



The Persephone Biannually

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Alice Ashley on a Green Seat' 1937 oil on canvas by Donald Towner

© Margaret Towner/Burgh House Trust



OUR BOOKS FOR SPRING/SUMMER 2011

We are frequently asked how we find our books and the answer is: in every way imaginable. This includes someone bringing a book into the office (as was the case with *Miss Pettigrew Lives for a Day*), finding out about it in a publisher's advertisement at the back of another book (*Fidelity* – a superb book – was advertised in the back of Elizabeth Jenkins's *Virginia Water*, which is not so good), coming across a book in a secondhand bookshop or a library (too many books to mention), realising that a book of classic quality was unaccountably not in print (*Mariana*, *Little Boy Lost*, *The Expendable Man*).

But each of the three books we are publishing in April 2011 has an unusual provenance: *Miss Buncler Married* is being reprinted literally by popular demand in that the first book we published by DE Stevenson, *Miss Buncler's Book*, was such a success (necessitating a reprint of another 3000 copies after only three months) and there were so many requests for the sequel that we promised to oblige – as indeed DE Stevenson herself obliged: the sequel is 'dedicated to those who liked Miss Buncler and asked for more.' The short

stories by Diana Athill were unknown to us but when an interview with her appeared in the *Guardian* mentioning that she had published a volume of stories in 1962, we got hold of them and asked Diana Athill if we could reprint a selection. And *The Sack of Bath* was a crucially important and influential book when it was published in 1973 although it is not – yet – seen as the important classic that, in our view, it is.

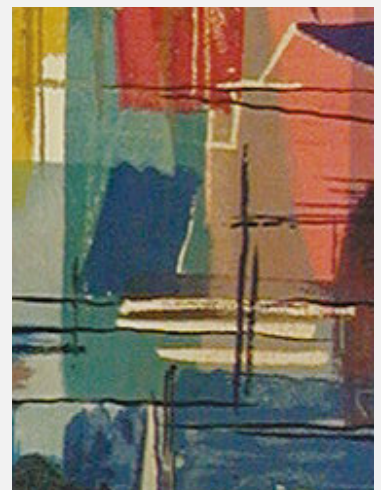
DE Stevenson was a widely read author of the '30s and '40s. And yet she had completely dropped out of view and it was not until the crime writer Aline Templeton recommended *Miss Buncler's Book*, Persephone Book No. 81, that she came to our attention. This first book, which was published in 1934, is a very funny and perceptive work about a woman who writes a novel about Silverstream, the village where she lives, under the pseudonym John Smith, and is then involved in the comedy as her neighbours try to discover the identity of the viper in their midst. Eventually she is forced to leave, and having married her publisher Arthur Abbott, moves to his house in Hampstead. The Abbotts then move out of London, which is when *Miss*



A 1936 Liberty's dress fabric used for Miss Buncler Married by DE Stevenson



A furnishing fabric used for Midsummer Night in the Workhouse, purchased by Diana Athill for her flat in the 1970s.



'The Stones of Bath', a 1962 fabric by John Piper for Sanderson and Son.

Buncle Married, Persephone Book No. 91, begins. Early on Arthur thinks: ‘But I really hope, in a way, that [Barbara] won’t want to write ... because this place is delightful – simply charming – and if she starts writing about our neighbours, we shall most probably have to leave Wandlebury – just as she had to leave Silverstream – in a hurry.’

As DE Stevenson’s great-granddaughter Fiona Bevan writes in the Persephone Afterword, ‘It is the truthful depiction of people, and the exposure of their faults, that makes Barbara’s writing dangerous.’ For, although witty and readable, DE Stevenson can be sharp and caustic, indeed she occasionally verges on the cruel when she lampoons some of her characters. However, she is also intensely sympathetic to the less fortunate, for example the reader knows that Miss Foddy, the governess to the neighbouring children, faces a bleak future where ‘it is so extremely difficult for a woman of my age and uncertified qualifications to find a post.’ Barbara, and her creator, both understand the problems facing a governess after she has ceased to be useful to a family (shades of *Miss Pettigrew Lives for a Day* and *Alas, Poor Lady*) and this was because DE Stevenson (who had passed the entrance exam for Oxford but been forbidden to go by her parents) was ‘fully aware of the potentially bleak outlook for women who cannot marry into a secure life.’

But despite moments of seriousness, *Miss Buncle Married* is overall a funny, touching and interesting novel that most Persephone readers will enjoy very much: great writing it is not; good writing of a very English and very particular kind it most certainly is.

Diana Athill, who was born in 1917 and now lives in North London, worked for fifty years as a publisher’s editor and in recent years has had enormous success with half a dozen volumes of

memoirs. But it was writing short stories that first gave the impetus to her writing life. As she says in the new Persephone Preface to this selection of her stories, *Midsummer Night in the Workhouse*, Persephone Book No. 92: ‘I can remember in detail being hit by my first story one January morning in 1958. Until that moment I had been hand-maiden, as editor, to other people’s writing, without ever dreaming of myself as a writer.’ Then she encountered someone who reminded her of an episode



Tea Time by F W Elwell (1870-1958) © Mallett Gallery/Private Collection/ Bridgeman



Kitty Carr (1895-1990) aged 17, five years before the birth of her first daughter Diana Athill, painted by William Strang (1859-1921) © Strang Estate/Abbott & Holder

in her past and that evening when she got home from the office she sat down at her typewriter and wrote her first short story, 'An Unavoidable Delay'. 'As soon as that story was finished, another one began, and by the end of the year I had written nine.' However, this was not what she calls her 'thunder-clap' story. 'That role was to be played by the third of the nine I

wrote in quick succession before coming to the end of them.' In early 1958 the *Observer* announced a prize to be given for a story called 'The Return'. Diana entered one of her stories, retitled to fit the competition remit, and out of 2000 entries it was the winner. She writes: 'You do not look up because you know that you cannot climb the tree. You have forgotten, by now, that

there is fruit hidden among its leaves. Then, suddenly, without a puff of wind, a great velvety peach falls plump into your hand. It happens to other people, perhaps; it never happens to oneself...I am still licking peach juice off my fingers...Bury me, dear friends, with a copy of the *Observer* folded under my head, for it was the *Observer*'s prize that woke me up to the fact that I could write and had become happy.'

By the time 'The Return' was published, at the end of December 1958, Diana had written a small collection of stories and some of them were sold to magazines such as *Glamour* and *Harper's Bazaar*. Then, energised by these successes, she wrote a memoir, *Instead of a Letter*, which was about her life until then and in particular about her devastation when her fiancé married someone else (the critic Noel Perrin wrote a eulogy about *Instead of a Letter* which is reprinted on page 7 of this *Biannually*). It was her first book and appeared in America in 1962; that same year the short stories appeared there, collected into a volume called *An Unavoidable Delay*. However, none of them ever appeared again in the UK. As Diana writes, 'In André Deutsch Ltd, our publishing firm, the belief that short stories by unknown writers were publishing poison was so deeply entrenched that I never thought of offering my stories to a British publisher.' A few more appeared in magazines, including

‘Desdemona’, the winner of the Erotica Award for 1973 which was published in *Transatlantic Review*. But until now none of the stories have been reprinted.

So this is a quite new selection of Diana Athill’s stories, which we have given the title of one of them, *Midsummer Night in the Workhouse*. Most were in the USA volume; a few have been omitted; ‘Desdemona’ has not been reprinted since it appeared in *Transatlantic Review*; and one story, ‘A Hopeless Case’, has never been published before. All provide a subtle counterpoint to Diana Athill’s memoirs because their focus is autobiographical: although not in the first person, they are about facets of a life which Diana knew through and through, either because she was, as she has said, writing about herself (the story about her first kiss, reprinted in this *Biannually*, or the one about an Oxford undergraduate and her boyfriend) or because she had sharply observed those around her (an Englishwoman on holiday having an affair, a married couple bickering at a dinner party). All the stories are beautifully written, perceptive, touching and funny. We are extremely proud to be publishing them and equally proud that Diana Athill has become the eighth in Persephone’s distinguished list of short story writers.

During the war Diana Athill worked in Bath. ‘Oh, lovely Bath! There is no city in England more beautiful than that one,



Diana Athill when young

stepping down into its bowl of mist.’ But *The Sack of Bath*, Persephone Book No. 93, is a fierce and angry polemic. Through words and photographs it is unashamedly outspoken, outraged and vituperative. The reason for the anger is as follows: in the 1960s local council officials in Bath took it upon themselves to draw up plans to demolish large swathes of artisan housing while retaining the set pieces such as the Royal Crescent. As a result, hundreds of small Georgian houses, of the kind that it is nowadays everyone’s dream to live in, were brutally bulldozed. Adam Fergusson (with the late James Lees-Milne) wrote an article in *The Times* about what was happening and then turned it into a book. This had the benefit of distressing and poignant photographs by, among others, Snowdon, EL Green-Armytage and David Wood (it is impossible, now, to be certain who took which photograph: all were giving their services *pro bono*). This is a short, 80 page book – but every page is illustrated.

Here is the first sentence of Adam Fergusson’s new Persephone Preface: ‘*The Sack of Bath* was the product of the collective cultural blindness of those who ran Bath four decades ago, and of the simmering, bursting indignation of those who cared about it.’ He continues: ‘*The Sack of Bath*’s publication in 1973 was the culmination of an already prolonged effort to lever the progressive destruction of Bath’s Georgian character into the popular consciousness. If it came too late to save much, it was in time to save a great deal more – and not only in one city.’

