside someone's domestic commitments when the book they wanted to talk about had chapters with headings such as Surplus Women, Sex and, yes, Domesticity.

So a simplistic answer to the question what is domestic feminism is – everything that 1960s feminism wasn't. The second wave feminists wanted equality but preferred not to have children and not to embrace domesticity. The domestic feminists made their feminism

part of their normal everyday lives.

To me it seems perfectly obvious. Feminism is defined for me by one word only – which is equality. Men and women should be equal: in the voting booth, in the workplace outside the home, in the sharing of domestic duties within the home.

But someone has to look after the children and in any case mankind cannot escape from the domestic. Human beings need to eat, and therefore to cook and clean up, to sleep and to make a bed comfortable enough to lie on for eight hours, to wash, to shop, to mend, to be sociable. They need to be domestic.

Well, that was not always the case. Men used not to need to be even fairly domestic. Let me give you the case of my father and mother. My father was what is called an eminent lawyer ie. the legal profession thought he was special. Years after his death it transpired that 12,000 – 12,000! – of his letters (to other lawyers) had been typed (to his dictation) and carbon copies kept. (A carbon copy is a copy of the typed page obtained by backing it with a piece of carbon paper which then imprints itself on a second piece of paper.) An institute has been set up in Berlin (my parents were originally German) and six people are working on the letters and associated papers.

And yet, when I am courteously and interestingly

presented with evidence of their industriousness in Berlin, I cannot help thinking of my poor mother. She too 'worked' (when we say worked in that context we mean outside the home, but of course women at home are working too, probably harder), my mother was a solicitor. But she also did absolutely everything in the house, and took it for granted that she did. She shopped, she cooked, she had the car serviced, she fetched my father from the airport (well, naturally he preferred that to getting a taxi or waiting for the airport coach), she organised us three children; the only thing she did not do was dust or clean the floors, though nowadays she would probably do that as well. (But she did sit down and have a cup of tea, when she could, with the two stalwart women, first one and then another, who did the dusting for us. And did she have time to write 12,000 letters? She did not.)

Now, I hope you don't think this sounds bitter, because she was not resentful and I'm not either. She simply took it for granted that my father did nothing, nothing at all, domestically. And observing all this perhaps inspired my interest in domestic feminism. Nor does this saga have a totally happy ending, in that I do not share the housework with my own husband. But there is a huge difference. He loads and unloads the dishwasher, he plays endless

Scrabble with the grandchildren, he wouldn't care if it was only tinned soup and bread and cheese for supper when my father would have been appalled, he would never ask to be fetched from the airport. The happy ending is for the next generation, people under 50, which assumes that they and their partner share the housework. They are domestic feminism in action. (Although there is a proviso here. You could argue that women are more meticulous and this causes tension. But that is a discussion for another day.)

And by the way it is my firm belief that the next generation but one, the current fifteen year-olds, will organise things in a completely different way that hasn't yet been thought about. No longer will someone's life be made or marred by whom they marry. As Juliet Aykroyd says in her preface to Richmal Crompton's *Family Roundabout*, PB No.24 (which is about two women each with five children who have very different styles of mothering): 'On the face of it Mrs Fowler's hands-off approach is more appealing than Mrs Willoughby's repressive autocracy, but in the end we are left pondering. What is a successful mother, or, come to that, a successful child? If a happy marriage is a measure of success, the Fowler children are disasters. Not one of them seems equipped to make wise choices.'

But I promised you a second

reason why the phrase domestic feminism is controversial and this is summed up by the word modernism. This is fascinating. You'll be aware, without perhaps having thought about it much, that domesticity and modern art are enemies. The critic Christopher Reed once edited a book called *Not at Home: The Suppression of Domesticity in Modern Art and Architecture*. In it he said that 'ultimately, in the eyes of the avant-garde, being undomestic came to serve as a guarantee of being art... This remark conjures up all kinds of images: the artist in his garret eating a ham roll off newspaper; that art-enemy the pram in the hall; the woman at home unable to be artistic because of the domesticity which she is unable to shake off; and of course, as Lytton Strachey put it in 1909, "Good God! to have a room of one's own with a real fire and books and tea and company, and no dinner bells and distractions, and a little time for doing something! It's a wonderful vision and surely worth some risks.'" (Which shows that the leitmotif of the room of one's own must have been around in Bloomsbury for twenty years before Virginia used it as the title of her lecture and later of a book.)

The vision, the risks, the tea and company would be the avant-garde, allowing Lytton or Duncan Grant (to whom he was writing) to work creatively unhampered by bourgeois

domesticity. The dinner bells and distractions would be the sterile, scorned kind of home life of which Bloomsbury symbolically represented the escape and Kensington the bastion.

And please don't think that the contrast between modernism and domesticity was newly invented by Bloomsbury. It was not. As Christopher Reed says, it's a 'concept current at least since Odysseus, in which the domestic figures as the opposite of the heroic.' Or, to put it another way, 'domesticity is equated with femininity in a culture where the real and the important are conceived as prerogatives of masculinity, and the homely is, by definition, insipid.'

Thus we now have two reasons why the real artists, the real modernists, the real feminists, despise the domestic. And would thoroughly despise Lester in *The Home-Maker* for wanting, or being willing, to give up a masculine life and succumb to home-making, to the domestic. He was so, well, feminine and so unheroic. (The ironic touch is that Lester writes poetry. What if he turned out to be rather good?)

So does it seem that what domestic feminism is striving towards is simple equality in the domestic sphere? No, it is far more than this. What so many of Persephone's books are about, all of them when seen from a particular angle, is the inequality of women's lives and the need for a new way of life for women.

Let's take some examples. Here is *Alas, Poor Lady* by Rachel Ferguson:

'Mary, what did Gertie do before she married – here, after breakfast?'

'She cleaned out the canaries' cage until Mamma stopped it and said it would spoil her hands.'

'And then?'

'She used to paint flower-pieces, and net purses and wrote out menu cards.' A full programme that Gertie would contrive to corner. When the drawing-room filled up with adults the jobs had had to be shared out; by that time Gertie was gone. She was probably brainy, Queen thought, forlornly....

The fear of tomorrow and all the tomorrows filled her. The time there was! Yet men filled it to the brim, in work which brought them in money or fame and in social engagements which never failed, or there was the club; even little Charlie was having a future built for him already that would put him beyond the reach of ennui. Whereas a woman's life was one of eternal waiting, to be taken out, called on, danced with or proposed to. How had it originated, this division of opportunity?

Isn't this one of the most poignant things you have ever heard? 'The fear of tomorrow and the tomorrows filled her.' If either Gertie or Mary failed

to marry, they would stay at home ministering to their parents until they died. And then what? (The 'then what' is what *Alas, Poor Lady* is about.) Or they would marry and, if they were comfortably off, would have servants so they wouldn't have to cook or clean. But what would they actually do all day? It doesn't really bear thinking about. Yet once the prison gates were propped slightly ajar, after WW1, the everyday life of the woman at home would become a huge theme in twentieth-century fiction, covered by novelists like Elizabeth Taylor (even in her very first novel *At Mrs Lippincote's*) and by Penelope Mortimer in *Daddy's Gone A-Hunting*, Persephone Book No. 77. In her preface to this book, Valerie Grove quotes Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* (1963): 'Each suburban wife struggled with it alone. As she made the beds, shopped for groceries, matched slipcover material, ate peanut butter sandwiches with her children, chauffeured Cub Scouts and Brownies, lay beside her husband at night – she was afraid to ask even of herself the silent question – "Is this all?"' It was exactly the same question that Ruth in *Daddy* asks herself in suburban Buckinghamshire.

The undervaluing of women's lives, and the boredom of women trapped at home, was thus a central preoccupation of post-war novels by women,

although naturally novels focusing on women's lives were firmly corralled into a ghetto marked 'women's fiction'. As so often, Virginia Woolf had anticipated this and had railed against the fact that female preoccupations were almost invariably considered less interesting and less important than male ones. She wrote in *A Room of One's Own* in 1929:

And since a novel has this correspondence to real life, its values are to some extent those of real life. But it is obvious that the values of women differ very often from the values which have been made by the other sex; naturally, this is so. Yet it is the masculine values that prevail. Speaking crudely, football and sport are "important"; the worship of fashion, the buying of clothes "trivial". And these values are inevitably transferred from life to fiction. This is an important book, the critic assumes, because it deals with war. This is an insignificant book because it deals with the feelings of women in a drawing-room. A scene in a battle-field is more important than a scene in a shop.

(Here we are reminded of Zadie Smith writing in *Intimations*: 'There is no great difference between novels and banana bread,' she declares. 'They're both just something to do and no substitute for love.')

And at the very end of

Middlemarch, Dorothea is described as retiring from the world when she ‘goes to live in a street’ (her sister sees this as a ghastly fate) where her ‘full nature... spent itself in channels which had no great name on the earth. But the effect of her being on those around her was incalculably diffusive: for the growing good of the world is partly dependent on unhistoric acts; and that things are not so ill with you and me as they might have been, is half owing to the number who lived faithfully a hidden life, and rest in unvisited tombs.’

