



# The Persephone Biannually

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**[www.persephonebooks.co.uk](http://www.persephonebooks.co.uk)**

*'Elswick, 1917: Mssrs Armstrong, Whitworth and Company' by  
John Lavery. The interior of a Newcastle munitions factory:  
women workers sitting on high stools working at machines.*



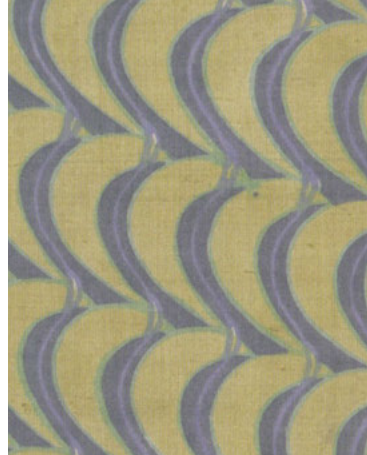
# OUR BOOKS FOR SPRING/SUMMER 2018

Persephone Book No. 126 was first published 100 years ago under the pseudonym 'AT Fitzroy' (the author lived at Fitzroy Street W1). The wonderfully titled *Despised and Rejected* by Rose Allatini (1890–1980) is everything we would like a Persephone book to be: by a forgotten writer who deserves to be revived and with strong themes: opposition to war, acceptance of homosexuality, tolerance of others, awareness that 'it is fatal to be a man or woman pure and simple, one must be woman-manly or man-womanly' (*A Room of One's Own*). And it is a very well written novel, and a page-turner.

The book begins deceptively as light social comedy (one reason it is not better known): in July 1914 a family gathers at a holiday hotel in Devon. There is a dominant father and a socially ambitious mother who adores her son Dennis. When he arrives it is at once clear to the reader why he does not fit in with his smugly conventional family. Then, with the outbreak of war, the tone of the book changes: it focuses on Dennis's refusal to fight, indeed on his abhorrence of violence; his falling in love with Alan; and his close friendship with Antoinette, who has not realised she is lesbian

but is unabashed when she does. Dennis, however, is in agony about being 'a musical man' (slang for being gay): 'Abnormal – perverted – against nature – he could hear the epithets that would be hurled against him. But what had nature been about, in giving him the soul of a woman in the body of a man?'

Running through all this is the background of the war. At first everyone thought it would be over by Christmas. Then there were the horrors of 1915. And then conscription started. Month by month one sees what happens to Dennis and the other COs (conscientious objectors) he knows. In early 1916, the Military Service Acts were passed by Parliament and all unmarried men between the ages of 18 and 40 were 'deemed to have enlisted'. A few months later married men were included. Tribunals were set up all across the country. The chairmen (in general 'offensive and dismissive' according to Caroline Moorehead in her book on conscientious objection) heard claims from everyone seeking exemptions including the three CO types: non-combatants who accepted being in the military and agreed to take part in units specially set



*'Lines of Crescents' by Charles Rennie Mackintosh for W Foxton, London, 1918*



*An 1890s furnishing fabric marketed by Sundour in 1925 as 'Summer Flowers'*



*'Transport', a 1945 dress fabric by Feliks Topolski for Ascher Ltd © V&A Images*

up to do work other than fighting; COs who did not oppose work on behalf of the government to help civilians but refused to be in the military; and absolutists opposed to compulsory service as well as killing. Dennis, and his lover Alan, are in the last category. Alan is arrested and imprisoned and eventually so is Dennis. *But for what?* This is the question the author is asking.

Rose Allatini had published three romantic novels when she wrote *Despised and Rejected* in 1918. It begins innocently enough by lampooning the snobbery of Dennis's family, but then takes an outspoken and brave stand against patriotic double-think and militarism. And indeed was published by Charles Daniel entirely because of its pacifist stance (CWD, as he was always known, had already spent two months in prison because of an anti-war pamphlet). The book was published on May 22nd 1918, had a polite review in the *TLS* on June 5th ('a well-written novel – evidently the work of a woman – on the subjects of pacifism and of abnormality in the affections') and sold 800 copies over the summer. It was not until September that the remaining 200 copies were seized and ordered to be destroyed.