And, it is true, the book had a much wider effect than the purely local, for example the fight to save Covent Garden was helped by Adam Fergusson’s rage. So it is an important book and an influential one, which is in many respects as relevant nowadays as when it was first published nearly forty years ago. This is also true of a recent unexpected bestseller, Adam Fergusson’s *When Money Dies: the nightmare of the Weimar hyper-inflation*, first published in 1975. The *Financial Times* wrote a few months ago: ‘This is not the only Fergusson book being republished. *The Sack of Bath* – a 1973 book about the destruction of Bath’s C18th architecture – is also being reissued. “So much easier than writing new books,” says Fergusson.’

The argument about Bath is still raging, and some of the key points will be aired for us on the *Persephone Bath Walk* on

June 16th (cf. Page 28). Jonathan Glancey of the *Guardian* last year commented that although many consider the new SouthGate shopping mall to be ‘better than the 1960s one it replaced, it seems nevertheless that the city has been careless of its heritage, unable to find ways of building intelligently.’ *The Sack of Bath*

also chimes in with a book that is so germane to Persephone novels of the period, *Family Britain 1951-7* by David Kynaston. The *LRB* said: ‘Time and again by his account, architects and planners simply ignored the wishes of the people whose world they were rebuilding. All the surveys showed a clear preference for houses over

flats, but it was flats that were mostly built, those “streets in the sky” that the modernist ideologues knew for certain were the way to promote community and fellowship.’ (Bath, thank heavens, escaped high rise.) Reading *The Sack of Bath* will surely give Persephone readers much food for thought.



Photograph on Page 19 of The Sack of Bath: at the back Northwick House 1961, this 1970 photograph shows ‘the last public appearance of Philip Street’.

A CRITIC ON DIANA ATHILL

‘Only a few totally honest accounts of a human life exist,’ wrote the American critic Noel Perrin in the *Washington Post* (reprinted in *A Reader’s Delight* in 1988), reviewing a reprint of Diana Athill’s first book *Instead of a Letter*. He went on: ‘That’s not because people are lacking who would like to tell the truth. (They probably *are* a minority.) It’s because you can’t tell it unless you know it. To see the truth of your own life you must first have gotten beyond all illusion about yourself, and probably about the world as well. Few of us do. Diana Athill is one of the few. She is also a gifted writer, and, if one may judge by this book, an enchanting woman. The book is the story of her life up to the age of 43. It is not a typical life. It contains more privilege, more suffering (internal, not imposed), and in the end acuter happiness than is the common lot. And yet, at least to me, it seems like the revelation of a whole sex. Short of being born a woman myself, I don’t know where I would get a greater sense of what it would feel like to be female than I did from reading *Instead of a Letter*.

Diana Athill is upper-class English. She grew up mainly in her grandmother’s house, which had twenty bedrooms, a park and a thousand acres of land attached. She loved life there, with its ritual, its servants, even its characteristic English upper-class discomforts.

At 15 she fell in love with an Oxford undergraduate named Paul, who had come to the estate to tutor her brother. At 19 she became engaged to him. They also began to sleep together, a more unusual event in 1936 than it might be now. A couple of years later, soon before they were to be married, he broke the engagement in a way so cruel that it caused her to lose all confidence in herself.

For the next twenty years she led a kind of half-life: plenty of affairs that were sure to lead nowhere; a successful career; but she often slept twelve hours a night at weekends to be rid of the time.

And then at 41, a miraculous reversal. Having almost by chance started to write stories, she entered a contest, and she won it. Soon after, she began her first serious relationship with a man since she was 22. Here, in short, is the plot of many a romance novel. Here is a life begun in joy, brought to sorrow, and then when least expected, returned to joy.

Examples won’t convey the marvellous frankness and immediacy of this book, or the calm wisdom with which Diana Athill looks back on her life and understands its every nuance. How well this woman writes!



Farm at Watendlath 1931 Carrington © Tate Britain. The Persephone Post 16 June '09.

PERSEPHONE IN SICILY

Not far from Syracuse, in the south-east corner of Sicily, is the Cyane Spring. This is where Persephone was taken down to the Underworld. Today it is a Nature Reserve, a small and deep freshwater pond, surrounded by eucalyptus and papyrus, and the source of the river Ciane which flows for a few miles towards the Mediterranean.

The Spring is at the centre of Ted Hughes's powerful reworking of Ovid's *The Rape of Proserpina* (in *Tales from Ovid*). It is here that Cyane ('blue' in Greek), a chaste nymph, cries out to Pluto (Hades) to prevent him carrying off Proserpina (the Latin word for Persephone). Here she 'stretched her arms as she spoke, /To block the path of the horses. /Then the son of Saturn, in a fury, /Plunged his royal sceptre /Down through the bed of her pool /And called to his savage horses. /The bottom of the pool split wide open, /And then they dived – /Horses, chariot, Pluto and his prize – /Straight into hell.' Cyane weeps, melts, and metamorphoses into 'clear simple water', the pool you can now visit driving a few minutes through orange and lemon groves from the Via Statale 119.

It was high up in central Sicily that Pluto found Proserpina, playing in a glade by Lake Pergusa, near Enna. The lake is today encircled by a motor-racing track, an 'example,' wrote Mary Taylor Simiti in *On Persephone's*

Island 'of the Sicilians' best efforts to ruin their landscape.'

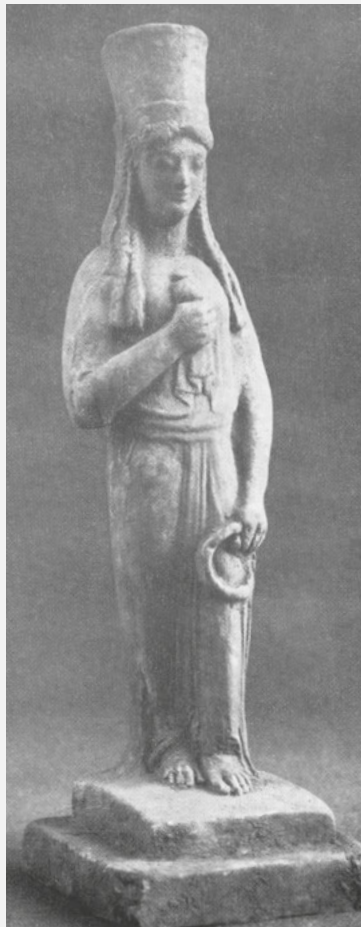
In the Ovid/Hughes account Proserpina's mother, Ceres (Demeter) pleads with Jupiter (Zeus) for the return of their daughter, which he grants on the one condition 'That she never tasted hell's food.' Unfortunately she has eaten some pomegranate seeds. But Jupiter relents: "He

parted the year's round into two halves. /From this day, Proserpina, /The goddess who shares both kingdoms, divides her year /Between her husband in hell, among spectres, /And her mother on earth, among flowers. /Her nature, too is divided. One moment /Gloomy as hell's king, but the next /Bright as the sun's mass, bursting from clouds.'

Syracuse was a great Greek city whose colonists made Sicily Persephone's island. But her origins in Greece were complex. The original inhabitants worshipped Persephone /Phersephatta, the Queen of the Underworld. The Greeks then brought with them to Greece Demeter (the corn-mother), together with her daughter, the Maiden (Kore). Then they came to worship the pre-Greek Persephone as one with the Maiden; thus Persephone became the daughter of Demeter.

'Sicilian images of Persephone appeared contradictory and enigmatic – the stern goddess of the Netherworld and the loving bride; the Queen of Death and the giver of fruitfulness and life' (Gunther Zuntz in *Persephone*).

This strange, uncomfortable myth became a regular source of inspiration for English poets. Shelley, Mary Shelley, Rossetti, Tennyson, Meredith, Swinburne, Wilde and DH Lawrence all celebrated her.



Terracotta of Persephone at Medma-Rosarno, Reggio Calabria, frontispiece to Persephone by Gunther Zuntz OUP 1971

OUR BLOGGERS WRITE

‘My favorite parts of *Round about a Pound a Week* were the stories about the women’s lives: their daily schedules, the food they cooked, the challenges of having one or maybe two rooms for six or eight people, the things they did to be thrifty. It is contemporary to Virginia Woolf’s *Mrs Dalloway*, which would be written a few years afterwards, and to the stories of EM Forster and W Somerset Maugham. That is the life the middle class is living while the families of Lambeth struggle for life. While Clarissa prepares her party, the women in Lambeth stay home because they have no boots, and they eat just a scant portion of bread for breakfast and tea (and maybe watery soup for dinner).’
Rebecca Reads

‘The ten stories in *Tea With Mr Rochester* are beautiful; they are also quirky and have very much an ethereal quality to them. Some of them have occult undertones and there is a fairy-tale like feel to the collection, as if they are all magical. By far my favourite were the title one, about the schoolgirl Prissy who reads *Jane Eyre* for the first time and is full of dreams and romance, and the poignant ‘The Little Willow’: Simon Byrne attends a party at the home of the three Avery sisters during the war and makes a powerful impression on the younger sister, Lisby, who is overshadowed by

her older sisters, Charlotte and Brenda. He promises to write and never does and when the war ends Lisby waits for news. This story tugs at the heart-strings and is so touching that it will be reread often.’ Paperback Reader

‘*Woman’s Place* is a great quick read. If you’re interested at all in the social history of women’s roles in Britain, I highly recommend it. It starts with the period just before WWI, and covers women’s suffrage, the war efforts, the fight for equal pay, and so much more and is a great overview. I learned quite a lot, much of which annoyed and infuriated me, such as the fact that the British government refused to give nurses professional status during WWI, because it might detract from that of the men, resulting in a severe shortage of nurses and hospitals after the battles at Marne, Ypres, and Neuve Chapelle, at which thousands of young men died.’ Books and Chocolate