These words are some of the most memorable lines in all literature. For those of us who wear the label Domestic Feminist would all be proud to think that their unhistoric acts had any influence on the good of the world; most of us, too, have led a ‘hidden life’, we shall rest in unvisited tombs. But there is a great difference between us and Dorothea. We can choose. We can have domestic lives and we can have lives outside the home. If we want to. But there is a caveat here. I am talking as though working outside the home is rather a jolly jape; and am taking it for granted that you all know enough about women’s history to realise that working-class women have always worked – because they simply had to – and that for most middle-class women nowadays it is also a financial necessity. The sharing

with their partner extends to everything and so they have to contribute, to earn.

In her Preface to *Young Anne* Lucy Mangan (who writes so beautifully about Dorothy Whipple) quotes from *Random Commentary* – Whipple says ‘I would have liked to hit him [her husband Henry], but had to sit alongside smiling as wives do’ – and remarks that moments like these still by and large pass unrecorded. Women’s lives ‘compared with the detailed, dedicated recording of men’s,

remain an under-explored, under-appreciated hinterland, one still too often dismissed by reviewers and those charged with documenting humanity’s history.’

So we might conclude that of all our writers (over one hundred) it is Dorothy Whipple who is the domestic feminist par excellence and it is her detailed, dedicated recording of women’s lives that makes her *Persephone*’s bestselling novelist. And that it is this focus on women’s lives, as opposed to a focus on both men and women’s lives in an



.Detail from Portrait of Thomas Sheppard 1792 by John Russell R.A. (1745-1806)

equal partnership, that made her anathema to other feminist publishers. They could not see that a feminist publisher would publish books about ‘unhistoric acts’ or ‘the feelings of women in a drawing-room.’ They could not see that in Dorothy Whipple’s novels the feminism is simply implicit: it’s what she wants the readers to think about, it’s part of her moral universe. Thus in *Someone at a Distance* Ellen is a happy housewife and wants nothing more than the peace and contentment that family life brings her. When her existence is wrecked by her husband’s arrogance and stupidity, she has the gumption and the strength of personality to find a new life for herself. The implicit feminist question is whether it had been sensible that Ellen was dependent for her happiness on her husband and what will happen to her if he destroys it? Is this a good way for society to be organised? Whipple is making as much of a feminist statement as much more overtly feminist writers but it is all implied, and modernist it isn’t. She is saying that women shouldn’t wait on men hand and foot, however happy they are to do it, and their financial security shouldn’t depend on their largesse; she is implicitly observing that Ellen only found a job and somewhere to live by a kind of fluke and that thousands of people in her position would have been wrecked; and she is implying that society should not

be organised in such a way that the male partner in the marriage can make or break the woman’s life.

It is the theme as well of *They Knew Mr Knight*. Thomas overreaches himself financially because he wants to build his family a grander life, and yet Celia had been quite happy running their small suburban house and being involved in every detail of her children’s life. In *They Were Sisters* Geoffrey exerts coercive control to such an extent that finally his wife is broken by it; the feminism lies in the fierce – but understated, always understated – cry for equality between the sexes.

The dignity offered by work and the liberation of a personal pay packet is explored in far more depth in *High Wages*, but it has its first celebration (first in the sense that it was Dorothy Whipple’s first novel) in *Young Anne*. Anne delights at her first job – ‘magic word to un-emancipated femininity... Opening the inaugural monthly envelope, she felt a sudden unlocking and a letting in of air on her old unhappiness.’ ‘These are the Whipple moments I most love’ (Lucy Mangan again): ‘the recording of women’s experiences and revelling in their triumph. As Anne peers in at her four pound notes I feel I am peering down the line of distaff history, connecting those first moments of independence

(even when your dependence had previously been invisible to you) wherever women have found them, and finding a link through the ages.’

And so on we go. It is feminism unrecognised by many but quietly understood by readers. It is the opposite of setting fire to either post boxes or bras. But it is true feminism nevertheless. And let’s end with something humorous but bitter-sweet. I haven’t actually used the word empowerment or disempowerment yet. But this is such a strong implicit theme in the work of so many novelists of the inter-war period. Here is Letty in *Greenbanks*, who has devoted her life to her husband and children and is now tired and depressed but stuck (she of course has no money and therefore can’t walk out). Her husband

Ambrose gave her, more and more frequently, the same flat exhausted feeling she had when she tried to carry a mattress downstairs unaided ... but of course you couldn’t give up; you couldn’t sit down in the middle of the stairs with a great burden like that; you had to carry it the whole way, until you could put it down somewhere final.

When domestic feminism wins the day, people like Letty will be able to stand up and have a life.

THE PERSEPHONE 150

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** This funny, romantic first novel, published in 1940, describes a young girl's life in the 1930s. Preface: Harriet Lane **Also a Persephone Classic**
3. **Someone at a Distance by Dorothy Whipple** 'A very good novel indeed' (*Spectator*) about the destruction of a formerly happy 1950s marriage. Preface: Nina Bawden, R4 'Book at Bedtime' **Also a Persephone Classic**
4. **Fidelity by Susan Glaspell** 1915 novel by a Pulitzer-winning writer brilliantly describing the effect of a girl in Iowa running off with a married man. Preface: Laura Godwin
5. **An Interrupted Life by Etty Hillesum** From 1941–43 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 up as 'Milly' ninety years before. Preface: PD James
7. **The Home-Maker by Dorothy Canfield Fisher** An ahead-of-its-time 'remarkable and brave 1924 novel about being a house-husband' (Carol Shields). Preface: Karen Knox, Afterword: Elaine Showalter **Also a Persephone Classic**
8. **Good Evening, Mrs Craven: the Wartime Stories of Mollie Panter-Downes** Short stories first published in *The New Yorker* from 1938–44. Five were read on R4. Preface: Gregory LeStage **An unabridged Persephone audiobook read by Lucy Scott. Also 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** 'One of the great English cookbooks, full of delightful, delicious recipes that actually work.' Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall
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 and wise 1960s poems about marriage, children and reality. Preface: author
13. **Consequences by E M Delafield** By the author of *Diary of a Provincial Lady*, PB No. 105, in this 1919 novel a girl who fails to marry goes in to a convent. 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** Observant and bleak 1947 short stories, an *Evening Standard* bestseller. 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 **Also 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. Translated into French; and 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'. Preface: Neville Braybrooke
19. **They Knew Mr Knight by Dorothy Whipple** A 1934 novel about a man driven to committing fraud and what happens to him and his family; a 1946 film. Afterwords: Terence Handley MacMath and Christopher Beauman
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 night-club singer. Read on R4 by Maureen Lipman; now a film with Frances McDormand and Amy Adams. Preface: Henrietta Twycross-Martin. **A Persephone audiobook read by Frances McDormand. Also a Persephone Classic**
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', praised by Oscar Wilde. Preface: Julia Neuberger
24. **Family Roundabout by Richmal Crompton** By the author of *William*, a 1948 family saga contrasting two matriarchs and their very different children. Preface: Juliet Aykroyd
25. **The Montana Stories by Katherine Mansfield** All the short

stories written during the author's last year; with a detailed editorial note and the contemporary illustrations. Five were read on R4.

26. Brook Evans by Susan Glaspell
An unusual novel written in 1928, the same year as *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, about the enduring effect of a love affair on three generations.

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, the *Guardian's* Nicholas Lezard's Paperback Choice, R4 'Book at Bedtime' read by Jamie Glover. Afterword: Anne Sebba. **Also a Persephone Classic**

29. The Making of a Marchioness by Frances Hodgson Burnett
A very entertaining 1901 novel about the melodrama when a governess marries a Marquis; a R4 Classic Serial. Preface: Isabel Raphael, Afterword: Gretchen Gerzina. **A Persephone audiobook read by Lucy Scott. Also a Persephone Classic**

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. **Also 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 describing 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'. 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* and not known 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 T S Eliot.

37. The Runaway by Elizabeth Anna Hart A Victorian novel for children and grown-ups, republished in 1936 with Gwen Raverat wood engravings. Afterwords: Anne Harvey, Frances Spalding

38. Cheerful Weather for the Wedding by Julia Strachey A funny, sardonic 1932 novella by a niece of Lytton Strachey, praised by Virginia Woolf. Preface: Frances Partridge. **An unabridged Persephone audiobook read by Miriam Margolyes. A film with Felicity Jones. Also a Persephone Classic**

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 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 1933 cookery book written for Aga owners which can be used by anyone; with illustrations by Edward Bawden

46. Miss Ranskill Comes Home by Barbara Euphan Todd A wry 1946 novel: Miss Ranskill is shipwrecked and gets back to a 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 1940s short stories with a dark sense of humour; read several times on BBC R4. 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 A memoir that reads like a novel set before and after the

- 1964 Rivonia Trial. Mandela was given a life sentence but the Bernsteins escaped to England. Preface and Afterword: the author [Also a Persephone Classic](#)
51. *Operation Heartbreak* by [Duff Cooper](#) A soldier fails to go 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 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](#) 1940 cookery book about ‘food for free’, full of excellent (and fashionable) recipes.
55. *Flush* by [Virginia Woolf](#) A light-hearted but surprisingly feminist 1933 ‘life’ of Elizabeth Barrett Browning’s spaniel, ‘a little masterpiece of comedy’ (*TLS*). A ‘Book at Bedtime’ on BBC R4. Preface: Sally Beauman
56. *They Were Sisters* by [Dorothy Whipple](#) A 1943 novel by this superb writer, contrasting three different marriages. Preface: Celia Brayfield
57. *The Hopkins Manuscript* by [R C Sherriff](#) A 1939 novel ‘by Mr Hopkins’ about what happens when, in 1946, the moon crashes into the earth. 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 the lovely and selfish ‘menace’ – but is she one? Afterword: Northrop Frye
59. *There Were No Windows* by [Norah Hoult](#) A touching and funny 1944 novel about an elderly woman with memory loss living in Kensington. Afterword: Julia Briggs
60. *Doreen* by [Barbara Noble](#) A 1946 novel about a child sent to the country during the war. Her mother regrets it and the family that takes her in wants to keep her. Preface: Jessica Mann
61. *A London Child of the 1870s* by [Molly Hughes](#) A 1934 memoir about an ‘ordinary, suburban Victorian family’ in Islington, a great favourite with all ages. Preface: Adam Gopnik
62. *How to Run Your Home Without Help* by [Kay Smallshaw](#) A 1949 manual for the newly servantless housewife full of advice that is historically interesting, useful nowadays and, as well, unintentionally funny. Preface: Christina Hardyment
63. *Princes in the Land* by [Joanna Cannan](#) A 1938 novel about a daughter of the aristocracy married to an Oxford don; her three children fail to turn out as she hoped.
64. *The Woman Novelist and Other Stories* by [Diana Gardner](#) Late 1930s and early 1940s short stories that are witty, sharp and with an unusual undertone. Preface: Claire Gardner
65. *Alas, Poor Lady* by [Rachel Ferguson](#) Polemical but intensely readable 1937 novel 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: miniature essays on gardening – such as Dark Ladies (fritillary), Better Gooseberries, Phlox Failure – which will be enjoyed by all gardeners.
67. *The Fortnight in September* by [RC Sherriff](#) Another novel by the author of *Journey’s End*, and *The Hopkins Manuscript*, PB No. 57, about a family on holiday in Bognor in 1931; a quiet masterpiece. Read on Radio 4. [Also a Persephone Classic](#)
68. *The Expendable Man* by [Dorothy B Hughes](#) A 1963 thriller about a young doctor in Arizona which encapsulates the social, racial and moral tensions of the time. By the author of *In a Lonely Place*. Afterword: Dominic Power
69. *Journal of Katherine Mansfield* The husband of the great short story writer (cf. *The Montana Stories*, PB No. 25) assembled this Journal from unposted letters, scraps of writing etc: a unique portrait.
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 line drawings and the endpapers are by David Gentleman.
71. *The Shuttle* by [Frances Hodgson Burnett](#) A 1907 page-turner about an American heiress married to an English aristocrat, whose beautiful and enterprising sister sets out to rescue her. Preface: Anne Sebba
72. *House-Bound* by [Winifred Peck](#) This 1942 novel describes an Edinburgh woman running her house without help; 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, living with her uncle and aunt, who has not yet learnt to dissemble. Preface: Charlotte Mitchell
74. *The Closed Door and Other Stories* by [Dorothy Whipple](#) Stories drawn from the three collections published during the author’s lifetime. Five were read on BBC R4.
75. *On the Other Side: Letters to my Children from Germany 1940–46* by

- Mathilde Wolff-Mönckeberg**. Written in Hamburg but not sent, the letters make an interesting contrast to *Few Eggs and No Oranges*, PB No. 9. 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/Vera Brittain. Preface: Marion Shaw
- 77. Daddy's Gone A-Hunting by Penelope Mortimer** 1958 novel about the 'captive wives' of the pre-war women's lib 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, published in 1983, about women writers of the inter-war period.
- 79. Round About a Pound a Week by Maud Pember Reeves** Working-class life in Lambeth in the early C20th: witty, readable, poignant and fascinating – and still relevant today. Preface: Polly Toynbee
- 80. The Country Housewife's Book by Lucy H Yates** A useful 1934 book on topics such as the storeroom and larder, garden produce, and game.
- 81. Miss Buncle's Book by DE Stevenson** A 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, beautiful, profound, and very modern in tone. Preface: Julian Barnes
- 83. Making Conversation by Christine Longford** An amusing, unusual 1931 novel about a girl growing up, in the vein of *Cold Comfort Farm* and PB No. 38 *Cheerful Weather for the Wedding*. Preface: Rachel Billington
- 84. A New System of Domestic Cookery by Mrs Rundell 1816** facsimile edition of an 1806 cookbook: 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 WW1. 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 and rather shocking on 'women in wartime'. Preface: Juliet Gardiner
- 87. Dimanche and Other Stories by Irène Némirovsky** Ten short stories by the author of *Suite Française*, written between 1934 and 1942. 'Luminous, extraordinary, stunning' said the reviewers.
- 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...
- 89. The Mystery of Mrs Blencarrow by Mrs Oliphant** Two 1880s novellas about women shockingly, and secretly, abandoned by their husbands, that were favourites of Penelope Fitzgerald. Afterword: Merryn Williams
- 90. The Winds of Heaven by Monica Dickens** 1955 novel by the author of *Mariana* about a widow with three rather unsympathetic daughters who finds happiness in the end. Afterword: AS Byatt
- 91. Miss Buncle Married by DE Stevenson** A very enjoyable sequel to *Miss Buncle's Book* (PB No. 81): Miss Buncle moves to a new village. Afterword: Fiona Bevan
- 92. Midsummer Night in the Workhouse by Diana Athill** 'Funny, engaging and unexpected' (*Paris Review*): 1950s stories by the editor and memoir writer. Preface: author, who also read six of the stories as a **Persephone Audiobook**.
- 93. The Sack of Bath by Adam Fergusson** A 1973 polemic, with photographs, raging at the destruction of Bath's C18th artisan terraced housing. Preface: author
- 94. No Surrender by Constance Maud** A fascinating and path-breaking 1911 suffragette novel about a mill girl and her aristocratic friend. Preface: Lydia Felgett
- 95. Greenbanks by Dorothy Whipple** 1932 novel by our most popular author about a family and, in particular, the happy relationship between a grandmother and granddaughter. Afterword: Charles Lock
- 96. Dinners for Beginners by Rachel and Margaret Ryan** A 1934 cookery book for the novice cook explaining everything in very useful detail.
- 97. Harriet by Elizabeth Jenkins** A brilliant but disquieting 1934 novel about the 1877 murder of Harriet Staunton. Afterword: Rachel Cooke
- 98. A Writer's Diary by Virginia Woolf** Extracts from the diaries, covering the years 1918–41, selected by Leonard Woolf in 1953 in order to show his late wife in the act of writing. Preface: Lyndall Gordon
- 99. Patience by John Coates** A hilarious 1953 novel about a 'happily married' Catholic mother of three in St John's Wood who falls 'improperly in love'. Preface: Maureen Lipman
- 100. The Persephone Book of Short Stories** Thirty stories, ten by 'our' authors, ten from the last decade's *Biannuals* and ten that are newly reprinted. A Persephone bestseller.
- 101. Heat Lightning by Helen Hull** A young married woman spends a sultry and revelatory week with her family in small-town Michigan; a 1932 Book-of-the-Month Club Selection. Preface: Patricia McClelland Miller