‘It seems impossible to summarise *High Wages* in a manner that makes it sound as good as it is. The life of a shop assistant at the time is very much a part of this book, but it is not what makes this book so very charming. One of the reasons is that Whipple’s style is one that manages to make the world she creates seem utterly realistic,

without having to use an awful lot of words. This book is perfect period-wise. And it speaks of class, and gender, and about a girl who truly manages to stand her own ground, without becoming heroic in an unrealistic sense, without skipping over her insecurities. Jane is admirable, but manages to seem so very real, all the time.’ Iris on Books

‘I was so afraid as I neared the end of *Little Boy Lost* that when I finally came to the conclusion, I wept. “What?!” I asked my husband. “What?” He was quite alarmed, and I was surprised myself, that a book should make me cry. There are so many ways of being lost, especially when it comes to children. But Hilary has truly lost his son. His search takes him to a desolate town in France, to the local convent and a little, ragged boy, with red hands, huge eyes, and clothes which do not fit. Hilary is not sure throughout the novel if the boy is indeed his, and perhaps it doesn’t matter if they are related by blood or not. For, in his own way, each is a lost boy. Marghanita Laski explores not only the relationship between father and son, but also that between tenderness and selfishness. She shows us the power we have as individuals for doing good, and in so doing, to redeem not only others but ourselves. I loved this book with all my heart.’ Dolce Bellezza

‘The idea of a novel in verse, albeit blank verse, rather intimidated me, but I put my faith in Persephone. Lettice Delmer is in many ways infuriating and yet there is a vulnerability, a feeling that she really cannot cope, so that it is quite impossible not to feel for her. Hers is a dark story, of depression, abortion, suicide, despair, death – but it is also a story of faith, hope and redemption. The characterisation in *Lettice Delmer* is lovely and the psychological insight is acute. And the verse? I have to say it works wonderfully well, giving the story and the characters room to breathe and grow, and at the same time giving the story just the right rhythm and urgency. This is not a comfortable book, and I found it very unsettling, but it is both moving and compelling.’ Fleur Fisher

‘I have been wanting to read *To Bed with Grand Music* since it came out, as the very subversive depiction of wartime life intrigued me immensely; no charity bazaars and ration queues and cheery keep the home fires burning spirit are found within the pages of this rather incendiary novel, which will forever have me doubting the rose-tinted view of women in wartime that I had previously believed in so fervently. Deborah is near impossible to like and her selfishness and lack of conscience are very shocking to read about. However, she is, thanks to Marghanita Laski’s excellent characterisation, far more three-

dimensional than a stock pantomime villain. This is an absolutely fascinating, brilliantly written portrayal of a completely different side of wartime life, and Marghanita Laski proves herself once again to be an absolutely phenomenal story teller. Why her books fell out of print, I cannot understand. This has become one of my favourite Persephones; complex, thought provoking, subversive and fascinating, I couldn’t put it down. Read it!’ Book Snob

‘Both stories in *The Mystery of Blencarrow* by Mrs Oliphant (I like the formal titles that Persephone grace their authors with) deal with the breakdown of relationships and the lack of options for a woman in an unsatisfactory marriage before divorce became possible. What Mrs Oliphant makes very clear is the potential cost of Mrs Blencarrow’s mistake. Caught between a husband who neither loves nor needs his wife and children who adore and depend upon their mother what is Mrs Blencarrow to do, where does her true duty lie? *Queen Eleanor and Fair Rosamond* deals with a good wife who interests herself in her husband’s comforts, a kind and loving father who has lived an honest life until he quietly disappears. Of the two I found this the more affecting tale. The wife in this case realises that she doesn’t really want her husband back and so forgives gross selfishness on his part. Mrs Oliphant seems calm enough about the fate of her heroines

but they made my inner feminist roar; this is why we needed the vote and a voice. I’m glad I’ve finally read this book which fits beautifully into the Persephone tradition of confounding my expectations – for every happy, cosy, read there seems to be something a little darker.’ Desperate Reader

‘I think the striking thing about the stories in *Minnie’s Room* is Mollie Panter-Downes’s tight focus on the everyday, and what some may call the mundane things in life, which take on a greater significance in the years after the war when people’s lives are returning to normal yet with profound changes and adjustments. What also is striking is her wit and sense of humour, which is abundant in the stories even though most of them are melancholic and deal with themes of death and adjustment. But *Minnie’s Room* isn’t depressing, the stories are full of realisation and hope and you get a real sense of the scale of changes from the simple to the dramatic that affected people’s lives after what, to many, must have been a difficult and traumatic war.’ chasing baw

‘*The Victorian Chaise-longue*, a brilliant little snippet of writing, is confusing and unsettling. Melanie’s problem is that she doesn’t know why she’s back in time, what the circumstances of the person whose body she inhabits is (except that they are sick), and that she is unable to articulate

herself because of the limitations of the body. She is in the body of one Milly Baines, a young woman who of course has no idea of the concept of things we take for granted, for example aeroplanes. Melanie spends a lot of time trying to work out exactly why and how she got to the past. The how may be obvious, but the why is not – part of the genius of this novel is that the reader never has more or less comprehension than the character. The topics covered are relevant today in much the same way as in Melanie's time.'

The Worm Hole

'**D**addy's Gone A-Hunting by Penelope Mortimer is not an uplifting book but it's absolutely fantastic: raw, insightful and immediately engrossing. Ruth is achingly lonely. Her marriage is empty. She is numb from going through the motions and suppressing her feelings. Her relationship with her husband Rex is superficial and strained. He belittles her, she frustrates him with her indecision and apathy. I think the many themes (isolation, conformity, finding meaning, authenticity) are still relevant for the 21st century reader. I was going to say female reader but I don't know if that is exclusively true.' A Book Sanctuary

'**T**here were two things that I utterly adored about *Miss Pettigrew Lives for a Day*. The first was the characters. The chalk and cheese nature of Miss Pettigrew and Miss LaFosse and how their relationship developed

was one of the complete joys of the book. The other thing I loved was the timing and pacing of the book. Its taking place over the space of a single day kept the pace and plot moving but more importantly left me believing, rather naively and sentimentally, that your life really can change completely in the space of a single day. I loved this book quite unashamedly and I think that it's one of my very favourite of the Persephone novels that I have read.' Savidge Reads

'**C**ontinuing my love affair with Persephone Books: *The Winds of Heaven* is so charming and tender and just a smidge heartbreaking, a book so *disarming*, a book I never wanted to end because that would mean saying goodbye to Louise – a heroine in the truest sense of the word – and not being witness to her hoped-for triumphs. With her daughters, she was "always conscious of her heavy debt to them, which she could never repay or evade." In this reversal of mother-daughter roles [times three], she is not so much a burden to her daughters as she is an *inconvenience*. Uncomfortably, I understood how the daughters felt about taking care of Louise – because Dickens refuses to box them into the category of Cruel, Selfish Daughters. She makes them human, with her constant sweep of the family's perspectives. Needless to say, I loved this touching, generous book. I enjoyed every minute of it, even all the uncomfortable, too-true ones.' Sasha & the Silverfish

'I had never heard of Emma Smith until I saw her photograph on the *Persephone Post*. I really liked the look of her and I liked the sound of *The Far Cry*, which was published in 1949 when she was 26. The novel tells the story of 14 year-old Teresa who is suddenly and unexpectedly removed from school and taken to India by her father, and is truly remarkable for several reasons. The plot is fascinatingly unpredictable – its twists and turns are at the same time unexpected and completely believable. The descriptions of India and its teeming life are superb – Elizabeth Bowen wrote of the novel that "I can think of no writer, British or Indian, who has captured so vividly, with such intensity, the many intangibles of the Indian kaleidoscope." And above all the characters and their interactions are quite brilliantly captured. The writing is highly intelligent. I really loved it.' Harriet Devine's Blog

'**A** *House in the Country* is a deep, moving, and surprisingly controversial novel. Cressida Chance is a remarkable creation and undoubtedly the beacon of Jocelyn Playfair's novel which is very funny, despite its more serious and even harrowing moments (what is difficult to remember, when reading novels of this period, is that neither author nor reader knew who would win the war). *A House in the Country* is another Persephone triumph (and one with a very good, informative Preface).' Stuck in a Book