- 102. *The Exiles Return* by Elisabeth de Waal** A novel, written in the late 1950s but never published. Five exiles return to Vienna after the war. A meditation on 'going back' and a love story. Preface: Edmund de Waal
- 103. *The Squire* by Enid Bagnold** In 1938 a woman gives birth to her fifth child: a rare novel about the process of birth. Preface: Anne Sebba
- 104. *The Two Mrs Abbotts* by DE Stevenson** This 'Miss Buncl' book, published in 1943, is about Barbara Abbott, as she now is, and the 'young' Mrs Abbott, keeping the home fires burning during the war.
- 105. *Diary of a Provincial Lady* by EM Delafield** One of the funniest books ever written: a 1930 novel, written as a diary, about everyday family life. Illustrated by Arthur Watts. Afterword: Nicola Beauman
- 106. *Into the Whirlwind* by Eugenia Ginzburg** A Russian woman is arrested in 1937 and sent to the Gulag. Filmed as *Within the Whirlwind* with Emily Watson. Afterword: Rodric Braithwaite
- 107. *Wilfred and Eileen* by Jonathan Smith** A 1976 novel, based on fact, set in the years 1913–15. Wilfred, badly wounded in France, is rescued by his wife. A 4-part television serial in 1981. Afterword: author
- 108. *The Happy Tree* by Rosalind Murray** A 1926 novel about the devastating effect of WW1 on the young, in particular a young married woman living in London during the war years. Preface: Charlotte Mitchell
- 109. *The Country Life Cookery Book* by Ambrose Heath** A 1937 cookbook, organised by month (and thus by excellent seasonal recipes) illustrated with a dozen beautiful wood engravings by Eric Ravilious. Preface: Simon Hopkinson.
- 110. *Because of the Lockwoods* by Dorothy Whipple** A 1949 novel: the Hunters are patronised by the wealthy Lockwoods but Thea Hunter begins to question their integrity. Preface: Harriet Evans
- 111. *London War Notes* by Mollie Panter-Downes** These extraordinary 'Letters from London', describing everyday life in WW2, were written for *The New Yorker* and then collected in one volume in 1971. Preface: David Kynaston
- 112. *Vain Shadow* by Jane Hervey** A Waugh-ish black comedy written in the 1950s but not published until 1963 about the days after the death of a patriarch in a large country house and the effect on his family. Preface: Celia Robertson
- 113. *Greengates* by RC Sherriff** A 1936 novel about retirement: Mr Baldwin realises the truth of 'for better for worse but not for lunch' but finds a new life by moving to 'metroland'. Preface: Juliet Gardiner
- 114. *Gardeners' Choice* by Evelyn Dunbar and Charles Mahoney** Two artist friends collaborated over the text and drawings of this rare and delightful 1937 gardening book. Preface: Edward Bawden, Afterword: Christopher Campbell-Howes
- 115. *Maman, What Are We Called Now?* by Jacqueline Mesnil-Amar** The author kept a diary in July and August 1944: an unparalleled insight into the last days of the Occupation in Paris. Preface: Caroline Moorehead
- 116. *A Lady and Her Husband* by Amber Reeves** A 1914 novel about a woman who realises that the girls in her husband's chain of tea shops are underpaid – and does something about it. Preface: Samantha Ellis
- 117. *The Godwits Fly* by Robin Hyde** A semi-autobiographical, lyrically written 1938 novel about a girl's rather fraught childhood by this major New Zealand writer. Preface: Ann Thwaite
- 118. *Every Good Deed and Other Stories* by Dorothy Whipple** A 1944 novella and nine short stories written between 1931 and 1961 which display the author's 'wonderful power of taking quite ordinary people in quite unromantic surroundings and making them live.'
- 119. *Long Live Great Bardfield: The Autobiography of Tirzah Garwood*** A touching, funny and perceptive memoir, with wood engravings by the author, and photographs (eg. of Tirzah's husband Eric Ravilious). Preface: Anne Ullmann
- 120. *Madame Solario* by Gladys Huntington** This superb 1956 novel in the Henry James/Edith Wharton tradition is set on Lake Como in 1906; published anonymously and with undertones of incest, it was a *succès de scandale*. Afterword: Alison Adburgham
- 121. *Effi Briest* by Theodor Fontane** An 1895 classic of European literature by the great German novelist, on a par with *Anna Karenina* and *Madame Bovary*. Afterword: Charlie Lee-Potter
- 122. *Earth and High Heaven* by Gwethalyn Graham** A 1944 Canadian bestselling novel about a young woman falling in love with a Jewish man and her father's, and Canada's, upsetting and reprehensible anti-semitism. Preface: Emily Rhodes
- 123. *Emmeline* by Judith Rossner** A 1980 novel, set in the 1840s, about a 13-year-old girl working in the mills at Lowell; she is seduced, and tragedy ensues: a subtle, and unusual feminist statement. Preface: Lucy Ellmann
- 124. *The Journey Home and Other Stories* by Malachi Whitaker** Four volumes of these startling short stories came out in the early 1930s; we reprint twenty of them. Preface: Philip Hensher. Afterword: Valerie Waterhouse
- 125. *Guard Your Daughters* by Diana Tutton** A 1953 novel written in a light, very readable style which has

dark undertones: four sisters living in the country have to defer to their demanding mother.

126. *Despised and Rejected* by Rose Allatini A pioneering 1918 novel about a gay conscientious objector and his friendship with a young woman who also opposes the war. Afterword: Jonathan Cutbill

127. *Young Anne* by Dorothy Whipple A quasi-autobiographical, extremely readable novel, her first (1927), about a young girl growing up. Preface: Lucy Mangan

128. *Tory Heaven* by Marghanita Laski A rather dark 1948 satire about a Britain under Tory rule with everyone divided up (by the As) into A, B, C, D, and E. Preface: David Kynaston

129. *The Call* by Edith Ayrton Zangwill A 1924 novel about a young woman scientist (based on Hertha Ayrton) who gives up her work for 'the cause' ie. to be a suffragette. Preface: Elizabeth Day

130. *National Provincial* by Lettice Cooper A 1938 novel about politics in Leeds in 1935–6, surprisingly page-turning despite its sometimes serious subject matter. Preface: Rachel Reeves

131. *Milton Place* by Elisabeth de Waal A novel set in a large house in the English countryside just after the war. A young woman from Vienna changes everything. Preface: Victor de Waal, Afterword: Peter Stansky

132. *The Second Persephone Book of Short Stories* Another volume (to follow our hugely successful first volume, PB No. 100) of thirty stories by women writers.

133. *Expiation* by Elizabeth von Arnim Curiously excluded from the von Arnim oeuvre, a 1929 novel by the author of *The Enchanted April* about marriage and deception – surely her best book. Preface: Valerie Grove

134. *A Room of One's Own* by Virginia Woolf Based on the path-breaking 1929 lectures given at Cambridge. Preface: Clara Jones

135. *One Woman's Year* by Stella Martin Currey Recipes, poems, observations, woodcuts: a delightful 1953 pot pourri.

136. *The Oppermanns* by Lion Feuchtwanger Written to alert the world to the horrors of fascism, an unforgettable novel about a Jewish family in Berlin from 1932-3. Foreword: Richard J Evans

137. *English Climate: Wartime Stories* by Sylvia Townsend Warner Twenty-two short stories set from 1940 to 1946, few previously reprinted. Preface: Lydia Fellgett

138. *The New Magdalen* by Wilkie Collins An 1873 'sensation novel' by the great C19th novelist about a 'fallen woman' and society's attitude to her. Preface: James Bobin

139. *Random Commentary* by Dorothy Whipple A 'writer's diary' (cf. Virginia Woolf's diary PB No. 98) covering the years 1925-45, selected by the author herself from her notebooks in 1965.

140. *The Rector's Daughter* by F M Mayor A 'beloved classic', first published in 1924, about the daughter of the rectory and an unrequited love affair. Preface: Victoria Gray

141. *The Deepening Stream* by Dorothy Canfield Fisher A classic of American literature about Matey's unhappy childhood, deeply happy marriage, and her life in France during WW1. Preface: Sadie Stein

142. *As It Was and World Without End* by Helen Thomas Two volumes of memoirs, first published in 1926 and 1931, about the author's life with the poet Edward Thomas. Afterword: Isabel Raphael

143. *A Well Full of Leaves* by Elizabeth Myers A 1943 novel, poetic

and beautiful, about four children damaged by their abusive parents and how they confront their destinies. Afterword: a 1957 memoir of the author by Eleanor Farjeon

144. *The Other Day* by Dorothy Whipple A delightful 1936 memoir of her childhood by Persephone's bestselling author.

145. *The Waters under the Earth* by John Moore A 1965 'condition of England' novel set in the 1950s about the 'end of the age of deference' and the approach of the 1960s, symbolised by the encroachment of a motorway. Preface: Amanda Craig

146. *Two Cheers for Democracy: a Selection* by E M Forster Literary and political essays written from 1925 -51: 25 selected from the original 69. Preface: Henry Mance

147. *One Afternoon* by Siân James An unusual and difficult genre, a love story, but this 1975 novel manages it with delicacy, wit and social insight. Preface: Emma Schofield

148. *Out of the Window* by Madeline Linford The first women's page editor of the *Guardian* wrote six books; this perceptive and unusual 1930 novel is about an unfortunate marriage. Preface: Michael Herbert

149. *Sofia Petrovna* by Lydia Chukovskaya A short Russian novel written secretly in 1939-40 about the effect of Stalin's Purges on an 'ordinary' housewife. Translated by Aline Werth. Preface: Helen Tilly

150. *The Third Persephone Book of Short Stories* Thirty short stories, ranging in date from 1911 to 1998. Ten have been published in the Persephone Biannuals, ten are taken from our short story collections and ten should be new to Persephone readers. The authors include Evelyn Sharp, Madeline Linford, Sally Benson, Dorothy Whipple, Sylvia Townsend Warner, Margaret Lane and Emma Smith.

‘A SPOT OF LEAVE’

At five o'clock, when the afternoon was deepening into violet-scented, spring twilight, Phillips and Aphrodite met for tea at Larides'. This was the hour when the Alexandrine Greeks drank coffee. Sometimes men dropping into the café from offices and women pausing in their shopping, would stand at the counter and eat with a silver, two-pronged fork, a couple of cakes. The counter displayed immense chocolate boxes tied with ribbons. The cakes were rich and elaborate: sponge-cake, macaroon or feather-fine pastry laden with cream, strawberries, chocolate, icing, nuts, preserved fruits, rich jams or chestnut paste. They were displayed behind glass.

‘And the ladies,’ thought Phillips in his captain's uniform, his young face decorated with a cavalry moustache he would have shrunk from wearing when a civilian clerk, ‘the ladies are like the cakes.’

They came and went in the shop, charming in their flowered silks, their furs, their confectionery hats, their sheer silk stockings from the United States and their delicate shoes. Each whose husband was of the necessary income-level wore like a trophy on her ring finger a diamond of at least two carats. All were completed with flowers and perfumes, as though a fashionable wedding might be sprung on them at any moment. Phillips, staring at them with

his slightly bulging, stone-blue eyes, nodded agreement with himself: ‘Just like the cakes – and I wouldn't mind a bite.’

‘It is shocking, don't you think, such a display?’ said Aphrodite.

‘Shocking?’ Phillips turned to her and laughed. Far from it.

‘But in Palestine you lack sugar.’

‘Well, the civilians are a bit short.’