THE PERSEPHONE 93

1. **William – an Englishman** by Cicely Hamilton Prize-winning 1919 novel about the effect of WW1 on a socialist clerk and a suffragette. Preface: Nicola Beauman
2. **Mariana** by Monica Dickens First published in 1940, this funny, romantic first novel describes a young girl's life in the 1930s. Preface: Harriet Lane
3. **Someone at a Distance** by Dorothy Whipple 'A very good novel indeed' (*Spectator*) about the destruction of a formerly happy 1950s marriage. Preface: Nina Bawden, R4 'Book at Bedtime' 2008
4. **Fidelity** by Susan Glaspell 1915 novel by a Pulitzer-winning writer brilliantly describing the long-term consequences of a girl in Iowa running off with a married man. Preface: Laura Godwin
5. **An Interrupted Life** by Ety Hillesum From 1941-3 a woman in Amsterdam, 'the Anne Frank for grown-ups', wrote diaries and letters: they are among the great documents of our time. Preface: Eva Hoffman
6. **The Victorian Chaise-longue** by Marghanita Laski A 'little jewel of horror': 'Melly' lies on a chaise-longue in the 1950s and wakes as 'Milly' eighty years before. Preface: PD James
7. **The Home-Maker** by Dorothy Canfield Fisher Ahead of its time 'remarkable and brave 1924 novel about being a house-husband' (Carol Shields). Preface: Karen Knox
8. **Good Evening, Mrs Craven: the Wartime Stories of Mollie Panter-Downes** Superbly written short stories, first published in *The New Yorker* from 1938-44. Five of them were read on R4 twice, and on R7. Preface: Gregory LeStage
9. **Few Eggs and No Oranges** by Vere Hodgson A 600-page diary, written from 1940-45 in Notting Hill Gate, full of acute observation, wit and humanity. Preface: Jenny Hartley
10. **Good Things in England** by Florence White This comprehensive 1932 collection of recipes inspired many, including Elizabeth David.
11. **Julian Grenfell** by Nicholas Mosley A biography of the First World War poet, and of his mother Ettie Desborough. Preface: the author
12. **It's Hard to be Hip over Thirty and Other Tragedies of Married Life** by Judith Viorst Funny, weary and wise 1960s poems about marriage, children and reality. Preface: the author
13. **Consequences** by EM Delafield By the author of *The Diary of a Provincial Lady*, this 1919 novel is about a girl entering a convent after she fails to marry. Preface: Nicola 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 Funny, observant and bleak 1947 short stories, twice in the *Evening Standard* bestseller list. Preface: AN Wilson
16. **Saplings** by Noel Streatfeild A novel by the well-known author of *Ballet Shoes*, about the destruction of a family during WW2; a R4 ten-part serial. Afterword: Jeremy Holmes
17. **Marjory Fleming** by Oriol Malet A deeply empathetic novel about the real life of the Scottish child prodigy who lived from 1803-11; published in France; was a play on Radio Scotland.
18. **Every Eye** by Isobel English An unusual 1956 novel about a girl travelling to Spain, highly praised by Muriel Spark: a R4 'Afternoon Play' in 2004. Preface: Neville Braybrooke
19. **They Knew Mr Knight** by Dorothy Whipple An absorbing 1934 novel about a man driven to committing fraud and what happens to him and his family; a 1943 film. Afterwords: Terence Handley MacMath and Christopher 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 nightclub singer. Read on R4 by Maureen Lipman; now a film with Frances McDormand and Amy Adams. Preface: Henrietta Twycross-Martin Also available as an unabridged Persephone audiobook read by Frances McDormand for £8 from persephonebooks.co.uk.
22. **Consider the Years** by Virginia Graham Sharp, funny, evocative WW2 poems by Joyce Grenfell's closest friend and collaborator. Preface: Anne Harvey
23. **Reuben Sachs** by Amy Levy A fierce 1880s satire on the London Jewish community by 'the Jewish Jane Austen' who was a friend of Oscar Wilde. Preface: Julia Neuberger
24. **Family Roundabout** by Richmal Crompton By the *William* books author, 1948 family saga contrasting two matriarchs and their very different children. Preface: Juliet Aykroyd
25. **The Montana Stories** by Katherine Mansfield Collects together the short stories written during the author's last year; with a detailed publisher's note and the contemporary illustrations. Five were read on R4 in 2002.
26. **Brook Evans** by Susan Glaspell A very unusual novel, written in the same year as *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, about the enduring effect of a love affair on three generations of a family.

- 27. The Children who Lived in a Barn** by Eleanor Graham A 1938 classic about five children fending for themselves; starring the unforgettable hay-box. Preface: Jacqueline Wilson
- 28. Little Boy Lost** by Marghanita Laski Novel about a father's search for his son in France in late 1945, chosen by the *Guardian's* Nicholas Lezard as his 2001 Paperback Choice. A 'Book at Bedtime' on R4 read by Jamie Glover. Afterword: Anne Sebba
- 29. The Making of a Marchioness** by Frances Hodgson Burnett A very entertaining 1901 novel about the ensuing melodrama after a governess marries a Marquis. A R4 Classic Serial in 2007. Preface: Isabel Raphael, Afterword: Gretchen Gerzina
- 30. Kitchen Essays** by Agnes Jekyll Witty and useful essays about cooking, with recipes, published in *The Times* and reprinted as a book in 1922. 'One of the best reads outside Elizabeth David' wrote gastropoda.com
- 31. A House in the Country** by Jocelyn Playfair An unusual and very interesting 1944 novel about a group of people living in the country during WW2. Preface: Ruth Gorb
- 32. The Carlyles at Home** by Thea Holme A 1965 mixture of biography and social history which very entertainingly describes Thomas and Jane Carlyle's life in Chelsea.
- 33. The Far Cry** by Emma Smith A beautifully written 1949 novel about a young girl's passage to India: a great Persephone favourite. R4 'Book at Bedtime' in 2004. Preface: author
- 34. Minnie's Room: The Peacetime Stories** of Mollie Panter-Downes 1947–1965: Second volume of short stories first published in *The New Yorker*, previously unknown in the UK.
- 35. Greenery Street** by Denis Mackail A delightful, very funny 1925 novel about a young couple's first year of married life in a (real) street in Chelsea. Preface: Rebecca Cohen
- 36. Lettice Delmer** by Susan Miles A unique 1920s novel in verse describing a girl's stormy adolescence and path to redemption; much admired by TS Eliot. A novel in verse sounds unappealing – but we highly recommend this book.
- 37. The Runaway** by Elizabeth Anna Hart A Victorian novel for children and grown-ups, illustrated by Gwen Raverat. 'There never was a happier book' (*Country Life*, 1936). Afterwords: Anne Harvey, Frances Spalding.
- 38. Cheerful Weather for the Wedding** by Julia Strachey A funny and quirky 1932 novella by a niece of Lytton Strachey, praised by Virginia Woolf. Preface: Frances Partridge. Also available for £8 as an unabridged Persephone audiobook read by Miriam Margolyes
- 39. Manja** by Anna Gmeyner A 1938 German novel, newly translated, about five children conceived on the same night in 1920, and their lives until the Nazi takeover. Preface: Eva Ibbotson (the author's daughter)
- 40. The Priory** by Dorothy Whipple A much-loved 1939 novel about a family, upstairs and downstairs, living in a large country house. 'Warm, witty and realistic' (*Hatchards*). Preface: David Conville
- 41. Hostages to Fortune** by Elizabeth Cambridge 'Deals with domesticity without being in the least bit cosy' (Harriet Lane, *Observer*): a remarkable fictional portrait of a doctor's family in rural Oxfordshire in the 1920s.
- 42. The Blank Wall** by Elisabeth Sanxay Holding 'The top suspense writer of them all' (Chandler). A 1947 thriller about a mother shielding her daughter from a blackmailer. Filmed as *The Reckless Moment* (1949) and *The Deep End* (2001); a R4 serial in 2006.
- 43. The Wise Virgins** by Leonard Woolf This wise and witty 1914 novel contrasts the bohemian Virginia and Vanessa with Gwen, the girl next door in 'Richstead' (Putney). Preface: Lyndall Gordon
- 44. Tea with Mr Rochester** by Frances Towers Magical, unsettling 1949 stories, a surprise favourite, that are unusually beautifully written; read on R4 in 2003 and 2006. Preface: Frances Thomas
- 45. Good Food on the Aga** by Ambrose Heath A 1933 cookery book written for Aga owners which can be used by anyone; with numerous illustrations by Edward Bawden.
- 46. Miss Ranskill Comes Home** by Barbara Euphan Todd An unsparing, wry 1946 novel: Miss Ranskill is shipwrecked and returns to a completely changed wartime England. Preface: Wendy Pollard
- 47. The New House** by Lettice Cooper 1936 portrayal of the day a family moves into a new house, and the resulting adjustments and tensions. Preface: Jilly Cooper
- 48. The Casino** by Margaret Bonham Short stories by a 1940s writer with a unique voice and dark sense of humour; they were read on BBC Radio 4 in 2004 and 2005. Preface: Cary Bazalgette
- 49. Bricks and Mortar** by Helen Ashton An excellent 1932 novel by a very popular pre- and post-war writer, chronicling the life of a hard-working, kindly London architect and his wife over thirty-five years.
- 50. The World that was Ours** by Hilda Bernstein An extraordinary memoir that reads like a novel of the events before and after the 1964 Rivonia Trial. Mandela was given a life sentence but the Bernsteins escaped to England. Preface and Afterword: the author
- 51. Operation Heartbreak** by Duff Cooper A soldier misses going to war – until the end of his life. 'The novel I enjoyed more than any other in the immediate post-war years' (Nina Bawden). Afterword: Max Arthur
- 52. The Village** by Marghanita Laski This 1952 comedy of manners describes post-war readjustments in village life when love ignores the class barrier. Afterword: Juliet Gardiner
- 53. Lady Rose and Mrs Memmery** by Ruby Ferguson A 1937 novel about Lady Rose, who inherits a great house, marries well – and then meets the love of her life on a park bench. A great favourite of the Queen Mother. Preface: Candia McWilliam