‘Here they have too much, yet they refuse to export. In this window last week there was a wedding cake – eight cakes on top of one another, white with sugar. And in Palestine children are ill for need of it.’

‘Too bad,’ agreed Phillips, looking back into the shop's bustle and fluffing up his moustache with his hand as dark eyes glanced towards him. He had admired Aphrodite's English every time he had been at a loss for something to say, but his ear was more intrigued by the chirruping, inaccurate French of the ladies who moved among the bows on the chocolate-boxes like flowers among butterflies. The men were as elegant. Phillips noticed one – small, elderly, plump, exquisite in silver-grey with pointed shoes – who followed a shop-girl and supervised her packing of a satin-covered box. He moved like a bright insect through the garden of sweets and women, pausing his long quivering, forefinger over the trays of fondants,

darting it like a sting when he made his choice, then rejecting and choosing again, making, unmaking and re-making his mind with agitation.

‘Wonder who the old boy's buying those for!’ said Phillips. ‘For himself.’

‘Surely not.’

‘Yes.’ Aphrodite gave a decided shake of her head. ‘He is a relative of mine. He is very rich. He always buys himself a box when he makes money on the Bourse. Every day he makes more money except when it looks as though the war might end soon, then the Bourse is frightened.’

‘Really!’ After some reflection Phillips said: ‘You have a lot of relatives.’

‘Everyone has a lot of relatives,’ said Aphrodite.

Beyond the giant window-bottles filled with crystallised fruits, violets and angelica, went a stream of people: smart Greeks, rich Egyptians, some wearing the fez, servants in galabiahs, French sailors with red pom-poms on their hats and every sort of English and Allied serviceman.

Some French officers, from the pale-grey battleships that had lain motionless in Alexandria harbour since the fall of France, sat at the near-by table. They drank coffee like the Greeks. They, thought Aphrodite, had become at home here because they had adapted themselves at once. The English tried to make a place adapt itself to them. Phillips, for instance,

had settled into his basket-chair and without consulting her had at once ordered tea. He had got it just as he had wanted it – hot and strong with milk and sugar. Larides' had learnt to serve it that way the day the first Englishman explained his needs. The Wrens, ATS and nurses, when they arrived, had proved more exacting, for they required the old tea to be emptied out of the pots and fresh tea put in for each customer – but they, too, got what they wanted. They sat round the tables with the confident look of the girls she had seen in teashops when she went to stay with her husband's family at Littlehampton.

'You like the tea here?' she asked Phillips.

'Just the job,' he answered. 'Laid on as mother made it.'

'Your nurses,' said Aphrodite, watching the table opposite, they do not approve of us, do they? They have seen men dying and they think here are all these people who only make money out of the war.'

'They're jealous,' declared Phillips. 'They know you've got nice silk stockings and they've only got cotton ones. You have got nice silk stockings, haven't you?' he gazed humorously under the table. 'That's what we like to see when we get a spot of leave.'

'Don't women wear silk stockings in Jerusalem?'

'Well, yes, they do if they can get them – but I used to be up in the blue, you know. I can

remember what a treat it was to see you girls nicely dressed. And it's still a treat. I'm glad your husband doesn't take too dim a shufti of me trotting you round a bit.'

'Why should he?' asked Aphrodite. 'He's an Englishman.'

'Even an Englishman can be jealous.'

'We are modern,' said Aphrodite, as though the suggestion of jealousy were an insult. She thought back to a few years before when, unmarried, she had the reputation of being the most 'modern' girl in Alexandria. Indeed, so 'modern' had her behaviour been that it had led to endless rows at home and her mother had said: 'You will never get a husband now. There is not a Greek of good family who would have you.'

'Then I'll marry an Englishman,' she said, and she did.

'My parents did not like me to marry James. He was only a clerk in the English bank – but I loved him. I love Englishmen. They are so intelligent, such breadth of mind, so "modern" – the Greeks are like Orientals. In England women are free.'

'Well, I suppose they are, Phillips agreed without enthusiasm. 'But nice girls aren't too free.'

'My parents wanted me to marry a rich cotton-merchant. An old man who was always drunk. A Copt, too! Think of it. "You can reform him," my mother said, but I said: "Why

should I? If he wants to be drunk all the time, it is of no interest to me." Then James was sent to work in Cairo and they were glad. I said nothing. I pretended I had forgotten him. Then one day I started to cry with a toothache. "What I suffer," I said, "Oh, what I suffer!" They were alarmed and said I must go to our dentist in Cairo. So I went and he made an X-ray of my teeth and one had twisted roots. "Look, mother," I said, "look at my insides – how terrible!" So they agreed I should go to stay with my aunt in Cairo and have my teeth mended. When I was two days in Cairo I got married to James.'

'Good Lord!' commented Phillips. 'What did the pater say?'

'You mean my father? He said much, but in the end it is all right. He is a banker. He used influence and James was brought back here to a position.'

'OK for James, eh?'

'We are very happy.'

'Oh, are you!' Phillips showed a twinge of annoyance that made Aphrodite smile.

She was reminded of the days before her happy marriage when she had roused endless twinges of jealousy in the young men of Alexandria. Now, after two years of contentment with James, she felt afresh the glow of the chase. In a moment the situation, which she had scarcely grasped before, fell into position and she saw herself in control. Looking upon Phillips as her natural victim, Aphrodite's eyes

and colour grew brighter and her whole manner eased into an indolent charm. 'Tell me about your home in England,' she said, as she pushed back her teacup and lit a cigarette.

'Oh!' Phillips was disconcerted for a moment, but he was not unprepared. Ever since he had got through the OCTU and his office experience had led him to a job in Pal Base, he had been readjusting his background.

Aphrodite, watching him as she listened to him, saw him quite newly as rather handsome in his youthful, blue-eyes fairness. His moustache hid his worst feature, his small prim mouth. She began to build up from what was attractive in him, the elements of romance. She knew exactly how it should continue from here and she would let it continue. She listened with all the necessary smiling interest, the glow, the flattering absorption in him that was to be his undoing. When Phillips blushed slightly, she thought: 'He is sweet, and only a boy.'

'What is your mother like?' she asked, keeping him talking.

'Rather handsome, the mater. Dresses awfully well, but a bit severe with the poor old pater. Plays golf, too.' He added this last touch, which he had not thought of before, and the picture came into focus.

'Have you a photograph of her?' asked Aphrodite

'Yes – at least, I mean, no.

Not with me,' Phillips blushed again.

After a smiling pause, Aphrodite said: 'Tonight my husband is going out for a business meeting. Come in and have a drink and keep me company.'

'Fraid I can't. I've got a date with another fellow on leave from my office.'

She looked surprised rather than hurt, but smiled: 'I hope you're not going to Maisie's House.'

He gave her a startled stare. There was a long silence before he suggested they should meet next day for tea.

'Of course,' said Aphrodite. 'And would you like to walk with me along the Corniche?'

'I don't mind.' Phillips's manner was neither eager nor indifferent. Aphrodite could interpret his manner as she wished.

When he had seen her to a taxi, he called one for himself and started back to his hotel by the sea. Settled into his corner, watching out at the brilliance of the street at that moment before darkness and the black out fell, he contemplated his life now lived in expensive hotels, expensive restaurants, taking tea with the daughters of wealthy bankers, jumping into taxis... and he murmured to himself in the almost forgotten argot of the desert: 'Bit of all right, eh, chum?'

Aphrodite's flat in the Sharia

Cherif Pasha was as English as its basic Frenchness permitted. Her father had also presented her with a small house at Stanley Bay, where she and James spent the summer. She had, she realised, all she could wish. James had the characteristics she most admired in the English. He was better-looking than Phillips, he was considerate yet met her on an equal footing and showed no resentment of her intelligence. She could not had she sighed have found cause for discontent, yet now she felt she was missing an excitement she must find again.

When James came home to supper, she said: 'You know Phillips, the young officer?'

'What about him?'

'You wouldn't mind, would you, if I went to bed with him?'

James did not glance up from his soup as he said: 'I'm tired and I've got to go out to that damned meeting.'

'You wouldn't mind, would you?'

'Mind what?' asked James irritably.

'What I asked – if I slept with Phillips?'

'I don't know.' James kept his glance on his plate. 'I haven't thought about it.'

'But we thought about it a long time ago. We agreed we'd be modern.'

'Then why ask me? You know you can do what you like.'

Aphrodite sighed. She wanted to get these formalities

over. Almost she wished now the whole business were over and Phillips safely back in Jerusalem. Yet she was determined to go through with it and in her determination she felt a little drunk, a little lifted above the realities of her everyday life. 'I don't want to deceive you,' she said. 'I want you to be happy about it.'

'All right,' said James. 'I'm happy. Now shut up.'

When he went out, Aphrodite remained in a state of restless inactivity until it was time to meet Phillips. She knew he had only three days more leave and the knowledge filled her with a sense of urgency that she ached with nervous strain. She ordered the house from habit and she was conscious of James with a worried impatience that was painful to her. What she felt for him was, she knew, intact, but it must remain at a standstill while she lived through this interlude that would prove to her that she was missing nothing.

After luncheon she left the house before James. 'I may not be back for dinner,' she said. He did not reply.

She met Phillips in a café near the old harbour. It was a brilliant spring day and the sea had in it the first green and purple that would depend with summer. On the other side of the circular harbour was the castle. It stood, on the site of the ancient Pharos, cleanly edged against the sea's colour as though blown

bone-white by the wind. The water within the harbour arms sprang up and down.

As they followed the Corniche road with the wind in their faces, Phillips said: 'I've been thinking of having a couple of days in Cairo.'

'You mean, after your leave?'
'No, I'd have to go tomorrow.'

'Alone?' asked Aphrodite.

'Well, the chap from my office is going. I thought of going with him.'

Aphrodite, silent, stared ahead.

'But I don't think I'll go. I like it here.'

'Ah!' Aphrodite smiled. 'Perhaps you do not want to leave me?'

Phillips cleared his throat as though he were doing a comic turn and gave her a coy glance: 'That's about it,' he said.

Conversation became easier after that. On one side of them the concrete houses and blocks of flats stretched far out of sight into the desert. On the other side splashed the middle choppy sea, its border of rock yellow and porous like rotting cheese.

'It reminds me of Worthing,' said Phillips. 'The only thing is we don't have date palms.'

'I know. I've been to Littlehampton.'

'Good Lord, have you?' and they talked about England and English seaside towns. Aphrodite was gaily critical, while Phillips was nostalgically respectful. They

came at last to a thin shelf of rock through which the ancients had cut holes. On a gusty day like this the sea came spouting through them.

'There!' said Aphrodite. 'Isn't that interesting? In the old days people used to fix musical instruments in the holes so the sea could play tunes.'

'Why on earth did they do that?'

'For amusement.'

'Rum idea.'

'But isn't it interesting? I brought you to see it.'

'Did you? Hell of a length this Corniche – as you call it. Better go back now,' and he swung round without waiting for her agreement. Now the wind was behind them, blowing their hair forward. A few barrage-balloons were beginning to rise like silver kidneys on threads above the harbour. The wind was growing cold.

'How about a taxi?' said Phillips at Stanley Bay. When they found one and settled inside it, Aphrodite placed herself comfortably against his shoulder. Some minutes passed before he thought to slip an arm round her.

'Now to brew up,' he said with satisfaction.

'Tea, of course. Where shall we go?'

'The same place,' Aphrodite whispered warmly. 'The same table.'

'OK,' said Phillips, and: 'We're in luck,' as they entered Larides' and saw their table was free.

When the tea was poured out, when they were pressing their forks through the luscious softness of coffee-cream cakes, Aphrodite felt the moment had come to clarify and speed up the situation. Phillips might have an Englishman's shyness, but he had only three days' more leave.

'I spoke to my husband about you,' she said.

'What did you tell him? Something nice?'

'Of course. I told him I wanted to sleep with you.'

Phillips raised his eyes and fixed them on her. Even then he had little expression, but he blushed more darkly than he had done for years. 'Good Lord!' he dropped his glance. 'What made you tell him that?'

'Because I didn't want to deceive him. He must know.'

Phillips put a lump of cake into his mouth before he mumbled: 'But there isn't anything for him to know.'

Aphrodite heard because she had been listening: 'You mean you don't want to?'

Phillips swallowed down the last of his cake and pulled himself together. His manner became rather aggressive: 'You ought to know better,' he said. 'A married lady! And you said you were happy.'

'What difference does that make?'

He refused to reply. She drank some tea. There was another pause before she said

with a nervous giggle: 'Why don't you want to?'

'Hell, let's drop the subject.' Phillips frowned in indignation and his voice had lost much of its gentility. A hard and edgy silence settled on them. Aphrodite tried once or twice to break it with anecdote about this person or that passing through the café, but Phillips was unresponsive. When they parted his manner was still cold. He did not suggest their meeting again.

James, supposing Aphrodite would be out, came home late that evening. He found her sitting alone in darkness. As he switched on the light, he said: 'Home early.

Did the beautiful romance fall through?'

She did not answer. She was lying back against her chair and sobbing. He stared at her for some moments, then went to her and slid his arm round her. 'What's the matter?' he asked.

She pressed her face against his middle: 'He didn't want me. Now I know I'm getting old.'

'Nonsense,' he said. 'It just showed what a fool he was.'

'No. I know. I know I'm getting old.'

This short story by Olivia Manning was written in 1946. It is taken from the 1967 collection A Romantic Hero.



The Arnolfini Portrait Jan van Eyck 1434. The woman has white fur (miniver) around her arms. (Sadly, miniver fur is taken from the white belly of hundreds of red squirrels.)

OUR READERS WRITE

In *Expiation* Elizabeth von Arnim can imply so much of attitude and emotion in so few sentences, with such wry humour, and each paragraph can be slowly savoured; but the story is so engaging, I could not linger long over it and confess I had to peek at the last pages to be sure of the heroine's fate. Even then, all I could see was that she was alive and with people she knew, which was reassurance enough to keep going: I couldn't have enjoyed reading had she 'gone under' as was more than likely to be her fate. The treatment of women in those days was extraordinarily cruel, and the men really do not seem to be on the same planet. The same action in one leads to banishment; in the other, nothing at all uncomfortable, for him. But what I loved most was von Arnim's kindness. These people's motives are carefully described, some of them begin to understand that their standing in society may not always be the only arbiter of moral behaviour, and this can be enough to start their progress in a gradual change of attitude. Thank you very much for republishing this wonderful book. Google review

I had vaguely heard of Dorothy Whipple (1893-1966) but never read any of her books and knew nothing about her. Then a friend, author and avid reader, recently listed her ten best novels of all time on Twitter.

Someone at a Distance (1953) was the only one on her list that I hadn't read. What? Time I put that right, obviously. It is a study of marriage, family dynamics and malevolence with splendid characterisation. Nearly every character is at best likeable and at worst more sinned against than sinning. They are all what EM Forster would have called rounded examples of Homo Fictus. I found myself unable to predict where this thoughtful novel might be going. As omniscient narrator, Whipple shows us what each main character is doing and thinking so the reader is well aware of all the complexities. Surely after everything that happens there couldn't be any kind of happy ending? Well, yes and no. Suffice it to say that where well-drawn sensible, and sensitive, human beings are involved there is always hope. Susan's Bookshelves

I am beginning to develop a passion for English novelists of the inter-war period – not so much the well-known ones, Woolf, Waugh, Orwell, Greene, although I love them too, but those lesser-known writers of domestic comedy and drama: EM Delafield, Elizabeth Von Arnim, John Moore, Winifred Holtby, Rosamund Lehmann. These are novels that you can pick up at any time, safe in the knowledge that the language will be fresh, interesting but

simple, the plots will feature everyday events and locations, the writing will probably start at the beginning, have a middle and an end just where you expect them to be, will be rich in observation, have comic touches and relatable characters, and will warm your heart. My particular passion at the moment is RC Sherriff and I want to talk about one of several domestic comedies he wrote in the 1930s, *Greengates*. If you would like to be totally and happily immersed in cosy 1930s English suburbia, this is the one for you. The story opens on an auspicious day: Tom Baldwin is retiring from his position as Chief Cashier in a City firm, clearing his desk after forty-one years' service, being ceremoniously handed that hackneyed retirement present of a mantelpiece clock, and setting off home for the last time. He is full of plans to make his own retirement busy and fulfilling, with studying, gardening, all the things he never had time to do when he worked. Of course, in no time at all, his new regime is causing havoc with the lives of Edith and the Baldwins' loyal old servant Ada. The three inmates of 'Grasmere' seem to be heading for a crisis, and while we can laugh at their irritations and upsets, the book is so perfectly written that we uncomfortably recognise our own little selfishnesses, routines and foibles in their behaviour. This book makes me roar with laughter,

and I could quote paragraph after paragraph to prove my point – except that I want you to find it for yourself. Yes it is a novel about navigating retirement, something for us all to think about at some point, but also about marriage, about starting again, about finding your true self. We as readers are so invested in the Baldwins’ happiness and fulfilment that we can only look on enviously, and hope that our lives may be equally full of purpose and joy. Sarah Harkness

If, like us, you hadn’t heard of Malachi Whitaker, you could certainly be forgiven – until now. The reason for this is that independent publisher of lost, forgotten and overlooked writers, Persephone Books, has dusted off some of her best short stories and offered them up once again. Thank goodness they have as these stories are gems of observation, style and character. Malachi Whitaker published 78 of them, until she started to feel ‘all written out’ and gave up writing in the 1940s. In this volume, there are stories of first experiences, unchecked children and encounters with socially taboo subjects, many of which feature imaginative and surprising turns of events. Whitaker offers a striking exploration of life as most people know it. Her stories contain keen observations of the inner lives, and the social inequalities

pervading the existence of the lower middle-class and working-class folk she lived among. Her stories bind together the banal and the extraordinary to make us look anew at the world we thought was so familiar. *Yorkshire Life*