- 54. They Can't Ration These** by **Vicomte de Mauduit** A 1940 cookery book about 'food for free', full of excellent (and now timely) recipes.
- 55. Flush** by **Virginia Woolf** A light-hearted but surprisingly feminist 1933 'life' of Elizabeth Barrett Browning's spaniel, 'a little masterpiece of comedy' (*TLS*). Preface: Sally Beaman
- 56. They Were Sisters** by **Dorothy Whipple** A 1943 novel by this wonderful writer, contrasting three different marriages. Preface: Celia Brayfield
- 57. The Hopkins Manuscript** by **RC Sherriff** What might happen if the moon crashed into the earth in 1946: a 1939 novel 'written' by a delightful anti-hero, 'Mr Hopkins'. Preface: Michael Moorcock, Afterword: George Gamow
- 58. Hetty Dorval** by **Ethel Wilson** First novel (1947) set in the beautiful landscape of British Columbia; a young girl is befriended by a beautiful and selfish 'Menace' – but is she? Afterword: Northrop Frye
- 59. There Were No Windows** by **Norah Hoult** A touching and funny novel, written in 1944, about an elderly woman with memory loss living in Kensington during the blitz. Afterword: Julia Briggs
- 60. Doreen** by **Barbara Noble** A 1946 novel about a child who is evacuated to the country during the war. Her mother regrets it; the family that takes her in wants to keep her. Preface: Jessica Mann
- 61. A London Child of the 1870s** by **Molly Hughes** A classic memoir, written in 1934, about an 'ordinary, suburban Victorian family' in Islington, a great favourite with all ages. Preface: Adam Gopnik
- 62. How to Run Your Home Without Help** by **Kay Smallshaw** A 1949 manual for the newly servantless housewife full of advice that is historically interesting, useful nowadays and, as well, unintentionally funny. Preface: Christina Hardyment
- 63. Princes in the Land** by **Joanna Cannan** A novel published in 1938 about a daughter of the aristocracy who marries an Oxford don; her three children fail to turn out as she had anticipated.
- 64. The Woman Novelist and Other Stories** by **Diana Gardner** Short stories written in the late 1930s and early 1940s that are witty, sharp and with an unusual undertone. Preface: Claire Gardner
- 65. Alas, Poor Lady** by **Rachel Ferguson** A 1937 novel, polemical but intensely readable, about the unthinking cruelty with which Victorian parents gave birth to daughters without anticipating any future for them apart from marriage.
- 66. Gardener's Nightcap** by **Muriel Stuart** A 1938 pot pourri: a huge variety of miniature essays on gardening – such as *Dark Ladies* (frittillary), *Better Gooseberries*, *Phlox Failure* – which will be enjoyed by all gardeners, keen or lukewarm.
- 67. The Fortnight in September** by **RC Sherriff** Another novel by the author of *Journey's End*, and of *The Hopkins Manuscript*, *Persephone Book No. 57*, about a family on holiday in Bognor in 1931; a quiet masterpiece.
- 68. The Expendable Man** by **Dorothy B Hughes** A 1963 thriller 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*, *Persephone Book No. 25*) assembled this journal from unposted letters, scraps of writing etc, to give a unique portrait of a woman writer.
- 70. Plats du Jour** by **Patience Gray and Primrose Boyd** A 1957 cookery book which was a bestseller at the time and a pioneering work for British cooks. The black and white illustrations and the coloured endpapers are by David Gentleman.
- 71. The Shuttle** by **Frances Hodgson Burnett** A 1907 page-turner about Rosalie Vanderpoel, an American heiress who marries an English aristocrat, whose beautiful and enterprising sister Bettina sets out to rescue her. Preface: Anne Sebba
- 72. House-Bound** by **Winifred Peck** This 1942 novel describes an Edinburgh woman deciding, radically, to run her house without help and do her own cooking; the war is in the background and foreground. Afterword: Penelope Fitzgerald
- 73. The Young Pretenders** by **Edith Henrietta Fowler** An 1895 novel for adults and children about Babs, who lives with her uncle and aunt and has not yet learnt to dissemble. Preface: Charlotte Mitchell
- 74. The Closed Door and Other Stories** by **Dorothy Whipple** Ten short stories drawn from the three collections (now extremely hard to find) that Dorothy Whipple published during her lifetime. Read on BBC R4 in 2007.
- 75. On the Other Side** by **Mathilde Wolff-Mönckeberg: Letters to my Children from Germany 1940-46**. Written in Hamburg but never sent, these letters provide a crucial counterpoint to *Few Eggs and No Oranges*. Preface: Ruth Evans
- 76. The Crowded Street** by **Winifred Holtby** A 1924 novel about Muriel's attempts to escape from small-town Yorkshire, and her rescue by Delia, alias Vera Brittain. Preface: Marion Shaw
- 77. Daddy's Gone A-Hunting** by **Penelope Mortimer** This 1958 novel is about the 'captive wives' of the pre-war women's liberation era, bored and lonely in suburbia. Preface: Valerie Grove
- 78. A Very Great Profession: The Woman's Novel 1914-39** by **Nicola Beaman** A mixture of literary criticism and historical evocation, first published in 1983, about the women writers of the inter-war period.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

87. Dimanche and Other Stories by **Irène Némirovsky** The ten short stories in this volume, especially translated by Bridget Patterson for Persephone Books, were written between 1934 and 1942. Some of

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

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

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: Merry Williams

90. The Winds of Heaven by **Monica Dickens** This 1955 novel by the author of *Mariana* is about a widow with three rather unsympathetic daughters who eventually finds happiness. Afterword: AS Byatt

91. Miss Buncle Married by **DE Stevenson** A hugely enjoyable sequel to **Miss Buncle's Book** (No. 81) about Barbara Buncle's marriage and her move to a new village. Afterword: Fiona Bevan

92. Midsummer Night in the Workhouse by **Diana Athill** Twelve short stories, mostly written in the early 1960s and never reprinted in the UK, by the celebrated editor and memoir writer. Preface: the author

93. The Sack of Bath by **Adam Fergusson** A 1973 polemic, with numerous black and white photographs, raging at the destruction of much of Bath's C18th artisan terraced housing. Preface: the author

The First Persephone Life: The Other Elizabeth Taylor by **Nicola Beauman** A biography, written in 2009, of the C20th novelist, £15.



Jean-Etienne Liotard Marie Adelaide of France dressed à la Turca 1753 © Uffizi, Florence/Lessing Photo Archive

'THE REAL THING' A SHORT STORY BY DIANA ATHILL

I went to the dance with Thomas Toofat. It's too good really, but he is too fat, with frizzy hair and flat feet. We never meant to let him know we call him that, but the week before, at the Turners' picnic, Sally said without thinking, 'And this is Thomas Toofat...' Oh, it was utterly withering.

On the night of the dance, no sooner had he come than he said might he go upstairs to wash his hands – he would. My father is always talking about putting in a lavatory downstairs and I shall die if he doesn't – we're the *only* people without one – but I'm sure he never will. Sally and Richard had arrived first and we were standing about in the drawing-room, and I began to wish it wasn't happening, it was such a let-down after the bliss of getting dressed. But when old Toofat came back into the room it got better again because he looked better than usual in his dinner jacket (his own, not his father's). And at least he is old enough to drive a car.

Although Sally and Richard are brother and sister they like dancing together. They are so good, now, from practising, that they despise dancing with other people and that's why Toofat was mostly mine that evening. I had never been to a dance with a man in a dinner jacket. Nine till two, it was, and my latest until then had been eight till twelve.

'Come on children,' said my mother. 'We must start dinner if you don't want to be late.'

She had put candles on the dining-room table, and the little silver dishes for chocolates afterwards, but when I had asked if we could have sherry first she had just laughed. It was utterly mortifying. Toofat's only been at Cambridge for two terms, but he must have thought it positively nursery to be offered no drink at all.

'You look very smashing,' said my father. 'Sally and Lucinda will be the belles of the ball.' He doesn't usually speak in a hearty voice but he seemed to think he ought to then. There's nothing more withering than dinner with grown-ups before a dance, I couldn't *look* at them and I couldn't look at Toofat or Richard either. Sally was wonderful, she talked to my parents about a million things, and Richard talked to my father about sailing and Toofat held forth about being at Cambridge – he's very pompous since he's been there even though he is only a medical student and Sally and I have decided that they don't count as proper undergraduates.

It was easy for the others to behave normally, it wasn't their parents – I'm quite good with Sally's, come to that. But if I talk naturally to my friends in front of my mother and father it doesn't

sound natural to my mother and father. 'No one likes an affected girl,' my mother said the other day ('affected' is her *worst* word) – and I hadn't been, I'd only forgotten for a minute that she was there and told someone I'd rather die than read Proust in translation (and I would, too. I know I got stuck in the first volume, but after I have been to France I shall be able to do it).

Anyway, dinner was hateful but I had known it would be. I just sat and felt my skirt round my legs and my hair on my bare shoulders, and waited for the dance. The truth is I wouldn't mind going to a dance with a *baboon*. Once the lights and music and dancing begin it's so fabulous that you don't need anything extra, though now I rather think I shall when I fall in love.

They made us go in our car because Toofat's looks fast though it isn't really, it would fall to pieces if it went over sixty. And there was a lot of fuss about 'Drive carefully' and 'Don't be too late', but we got away at last and Sally and Richard and I started singing in close harmony like we do. If I hadn't known them so well and if the other man hadn't been Toofat it would have been like doing something that other people do, and perhaps as we drove through villages the people who saw us thought we *were* other people: just a flash of black and

white they'd have seen of the boys, and Sally and me with our chiffon stoles over our heads and the roses my father had cut for us pinned to our shoulder straps (because we'd taken off our coats once we were out of sight). By the time we got there I was beginning to feel it myself.

A long time ago, when I was twelve, I heard my mother and Aunt Molly saying how glad they were that they had got out of going to some dance. At that time I only thought it was a bit odd but now I think it was the most tragic thing I ever heard, because if you're so old that you don't even *want* to dance I can't see that you can want to do anything; and if you don't want to do anything you might as well be dead. I told Sally about it while we were putting on lipstick (her mother won't let her use it so I agreed not to use mine either until we got there, so that she wouldn't feel silly at dinner. Mine lets me, for parties). We agreed that we would pray to God to let us die before we got as old as that.

Toofat just shuffles from side to side and turns at the corners, but in spite of his flat feet he has a good sense of rhythm – it's not exciting to dance with him but it's not withering – and when we had been twice round the floor he said in his patronising voice, 'You dance very well.' Luckily he's taller than I am. It was easy to look down and hide the fact that I blushed, which of course I did at once. I wasn't blushing because I'd had a compliment. I was doing it because as soon as I have a compliment I think quickly, 'I

mustn't blush,' and that makes me. I have always thought that I shall die if I don't grow out of it soon, but later that evening something happened which changed things.

There were plenty of people there who Sally and Richard knew, and Toofat as well, of course, because he gets asked to lots of parties, being a spare man. I knew them too, in a way,

but they hadn't got round to thinking of me as someone to meet at a grown-up dance. When we began to mix in with them I could feel sometimes that boys asked me to dance because they felt they had to. They did ask me, though, and I didn't mind much who they were or what they were thinking so long as they danced well, which some of them did. I was in a sort of dream,



The Velvet Jacket by Madeline Green 1884-1947 whereabouts unknown

almost, because it was so beautiful. I danced several times with Toofat, and twice with Richard, and about five times with other people, and then I somehow got attached to the party which the Morgans had brought and somebody introduced me to this extraordinary man.

I didn't hear his name. He was quite old and he came from London. It wasn't so much that he was good-looking, but he had light grey eyes with very black lashes and his nose was thin and crooked so that he looked witty – I thought the minute I saw him that he was probably the most intelligent person there besides me, but because he was so much older I couldn't see how to show him that I was intelligent too. When we began dancing he said:

'Do you like to talk when you dance, or do you prefer to keep it for afterwards?' which was a great relief. Of course I said afterwards. We had a fabulous dance – one of those when my feet can do all kinds of things I didn't know they knew: a floating dance. Afterwards he got me an ice and we sat on a sofa and he said: 'Now. Do you prefer to be flattered, or amused, or disconcerted?'

I *was* disconcerted, of course, but I didn't show it. What I said – and I still think it was very good – was: 'What I really like best is to be enraptured.'

'That's a tall order,' he said. 'You must give me a clue to what sort of thing enraptures you – traveller's tales? Poetry? This season's collections? Visions of

eternity?'

'Well,' I said, 'not visions of eternity, because as a matter of fact I'm an atheist' – and I had never told anyone that before, not even Sally, but the way he danced and the way he looked had made me feel very odd.

'A real, thorough-paced atheist?' he asked. 'Not just an agnostic?'

'I *think* I'm a real atheist,' I said.

'That's pretty dashing,' he said, and then I saw that he was laughing at me but to my great surprise I didn't mind at all.

'And I'm a Socialist too,' I told him. 'It's not at all easy to be an atheist and a Socialist where I live, everyone else is fabulously conventional.'

'What are you going to do about it?' he asked. 'Have a one-girl revolution?'

So I told him about going to Oxford when I get back from France, and it turned out that he had been there too, ages ago, about five years I think. He said that the smart thing now was to be a Young Conservative and a Catholic, but he was teasing, and then he told me things I would do at Oxford, quite different from the things Miss Montague told me when she was coaching me for the entrance exam, and much more the kind of things I would like. He said I would go to tea with a different man every day of the week and be a nervous wreck at the end of each term, trying to decide which of them to be seduced by.

Now when he said that about being seduced I was not at all



1933 portrait by Edouard Vuillard of the fashion designer Jeanne Lanvin 1867-1946
© Musée d'Orsay, Paris/Lessing Photo Archive

shocked – of course I *shall* be seduced (only that's a silly word) as soon as I want to be – but the word sort of startled me, in connection with myself, and what did I do but start to blush, a really bad one right to the top of my head. I thought it was going to be the most withering moment in my whole life. But instead of pretending not to notice, which is what most people do, this man said in an ordinary voice: 'Do you find that you blush very easily at nothing? I used to do it too and it was utter misery.'

It was an enormous relief to hear him say that, in such a natural way, and I felt better at once. I told him all about what a terrible mortification my blushing is to me.

'It will stop quite suddenly,' he said. 'Mine did.'

'How old were you when it stopped?' I asked, being naturally very interested.

'I suppose I was about nineteen and a half,' he said.

'Help!' I said. 'That means I've still got nearly three more years of it.' (Which was the silliest thing to say, because I look quite nineteen in that frock and I didn't want him to know I wasn't.)

'But I don't see why you worry,' he said.

'You've just said yourself how much you hated it.'

'Yes, but I was a gawky boy and you're a very pretty girl. If a girl is very pretty she can carry off anything, even blushing. Hasn't anyone ever told you that you look enchanting when your face is pink?'

For about one second I didn't

take it in, I truly didn't, but then it dawned on me that I'd just had the most fabulous compliment of my whole life. Of course my parents sometimes say, 'You look pretty in that colour,' and people have told me I dance well, and a boy said to me last year that he liked my hair, and I can see for myself that I haven't got a face like an old boot, but this was different. When I was much younger I used to imagine myself becoming a new person when I grew up – a raving beauty with chestnut-coloured hair – but I realised long ago that people don't change all that much, and since then I've just supposed that I was all right. I never thought that I was *very pretty*. I was so astounded to hear him say it that I didn't blush again, in fact I think I may even have gone pale.

'Did you actually *mean* that?' I asked, and he told me he did. Then he said: 'Bother. There's my next partner adrift by the door – I must go and do my stuff. We must dance again later,' and he looked at me and crinkled his eyes and went off to dance with someone beautiful in a black dress. As a matter of fact I think they were in love with each other because I saw them later dancing with their cheeks touching and their eyes shut, and he didn't ask me again, but after that wonderful conversation I could hardly expect any more.

I ran upstairs to look at myself, and it *did* seem to me that I was very pretty even though my face was quite pink again by then. When I came down I was feeling dreamier than ever and Toofat

happened to be at the bottom of the stairs and just put his arm round me and whirled me into the room for a waltz, which he did pretty well. He talked all the time about how, although he despises games, he has decided to take up a sport because he believes that everyone should exercise his will power by doing some things he hates. He wanted to know whether I thought cricket or rigger would be best. I told him cricket because I guess that's easier – he would be very bad at either, you should see his tennis. But wanting to exercise your will power is something I admire, so I decided to stop calling him Toofat, even to myself – and even more so when he went on to say that his favourite occupation is writing poetry. Last term he actually had a poem published in a Cambridge magazine. Really published, in print. I never dreamt I would get to know a poet so soon.

I asked him to tell me his poem but he said it was too complex, it had to be read slowly and that he would explain it to me and give me a signed copy of the magazine. He always talks to me in this patronising way but it seemed almost justified after his revelation. Then I told him a little about my poems and he offered to read them and say if they were any good. A few minutes earlier I would have thought, 'Pompous ass, what a nerve!' but now I felt quite grateful. We began to have a very interesting conversation about poetry. If he didn't talk in such a

pompous way which sounds silly coming from someone so fat and pink, he would be a most interesting man, I believe. Also if he didn't sniff so often.

But I must never again be horrible about Toofat – Thomas, I mean – because the next fabulous thing which happened to me that evening happened because of him.

It had got very hot and they had opened the French windows. 'Let's go into the garden for a breath of air,' he said. In the middle of the lawn there was an enormous mulberry tree on which they had strung millions of fairy lights, and the grass where the windows shone on it was brilliant and the night was black with a terrific smell of honeysuckle. It was terribly romantic. We walked past the tree into the shadowy part of the lawn where you couldn't see anything but a few pale dresses floating here and there, and shirt fronts, and the white flowers in the border, just dimly. We were walking along slowly, still talking about poetry and sort of bumping into each other occasionally, when Thomas did an unexpected thing. He put his arm round me.

He didn't say anything special, went on booming about John Donne as though nothing were happening – but his arm was round me and his hand was on my waist. I wasn't sure whether he had done it absent-mindedly or on purpose, but there it was, his hand on my waist, and it gave me the most extraordinary feelings. First I felt as though I

were a girl in a film with a man's arm around her, graceful, with my waist swaying towards him – *me*, doing that! And then I felt as though my bones had gone soft and as though his hand wasn't just touching my dress but was sending rays right down into me – the feeling went right through into my stomach. It was quite different from when someone puts his arm round you for dancing. I almost began to feel sick but it was vital not to show how surprised I was, so I went on saying yes and no to old Toofat in an ordinary voice, while all the time my body was absolutely full of this extraordinary feeling of that hand on my waist, and my mind was full of how this was really happening.

'I suppose we should go back,' he said, when we got to the fence at the end of the lawn, and he squeezed his arm tighter as he turned me round. And then it became even more marvellous. He said in a funny voice, 'You're a very sweet child,' and before I knew what was happening he bent down and kissed me.

His lips were cold and rather sticky from the hock cup he had been drinking. Some people might have been pretty disappointed by that kiss, but luckily for me I read the whole of Thomas Hardy when I was much too young to appreciate it and I have always remembered one thing out of one of his books – I forget which book. A man and a girl are walking together and he kisses her for the first time and it is disappointing, but Thomas Hardy says that *first kisses always*

are. So although in a *way* I had always imagined my first real kiss from a man would be tremendously warm and soft and faint-making, I did actually know that it might not be, and after one second I remembered this. You have to *learn* about lovemaking like you do about dancing – look how I hadn't known about the hand feeling – but I expect some people learn more easily than others and I'm sure I'm going to be one of those.

I stood quite still while Toofat was kissing me – it didn't take long – and I was doing a lot of things all at once: thinking 'This is *me*, being kissed'; remembering Thomas Hardy; noticing the tree with the lights and the green grass outside the windows; listening to the music from the house; smelling the honeysuckle; thinking that I must fix every bit of it in my mind for ever. Then the kiss stopped and we went indoors, still talking as though nothing had happened. And the next time I'm kissed it will be by someone like the man with the crooked nose.

This is the first story in Midsummer Night in the Workhouse. It was published in April 1966 in Glamour and reprinted in An Unavoidable Delay (Doubleday, NY) in 1962. It is also available as one of six stories from Midsummer Night in the Workhouse read by Diana Athill as a Persephone audiobook download from persephonebooks.co.uk for £8.

BATTERED BATH: THE CASE FOR FREEZING A CITY

‘-t would be inadequate to declare that I have an interest in Bath, I am murderously obsessed with it’ *wrote Jan Morris in The Times on 21 May 1973 reviewing **The Sack of Bath.***

‘Having known that fine city all my life, some years ago I realised that it offered qualities of urban living unparalleled in Britain if not in Europe, and so acquired a pied-à-terre in the heart of its Georgian glories. Ever since I have watched with impotent ferocity as the developers have inexorably eroded its character., destroying a nook here, a cranny there, replacing the intimate with the monolithic, the charming by the crass, the fantastic by the ordinary. I am certainly not going to give a bad review, I tell you straight, to **The Sack of Bath**, Mr Fergusson’s furious onslaught upon the philistines, the dullards, the opportunists and the hypocrites who have, between them, done their best to wreck this loveliest of English cities.