I come from having read *Out of the Window*. Let me say that I totally enjoyed it and wanted to share with you my impressions. I felt the novel was absolutely up-to-date. I found indeed that we read it as a manifesto of ‘domestic feminism’ (as you say) more thanks to our modern gender equality concerns than to Lynford’s efforts to show the drawbacks of a mixed classes marriage. I can partially agree with Charles Marriott (*Manchester Guardian*, 5 September 1930) when he writes that ‘Ursula is rather more of a silly and Kenneth more of a lout than the average of their respective classes. ... it is within the experience of most people that love will survive the most grinding poverty’. As well Miss Linford writes with amused attachment rather than with sympathy: she sees rather than feels, and she is never at a loss for a witty aside.’ But I feel that Mr Marriott’s sympathy went somehow more to Kenneth than to Ursula, in accordance with the 1930 prudish, male-dominated society; the narration, instead, lets us follow Ursula in what should be her growth

path, Kenneth being but the spark, the push, the trigger of her steps forward. If we would like to find a weakness in the structure of the plot, we could find it in the bittersweet happy end (for Ursula). But to follow her in a lifelong struggle against poverty and unhappiness would have required an entire second novel, perhaps heavier and more distressing to read. On the contrary *Out of The Window*, even with oppressive pages (the depiction of the small new house is suffocating!), leaves you with the strong belief that not everything is lost as long as we don’t succumb to despair. Thank you very much, therefore, for having dug out and suggested this lovely novel. Please, keep up the good work! MG, Rome

‘While collective memory is grounded in fact, it need not be,’ cautions the historian Margaret MacMillan. ‘That is why dealing with the past, in deciding on which version we want, or on what we want to remember to forget, can become so politically charged.’ Nowhere is this notion more apparent than in *Sofia Petrovna*, a novella written in pre-war Soviet Russia where well over 700,000 lives were lost to the prevailing orthodoxy and collectively sanctioned madness of Stalin’s Great Purge. Persephone Books is to be applauded for re-releasing a work both moving and savagely

honest, and one that deserves a wide readership given the truths it aimed to expose are as relevant now as they are during the terrors of the late 1930s. Lydia Chukovskaya's masterpiece of dissident fiction, is a short and pithy testimony to how values warp in order for a society to maintain a cogent view of itself, all the while remaining blind to its own tyranny. The writing is unsentimental. Whether she is shivering in the interminable queues for the prosecutor's office, waiting at the iron gates to the prison where her son is being held, or organising a children's Christmas party at the publishing house where she is employed, Sofia Petrovna inhabits a mundane reality. The banal routine of her typist's life only heightens the novella's ultimate pathos. Hers is an unremarkable existence in a society poisoned by lies.... Joanna Grochowicz in *Persepective* magazine

Recently, I read a novel about marriage that felt entirely new, despite being published almost a century ago. Unlike novels exploring the subject I'd read before, the engine powering the narrative was class: specifically, what a class divide might have meant in a relationship in 1920s Manchester. It is clear-eyed, and while the novel has plenty of affection for its characters, it is *relentlessly* unromantic. I'm talking about Madeline Linford's *Out of the*

Window (1930), which was recently brought back into print by Persephone Books and is clever, witty and devastating. Linford can turn a lovely lyrical sentence. But ultimately, she is too shrewd to write about first love without an undercurrent of cynicism. Ursula pieces together a sort of manifesto about what she believes marriage should be: 'There has to be something else to make one want to marry a man. A sort of glow. I don't know what it is. Passion, perhaps. It's really more important than tastes in common, because it's the thing that makes marriage worthwhile.' The rest of the book attempts to test this thesis and the novel, which starts off gently, proceeds to slowly throttle the reader. Linford writes vividly about how small daily burdens (money worries, loneliness, boredom, cleaning, the hell of cooking three substantial and well-budgeted meals a day for your hungry husband when you hate both cooking and maths) add up to an unbearable weight. Before long the book becomes suffocating – nobody has forced Ursula's hand. The airless life she leads has been entirely of her own making. It's a sharp and frightening novel, until it isn't, a compelling look at life in the 1920s. Sophie Atkinson in *The Mill*, Manchester

I needed this. I needed the reassuring quietness of a

cover that says nothing at all. I needed the comfort of a book that lies flat in the hand, the ease of clear print, and the simple pleasure of very nice paper. I'd probably enjoy Persephone books even if I didn't enjoy the stories, though it seems there's little fear of that. This is my thirtieth Persephone and (even including a dozen more Persephone titles that I've read in their original editions) it is my new favourite. Barbara Noble's writing might not be as fine as Dorothy Whipple's, but this story tore my heart out. When war broke out, the children of London were evacuated. Mrs Rawlings, however, perhaps because she is the single mother of a lone child, an office-cleaner with little joy in her life, can't bear to part with nine-year-old Doreen. As the air raids intensify, Helen Osborne's conscience forces her to intervene. Geoffrey, her brother, is a respectable solicitor, has a nice house in the country and won't refuse to house a child, if only to make up for what he couldn't give his wife. Geoffrey's nice wife, Francie, furthermore, has longed for a child of her own and will surely welcome an evacuee with open arms. Mrs Rawlings, reluctantly, agrees to sacrifice her own happiness for the sake of her daughter's safety. And so Doreen is swept up by the guilt, fears and desires of adults. She leaves behind her tenement home and boards a train for the Middle Classes.

From there, it's like watching a rosebud opening, knowing that, in one way or another, the beautiful bloom is going to get crushed. Growing up 'was not conditioned by the time you went to bed. Growing up was finding out that grown-ups suffered.' There's a striking similarity to Claire Keegan's *Foster*, and a close comparison of the two would make a very interesting study. Noble tells more, where Keegan's so good at showing. Both, however, demonstrate with painful clarity the perils of crossing social divides. All the stars, highly recommended. Sultana Bun on Instagram

Out of the *Window* by Madeline Linford was a novel ahead of its time and quietly daring in its exploration of whether sexual attraction alone can be the mainstay of a marriage. One of the reasons I enjoyed it so much is because it explores many of the themes in which I have a particular interest (and which are common to many other Persephone books). Houses, and women's role in the home, are significant in this book, and gardens and nature (or lack thereof) also play an important role in signalling class distinctions and women's lack of freedom. In describing the respective houses of Kenneth and Ursula's upbringing, Linford cleverly shows that the home in which the newly wed couple start their lives together will be perceived

very differently by each of them. Indeed, it is this home – coupled with her inexperienced naivety – that is in many ways Ursula's undoing. Unusually for the time in which she wrote, Linford does not rule out the couple's compatibility based on social class alone; instead she offers a bleak depiction of the realities of poverty compared with the ease of wealth. The grim toil of Ursula's domestic work, coupled with her unequal status within the home, strains her marriage. She wilts and withers in her new surroundings, and Madeline Linford signals her unhappy state when she is unable to enjoy the outdoors. The reality of her impoverished circumstances first hits her when she opens a window to try to freshen up the air in a room. The breeze that gushes through the window carries with it the overpowering cooking smells from her (very close) next door neighbour's kitchen, and she shuts the window again. Windows, like houses, are important in this book: they highlight the contrast between Ursula's childhood, when windows framed attractive garden scenes and let in sweet-smelling country air, and her married adulthood where windows are firmly shut against smells, noise and dirt and offer no pleasant view. Miranda Mills

I love Persephone Books – not just because they publish such beautiful editions of titles that

have been ludicrously unloved or sadly forgotten, but because they introduce me to fascinating women – who happen also to write novels. Madeline Linford is one of these, and this month Persephone are publishing her fifth and final novel, originally written in 1930: *Out of the Window*. The plot is simple: Ursula, growing up bored and naive in a small Cheshire village, is introduced at a party to an extremely good-looking young trade unionist, Kenneth, and they fall in love. They marry, much against the wishes of both families, but Ursula is unable to adapt to working class life in an industrial city and the marriage fails. For a novel written by a woman in 1930, its treatment of sex and its consequences seems pretty daring. Although Ursula and Kenneth believe they are in love, it is obvious that in fact the overwhelming emotion is sexual desire, and Linford is making a strong case that this on its own is no basis for a successful long term relationship. The picture of the working-class society in which Ursula finds herself is sympathetically drawn: it is clear that Ursula fails to fit in because she has never been taught the basic skills of housekeeping, and is too proud to ask for help. She is also ridiculously foolish about money. I don't want to spoil the plot, as I hope you will want to read this excellent book for yourself. Sarah Harkness

LYDIA & ELENA CHUKOVSKAYA

In 2014 a Russian publishing house completed the release of the collected works of Lydia Chukovskaya (1907-96) in eleven volumes. The journalist Anna Narinskaya talked to her daughter, the publisher Elena Chukovskaya (1931-2015) (below with her mother in 1968).

Eleven volumes are a truly solid collection of works.

Well, three volumes make up *Notes about Anna Akhmatova*, Lydia's most popular work. But, yes, in general, her legacy is quite large. For example, she kept a diary all her life. And if her father Chukovsky's diary took up 29 notebooks his assistant and I spent ten years analysing the text and compiling comments on

it, then Lydia Korneevna had 260 notebooks. Moreover, these only date from 1938 (everything before that was destroyed).

I started a thorough analysis of this diary only two years ago – I was already 80 years old then – so I no longer have enough time to sort through everything. I made several selections of her diary entries: about Brodsky, about Solzhenitsyn – they were included in this collection. Most recently, I made a compilation of Lydia's notes about her attempts to publish *Sofia Petrovna*.

After all, it was Sofia Petrovna that she considered her main book.

Yes, her main book and 'her pain', as she put it in one of her poems. She wrote this story

in 1939-40 – about what was happening in Leningrad in the prison lines of the 1930s. For my mother, this was part of her life: my stepfather, the theoretical physicist Matvey Petrovich Bronstein, was arrested in '37 and shot in '38. Lydia spent this time in prison queues. But the heroine of the story was a woman of a completely different make from herself: a mother whose son is arrested, and she absolutely does not understand how such injustice could happen.