Not that I am by instinct preservationist. I am temperamentally in favour of change, believe a city to be primarily a social mechanism, and am generally repelled by conservationist tracts. Bath is not being Sacked – anything but, for its monumental quarters are in better shape than ever – and when Sir John Betjeman sings

Goodbye to old Bath. We who loved you are sorry/ They’ve carted you off by developer’s lorry, it is just the sort of flippant overstatement that antagonises people like me.

Not is the situation quite as depressing as Mr Fergusson himself maintains. The old buildings lost were not *all* so important to the whole. The new ones erected are not *invariably* so frightful. “Not quite a total loss” really is going too far, as an epitome of Bath today, and with the best will in the world I cannot stifle doubts about that C18 royal tennis court, whose long abandoned function and drab silhouette (I see it every morning from the grocer’s door) seem to me less than essential to the flavour of life or the fascination of history.

But exaggeration is the fuel of polemics, and Mr Fergusson, seeking to alert the nation to a potential more than an accomplished tragedy, justifiably stokes up with it. In essentials his grand assault seems to me absolutely fair and true. It is not only magnificent in its manner, it is also patently war, for he hates with a burning belligerence everything that is likely to make Bath less truly itself – all the specious plans, all the half-cock philosophies, all the dud architects, every chunk of commercial mock-mansard neo-

Georgian (which he dubs “packing case architecture”, but which reminds me ironically of socialist realism in Moscow).

His case is not that Bath’s grandeurs are being destroyed but that their supporting filigree, of alley, courtyards and lesser terrace, is being ignorantly cut away and replaced by vast ugly structures that nobody wants. It is not a Sack but a Whittle. We are told that this is a nicety of civic appreciation, that until the other day everyone was in favour of comprehensive development in run-down areas, but of course this is nonsense. It may have escaped our planners, but it has never escaped our citizens, who have said all along that they would rather live in a touched-up slum house than a centrally heated skyscraper.

Not that they were slums, those Bath working-class terraces destroyed so heedlessly by the developers. They were handsome small Georgian houses of the kind that most of us would give our eyes for. What makes Bath so desirable both to the aestheticians, like Mr Fergusson, and the mechanists, like me, is that though beautiful it *works*. It is a very modern city. It is the right size. It is the right shape. The scale is gentle and even the traffic is nothing like intolerable. The

trouble with Venice, say, is that it was built for an obsolete purpose. Bath was built for pleasure and solace, and this remains as honourable a civic function as any.

It is not the fault of the unfortunate City Fathers that they have failed to recognise the contemporary nature of Georgian Bath. They have been brain-washed to believe in Development as a *sine qua non* of a civic pride, and they think instinctively, I suppose, in terms of industrial zones, ring roads and regional shopping centres. If they have betrayed their city it is not because they are wicked but because they are simply not

competent, provincial worthies that they are, to deal with a socio-artistic problem of international importance.

National intervention is surely the answer, as the *Architectural Review* has vehemently argued, but our immediate concern must be simply to hold everything. For God's sake, Mr Fergusson is crying, *stop!* The Council's intentions are so disgracefully hedged about with secrecy, and the bulldozers swing into action with such horrible precipitancy, that buildings seem to disappear in a cloud of rubble, or rise in a dazzle of reconstituted stone, almost overnight. What

Bath needs above all is a freeze on all change, and a fresh start.

If such a creative pause is achieved, if Bath as a result is saved from further degradation, if indeed the royal tennis court itself is preserved for a marvelling posterity, then it is Mr Fergusson who must above all be thanked. He it was who translated the struggles of the brave local activists into a national anxiety. He is a John Wood in reverse, and if in a century's time there are still visitors to look around them at the civilised delights of Bath, invisible between the crescents they may detect his monument.'



Bellevue Buildings, Lansdown Road, Page 42 of The Sack of Bath 'before'; the caption to 'after', reads, 'The house with the railings still stands; but Bellevue Buildings has become Ballance Street North' (about which it is difficult to think of a kind thing to say).

THE PERSEPHONE POST

The picture on this page is *Off Duty Nurse Darning Stockings* c. 1941 by Rosemary Rutherford. She trained at the Slade before joining the Red Cross at the outbreak of war, and was given permission to record her work as a VAD by the WAAC (War Artists Advisory Committee). It is a painting that is, we hope, clearly representative of some of the so far 450 plus pictures that have been appearing on the *Perseph-*

one Post every weekday for almost two years; in some tangential way each one is relevant to our books, which is why we call the *Post* ‘a parallel in pictures to the world of Persephone Books’.

Most weeks have a theme and each picture has a sentence or two of accompanying text. In recent weeks we have had: paintings relating to food and kitchens, photographs of women

who were at Newnham College, Cambridge, photographs by Edwin Smith, paintings by Thomas Lawrence, pictures of and about Syracuse/Ortigia in Sicily, paintings by Ethelbert White, pictures of the Omega Workshop, photographs of Paris, photographs of Persephone authors, pictures by Stephen Bone, houses lived in by Persephone authors, travel and vintage posters, pottery bowls and jugs (of the kind for sale and in use at the shop), pictures of men associated with Persephone Books, five drawings of Bloomsbury by Ann Usborne, our favourite bookshops. And so on.

The *Times* ‘Web Search’ column wrote: ‘The Persephone Post. What is it? This is the blog of the popular Bloomsbury bookshop, which publishes rediscovered 20th-century titles, fiction and non-fiction, by women. What you will find: Posts have been appearing nearly every day since May 2009. Browse through the back-catalogue that includes images of inspirational women, reading recommendations and curios.’ If you enjoy reading the *Biannually*, and if you enjoy its photographs and paintings, then it is very likely you will like the *Post*. Five hundred people look at it every day. If you would like to be one of them go to the Persephone Books Home Page and click on the link to the *Post*.



OUR REVIEWERS WRITE

‘If Monica Dickens means nothing more to you than horsey books and no-nonsense memoirs of nursing and service, then this eloquent novel about the genteel poverty of a widow shunted between her three egotistical daughters is a fine corrective’ wrote the *Guardian*. ‘Louise discovers her husband had lost all their money and she must depend on her children’s charity, moving between Miriam and her home-counties pretensions; Eva’s fragile London world of theatre and treacherous lovers; and a muddy smallholding where the slovenly Anne ignores her. Though Louise is a slight kind of Lear, her tragedy plays out in postwar Lyons Corner Houses and the ill-heated rooms of an out-of-season hotel. Dickens acutely observes the brittle veneer of social conventions; but is never quite acerbic enough in her criticism of the ungrateful children, and perhaps too sentimental about her distressed gentlewoman. But *The Winds of Heaven* is a worthwhile reissue.’

‘Widowhood in 1955 was not a desirable state’ wrote Matthew Dennison in the *Spectator*. ‘Not, at any rate, for Louise, heroine of *The Winds of Heaven*. She is 57 and has a small, inadequate income from her parents. From her ghastly husband Dudley she has inherited nothing but debts. She has lost her house and her possessions, save a few clothes, and with them

her way of life and her identity. In middle-age, she has been down-graded to second childhood. None of which is her fault. Within the parameters of Monica Dickens’s mid-century, middle-class world, such is the inevitable result of financial ruin and dependency. At a time of economic uncertainty, this is a troubling suggestion for readers today. So Louise is “like a child who has got lost on a church outing”. During the course of the novel, she will be found – although rescue comes from an unlikely quarter and is, again, none of her doing. Her three grown-up daughters devise a plan: their mother will live with each of them in turn throughout the course of the summer, while during the winter she will stay in a hotel on the Isle of Wight belonging to her oldest schoolfriend, who offers her cut-price rates. A victim of charity, she becomes “a surplus piece of furniture”, a minor element of discord in her children’s homes. But Louise is a universal figure, a sorrowful outsider who, burdened with domestic minutiae, attains the nobility of the romantic heroine at odds with an unfeeling world. The novel invests her with a grace and stature that those nearest her cannot see. And it does so with much style and wit.’

‘In 1887 Margaret Oliphant published *Queen Eleanor And Fair Rosamond* and three years later *The Mystery Of Mrs*

Blencarrow,’ wrote the Glasgow *Herald*. ‘Although the former contains fictionalised elements of Mrs Oliphant’s own life – Mr Lycett-Lyndon’s midlife crisis and abandonment of his family mirror events in the writer’s own extended family – both novellas are imaginative works of considerable power on the subject of unsuitable marriages. Mrs Oliphant’s achievement in both of these fast-paced and involving stories is to subvert the reader’s expectations. Each ends, unusually in Victorian storytelling, not with a happy marriage but with the unravelling of a marriage and the avoidance of punishment (at least in terms of public censure) on the part of the stories’ wrongdoers. Part of these novellas’ impact is the manner in which they deliver an unexpected (but unexpectedly satisfying) ending within narrative structures and moral codes which appear wholly conventional. This is familiar 19th-century potboiler stuff. That it still succeeds so well is an indication of the superiority of Victorian publishing over today’s reality TV. If Persephone has taken a risk in reissuing these two forgotten stories by an author who, today, is mostly unread, it is that modern readers will resist Mrs Oliphant’s cliffhanger style and the overwrought emotions which are central to stories of this kind. For those able to overcome these minor hurdles, this double reissue offers a rich and exhilarating reading experience.’

'MAUREEN – DON'T DO THAT' BY MAUREEN LIPMAN

When I was in Scarborough, *Re: Joycing!*, I had a request from my primary school in Hull to open their new library and read to the children from some of my favourite books. It was irresistible.

I had not been inside Wheeler Street School for thirty-eight years. It was, of course, smaller than I remembered and the years had freshened and jollied up the dark tiled walls of my memories. I imagined the tiny toilets had gone too. The ones down which I was convinced the spiders lived and whose cubicle doors burst open the minute you'd started an undeflectable pee.

Visiting schools is always joyful and invariably exhausting. After a mere half hour of the children I was flailing around – and teachers have a seven-hour day. Plus all the wretched administrative work so generously thrust upon them by the National Curriculum. They are, give or take a few miscreants, heroes to a man or woman, and their status, salary and the respect due to them cannot be elevated high enough. There now. It needs to be said and I've said it.

Moreover, when successful people revisit their old school to talk about their lives since school, I don't suppose

there's one who wasn't inspired to succeed by some unknown, unsung (Emlyn Williams aside) educator. Someone who suddenly reached through all the sham and the rebellion and the gauche poses to the still, receiving centre of that child and opened a door to a way of life with possibilities.

So here I am, in my nice dress, standing on the stage which looked so huge and imposing to me when I was under three foot, and I realise it's about a foot high and maybe ten feet wide by seven across, and I'm gazing out at a funfair of faces.

It is Comic Relief day and every child is in fancy dress sitting completely cross-legged on the floor. They look magnificent. There are Blobbys and Batmen and clowns and nurses and shiny-headed robots and huge-headed dinosaurs who wish to heck they'd come as cowboys, and I start to talk about reading after the first tumult has died down. For a while they listen because that's what they've been told to do. Then I ask a question and everyone answers at once, and I ask another and a chorus breaks out, and I panic for a moment because how will I ever retain order, and the teachers down the sides in their chairs are wondering whether to help me out or not... And, suddenly, as

has happened so often and in such timely fashion over the last six years, Joyce Grenfell comes to my rescue.

'Children! Children!' I call in that pitch so known and so attended to by those of a certain age – and I clap my hands together. 'Children! Gather round now, because we are going to do our lovely moving to music now. And Miss Boulting is going to play her piano,' and I gesture towards the wall of the Assembly Hall where there is no piano and they all look left to where I'm pointing and accept there is one. 'And we are all going to be lovely flowers, growing and dancing in the grass.' There is a puzzled silence... 'Now isn't that nice?' They are not sure that it is. 'Yes, it is Sidney. It's very nice!' And they start to laugh, and we're away.

It really is magic. Thirty-five years after she conceived the slightly out-of-control teacher, Joyce's creation is still fresh as the daisy in the circle suggested by Peggy, the invisible pupil.

You should have *seen* those kids. How they looked around at George every time he did whatever it is that he does and I tell him not to. How their eyes followed Sidney out of the room in disgrace and back in again when he refused to give me

whatever he'd had in his mouth. 'A big button, Sidney? Well I'm ashamed of you. Yes I am. A big boy of four, eating a button off the back off little girls' dresses! Well, I'm very glad you spat it out. You didn't? Oh. I see – you've, yes, well...Do you *feel* alright Sidney?'

And when Jemima came back into the circle and I said, 'Oh, Jemima dear, what do we do when we come back from the littlest room? We pull our knickers *up* again, do we?' I thought the roof would fly off. Knickers of every hue were

revealed as they rocked backwards and screeched out their pleasure. It was a triumph that the lady herself would not have been able to resist. Later, I received a letter from the head teacher thanking me for entertaining the whole school. 'One of the girls laughed so much, she wet herself,' he wrote. 'And that was the geography teacher.'

Joyce once asked a roomful of children to tell her what the word frugal meant. One little chap said it meant 'to save', and she congratulated him on his knowledge and suggested the

class might all write her little stories that contained the word frugal. The prize-winning story went as follows:

'The princess was imprisoned in the tower and she shouted Frugal me, Frugal me, and the hansom prince came and he frugalled her and they lived happily ever after!'

I think even Miss Blyton might have flashed a knicker at that one.

Taken from Past-It Notes by Maureen Lipman 2008.

EVERYWHERE YOU GO



THE VALE OF AYLESBURY

REX WHISTLER

YOU CAN BE SURE OF SHELL

Rex Whistler Shell Poster 1933 76 x 114 cms.

AND BY THE WAY

Having had a page about the *Persephone Post*, we must put in a plea for the *Forum* (thepersephoneforum.co.uk) which is where Persephone books are written about by us and by you. 'The country cousin', who moderates it, wishes to ask Persephone readers to write *more*. The *Forum* is firmly part of the website – for one thing the pieces about each title, and the comments, don't go out of date stamp – it's just that we wish people made them in greater numbers! We do understand how busy you all are. But please do think of joining the discussion.

Facebook: we tend to put up 'newsy' items (something new for sale in the shop, a mention in a magazine) there rather than in the *Fortnightly Letter*, which now consists of longer articles instead of lots of short 'titbits'. So, for example, when our audiobook page went live with *Cheerful Weather for the Wedding* (read by *Miriam Margolyes*) and *Miss Pettigrew Lives for a Day* (read by *Frances McDormand*) available as unabridged downloads we put a note to that effect on Facebook.

Audiobooks: we now have two more, the unabridged *The Making of a Marchioness* read by the actress *Lucy Scott*, and six stories from Diana Athill's collection of twelve, *Midsummer Night in the Workhouse* read for us by *Diana Athill* herself. All our audiobooks cost £8 per title.

Clara, who used to work at Persephone, has won the Julia Briggs Memorial Prize with an essay on 'Virginia Woolf and Libraries'. And Lydia, also doing a PhD but still with us one day a week, is one of the organisers of a one day conference to be held on Friday 16th September at UEA called 'Out of Print: The rediscovery of neglected writing and the re-branding of secondhand books as desirable

retro objects.' Persephone Books will be there!

The tea towel reproduced on this page is designed by Karen Wilks and supplied to us by Ancient Industries through Folk at home. It is £10 (and can be posted for the same price as a Persephone book ie. £2 in the UK, more abroad). We shall have the Summer one in June.

WETTEST SPRING 1983

Deepest single day's snowfall | 3rd March 1925

(Six feet of snow in 15 hours was recorded on Dartmoor)

Hottest March day | March 29th 1968

(25°C was recorded in Cromer, Norfolk)

WARMEST APRIL DAY | 16TH APRIL 1949

(29.4°C was recorded in Camden, London)

SPRING

WETTEST APRIL DAY | 22ND APRIL 1970

(182.1mm rain fell at Seathwaite, Cumbria)

Largest temperature range | May 9th 1978

(Overnight low of -7°C to a high of 22°C)

HOTTEST MAY DAY | MAY 29TH 1944

(32.8°C recorded in and around London)

DRIEST SPRING 1996

Sharp May frost of -12°C | 16th May 1935

(recorded at Rickmansworth, Buckinghamshire)

EVENTS

On **Thursday May 12th** the writer Adam Fergusson will talk at a Persephone **Lunch** about his book *The Sack of Bath*.

We are reviving *Possibly Persephone?* on **Wednesday May 25th**: please come to the shop from 6-8 (Madeira and bread and cheese will be served) and tell us about a title which you would like to see reprinted as a Persephone book.

On **Tuesday June 7th** at 3.30 there will be a **Tea** at Roppelegh's GU27 2EN, the house near Haslemere where Mollie Panter-Downes lived for fifty years. Lucy Scott, who is recording *Good Evening, Mrs Craven* as a *Persephone Audiobook*, will read a story and a cream tea will be served courtesy of the current owners of the house.

On **Thursday June 16th** there will be an **Afternoon of Walks in Bath**. We shall meet at The Circus Café 34 Brock Street for lunch at 1.30, then walk round Bath in the company of Caroline Kay, who runs the Bath Preservation Trust, and Adam Fergusson. Afterwards there will be **Tea** at No.1 Royal Crescent. NB, the 6 mile walk to see Bath's Georgian architecture is the one that is downloaded most often from the National Trust website.

There will be a showing of the film of *They Knew Mr Knight*

on **Thursday June 30th** at 2pm at the BFI 21 Stephen Street W1. We are reviving an old tradition: lunch will be served first at 1 pm.

Diana Athill will read from her short story collection *Midsummer Night in the Workhouse* and answer questions



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about her life and work at a **Persephone Tea** from 3.30-5.30 on Wednesday July 6th. This event is to celebrate the audiobook of six stories read by her and available from our website as a download.

The writer Michelene Wandor will talk at a **Lunch** on **Tuesday September 13th** about

adapting Persephone books for the radio (*Every Eye, The Making of a Marchioness*) and others that she is hoping to adapt in future.

On **Thursday September 22nd** Debbie Kerslake, Chief Executive of Cruse Bereavement Care, will talk at a **Lunch** about *The Winds of Heaven* by Monica Dickens and the issues it raises that are relevant to Cruse, widowhood and recovery.

On **Wednesday October 5th** Maureen Lipman will talk at a lunch about her acting, her writing, about Joyce Grenfell, and anything else that occurs to her.

We have asked Felicity Jones, the star of the forthcoming film of *Cheerful Weather for the Wedding* to come and talk at a lunch on **Thursday 20th October**. But both Maureen and Felicity are only penciled in as nearer the time they may have acting commitments.

All Persephone lunches take place at 59 Lamb's Conduit Street at 12.15 for 12.30 and last for a couple of hours; they cost £30. *Possibly Persephone?*, and the **tea at Roppelegh's** cost £10 and the **Afternoon of Walks in Bath** costs £20. The film costs £25.

Lastly: the **Seventh Persephone Lecture** will be given by the novelist *Sarah Dunant* at the Artworkers Guild on December 6th

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

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