Because she trusts her native Soviet state and Comrade Stalin.

Yes, she is a truly Soviet person who trusts everything. She is a typist in a publishing house, she goes to meetings, she does social



work. The son is also prospering, working at the factory, his portrait is published in the Pravda newspaper, and suddenly he is arrested. It turns out that he is an enemy of the people.

Among other things, it describes how Sofia Petrovna herself and her employee, who is in love with her son, after his arrest suddenly become like lepers – no one wants to have anything to do with them, they are shunned. Is this part of Lydia's personal experience? Did this happen to her too after her husband's arrest?

It was different with her. This time – 1937 – was a milestone for her in every way. Then they not only imprisoned Matvey Petrovich, but also dispersed the editorial office of the Leningrad Detizdat, headed by Marshak (Lydia had worked there for the previous ten years). Two of her best friends were imprisoned. They also came for Lydia herself, but at that time she left for Moscow and then did not return to Leningrad for a long time. And she was not arrested, although there is a report from the NKVD about what is happening to the families of those arrested – and next to her name there is 'arrest is being formalised.' Her world was empty without her being shunned.

One of the amazing things associated with Sofia Petrovna lies outside the text. After all, it seems that many then had to write something like this secretly. And now we see that practically no one wrote about what was happening in

the wild during the repressions, if we do not mean orthodox Soviet texts. In any case, practically nothing has come down to us.

Yes, which makes this small text even more valuable. It was written in a school notebook. I was eight years old at the time, and – I'm very proud of this – they entrusted me with numbering the pages. I wrote down the numbers in red pencil. This notebook was kept by my mother's friend in besieged Leningrad.

Why did she give it away?

Before the war, she read this story to several of her friends – this often happened then, no one thought about the source of the 'leak' – and in the Big House it became known that she had some kind of document about 1937. The NKVD called my nanny. And my mother decided to leave Leningrad again. And she left – she simply left, leaving the apartment and all her things, and giving the notebook to a friend for safekeeping. And then the war began. And when she returned to Leningrad in 1944, strangers lived in the apartment, things were missing, and the notebook just happened to be saved. An acquaintance died during the blockade, but before his death he gave the manuscript to his sister.

It's as if there's a special antithesis to the one who informed. I think it's very important to realise this about that time now. Nowadays it is customary to recall Dovlatov's phrase about the

40 million denunciations that our fellow citizens wrote then, to say that the Stalinist dictatorship corrupted everyone. But it is important to remember those who did not succumb to corruption. And there were not so few of them.

Yes. Although **Sofia Petrovna** is more about those who succumbed. Not corruption, but intoxication.

After the 20th Congress, Lydia gave the book a rewrite and in 1962 she made an attempt to publish it. And, recently making a selection about the fate of **Sofia Petrovna** from my mother's diary entries, I reconstructed the chain of events. On November 16th 1962, *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* was released. At this time, **Sofia Petrovna** was accepted for publication by the publishing house Soviet Writer and in the magazine *Siberian Lights*. On Dec. 1st, Khrushchev came to the exhibition in Manege and crushed the artists, and on Dec. 18th an order was issued to end publications about the camps. And then the magazine refused to publish the story, and the publishing house terminated the contract. The door that had opened slightly slammed shut. In her diaries of that time there are almost daily entries about how she went around to various magazines, trying to achieve publication – but that's it, that was no longer possible.

When was Sofia Petrovna released in Russia?

Only in 1988. And I am very upset about my mother's fate as a writer. Because (and this can be seen from the letters of the first 'samizdat' readers) if this text had been accessible to the generation that experienced all this, its reception would have been completely different. And now this is 'another evidence' of what everyone already knows.

But even without becoming a famous writer, Lydia was a very important figure for the Soviet intelligentsia. For a certain group of people, she – who stood up for Sinyavsky and Daniel – rebelled against the persecution of Sakharov and Solzhenitsyn and was expelled from the Writers' Union for this – was, if we are not afraid of pompous expressions, a moral compass. With all that it entails, they admired her and laughed at her.

Yes, and just as Korney Ivanovich was upset that he was seen as a children's writer, while he considered himself a critic, so Lydia was not delighted that in her circle she was mainly perceived as a moral compass. She has this entry: 'Well, everyone writes about my courage. Hm.' She was a writer after all. And a master of artistic expression – that's why her journalistic works work that way. Or her notes about Akhmatova. For example, Makovitsky wrote four volumes about Tolstoy – this is, of course, a valuable source, but try reading them. But no one thinks about how she wrote, about what kind of writer she is,

no one notes this. Her courage is constantly celebrated.

They note her uncompromisingness, inflexibility, the firmness of her convictions, her amazing ability to make a choice once and for all, her ability to say 'no' – in general, those qualities that are becoming more and more relevant today.

As for relevance, it is quite difficult to say how she would behave now. For example, in the 1990s she said: 'I don't want to live under capitalism.' She remembered (and did not like) the NEP, she remembered the inequality that reigned then, the poverty from which her family was struggling – and she did not like it at all. One thing can be said about 'how she would behave now' – she would behave very differently. For her, this endless pushing back of boundaries, these compromises that mark the present day, were completely unacceptable. Her gaze could even be erroneous, and more often – too firm, too unshakeable. It was absolutely impossible to come to an agreement with her. When **Sofia Petrovna** began to be published in *Neva* magazine in 1988, the censorship did not want to omit the words 'special department' and the magazine called and asked to replace these two words. And Lydia said: 'I've been waiting 50 years, I'll wait some more' – and didn't change her mind. The time was already ripe, and in the end the 'special

department' was abandoned. She always behaved absolutely clearly and consistently. And if, say, today she decided that she was happy with the annexation of Crimea, then she would sign up 'for' and walk with her head held high, and if not, then she would not shake hands with the 'signatories' in the literal sense of the word. I remember once a friend called her and said something hostile about Solzhenitsyn. Lydia replied: 'I do not allow talk about Solzhenitsyn in such a tone,' hung up and never talked to this lady again.

In some ways, life is easier that way. That is, externally, of course, it is more difficult, but internally it is easier.

How can I say? Well, she wrote a book about Herzen, argued with the editors, took the work away, and put it on the shelf. She wrote a book on Hadji Murad, argued with the editors, took the work away, and put it on the shelf. I made a school literature anthology – I argued with the editors, took it away, and put it on the shelf. She did not accept any amendments – not only censorship, but also stylistic ones. She did not try to come to an agreement, but immediately disengaged. Therefore, most of her Soviet-era works simply disappeared. So, by doing what she did, she was freed from pangs of conscience and regrets about compromises. But 'outwardly', as you put it, it was a very hard life.

FINALLY

A few days after this *Biannually* is published the *Persephone Festival* will take place celebrating 25 years of publishing and 150 books. The Festival events will then be available to listen to online so that (rather miraculously) Persephone readers who were not able to join us in Bath from April 19th-21st will be able to 'catch up' from anywhere in the world.

Meanwhile, we keep in touch by emailing the monthly *Letter*, sending out *Diary of a Provincial Bookshop* (the entries for 2023 are now available as a pamphlet), posting on Instagram and answering readers' emails (for which we are always very grateful: we find our readers are never short of an opinion). But at the heart of it all are our books, 150 of them and counting.

However, after 25 years, it is inevitable that some changes are afoot. We shall be discontinuing the events (film screenings, lunches and teas with speakers etc) which (we think and hope) our readers have enjoyed ever since the very first event in Gt Sutton Street in Clerkenwell in 1999. Instead we shall have an annual, or possibly even twice-yearly, *Persephone Day*, rather like the April 2024 *Festival* but in miniature. Although of course we are continuing with the two monthly *Book Groups* and

with the hour-long *Persephone Concerts* in our upstairs room at 7 pm on the second Thursday of the month. (The audiences are small and select but the people who come simply love it, for indeed the musicians are marvellous and the atmosphere in the 'Edgar Row' first floor room is rather magical.)

Also, the format of this *Biannually* will change somewhat, we are not yet sure how. This is because we feel



sending a magazine twice a year is beginning to look rather old-fashioned. And we of course pride ourselves on being at the forefront of things.

Another exciting thing that is happening this spring is that Pan Macmillan are launching two new Persephone audiobooks, *William – an Englishman* and *They Were Sisters*. Our existing audiobooks will also become more accessible (details soon).

And because nothing stands still at Persephone, to coincide with the reprint of our *Bath Literary Map* we are publishing another of William Lindley's 'concertina' cards, this one is of eight streets lived in by eight women writers who lived in Bath. Also we shall continue to have a selection of beautiful things for sale in the shop (enamel saucepans! the Wallace and Sewell scarf! the £10 posters! the rather more expensive original posters!) and to be open to suggestions for other as yet unthought-of events (a residential weekend? a Persephone lunch at Castle Farm? a trip to Lyme Regis?).

Finally, our books for October: No. 151 will be a new edition, 85 years after its first publication, of *Mrs Miniver* by Jan Struther. This will have a new Preface by her granddaughter Ysenda Maxtone-Graham. We are also bringing out a new Classic edition of *High Wages* by Dorothy Whipple (with of course its preface by Jane Brocket).

Happy Reading!