The two-day trial was a foregone conclusion, the report in *The Times* on October 11th (on this page) declaring that the book was 'likely to prejudice the recruiting, training, and discipline of persons in his

Majesty's forces.' Sir Charles Wakefield said that the question of whether the book was obscene was not before him, but he described it as 'morally unhealthy and most pernicious'.

Throughout the trial Rose's name was kept out of the proceedings. In 1921 she married

the composer Cyril Scott and had two children. Then in the '30s she started writing again and by the time she died had published thirty novels under the name 'Eunice Buckley'. This 1918 novel was forgotten, until briefly re-issued by the Gay Men's Press in 1988 and in 2010 by a small independent press in the US.

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menced, or concrete in preference to wood.  
A garden should be attached to every house.

**"DESPISED AND REJECTED."**  
PUBLISHER OF PACIFIST NOVEL  
FINED.

At the Mansion House yesterday, before Alderman Sir Charles Wakefield, fines and costs amounting together to £450 were imposed in the case of C. W. DANIEL (Limited), Tudor-street, and CHARLES WILLIAM DANIEL, a director of the company, who were summoned for making statements in a book entitled "Despised and Rejected" likely to prejudice the recruiting, training, and discipline of persons in his Majesty's forces, and for having 234 copies of the book in their possession. The summonses—eight in number—were issued under Regulation 27(c) of the Defence of the Realm Regulations. The defendants pleaded "Not Guilty." It was stated at the previous hearing that the book was written by Miss Rose Allatini, whose *nom de plume* was "A. T. Fitzroy."

Sir Richard Muir prosecuted; Mr. Cecil Whiteley appeared for the defence; Sir Charles Mathews, Director of Public Prosecutions, was present during the hearing.

Mr. Whiteley, for the defence, submitted that in fact no offence had been committed. The book was a novel, not a tract or a pamphlet. Practically every one of the speeches which the prosecution complained of were made by the hero Dennis. It was only fair that attention should be called to the arguments which were put forward by other characters in the book in opposition to Dennis's pacifist views. The reader had the anti-pacifist side as well as the pacifist placed before him all through. The title "Despised and Rejected" referred to the abnormal sexual tendencies of the hero, and not to his pacifist views.

Sir R. Muir said that in 1917 the defendant was fined £40 at Bow-street Police Court in respect of a pamphlet called "A Knock-out Blow" which was of a frankly pacifist nature. The defendant was a person who assisted those who desired to propagate the pacifist idea by printing for them these pamphlets. This was a pacifist pamphlet in the disguise of a novel.

ALDERMAN SIR CHARLES WAKEFIELD said that the question whether the book was obscene was not before him, but he did not hesitate to describe it as morally unhealthy and most pernicious. He held all the offences fully proved. He had had considerable hesitation whether he ought not to send the defendant Daniel to prison. On summonses one and two and three and four he fined each defendant the maximum penalty of £100 with £10 costs. If Mr. Daniel did not pay his personal penalties he ordered in each case 90 days' imprisonment in default of distress, the terms to be concurrent. In each of the summonses five, six, seven, and eight he imposed a penalty of £5, with, in Mr. Daniel's case, 26 days' imprisonment in default. He also ordered all copies of the book in the possession of the defendants to be forfeited. He allowed defendants until November 7 in which to pay the money.

**PARCELS FOR THE TROOPS.**  
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The first 1000 copies of *Despised and Rejected* are wrapped in a facsimile of this page of *The Times* and tied in red ribbon

**D***espised and Rejected* was much ahead of its time in its depiction of homosexual love and desire, in Antoinette's 'crushes' and slow acceptance that she won't be able to be in love with a man, in its honest attitude to the war, and in the radical way it links maleness with belligerence and being gay with the refusal to kill.

**A**nd there is another theme which makes *Despised and Rejected* topical today. Darwin, 150 years ago, had encouraged people to think that 'man is more courageous, pugnacious and energetic than woman' and thus superior. Yet Dennis's friend Barnaby believes that homosexuals are 'the advance guard of a more enlightened civilisation... From them a new humanity is being evolved.' As well as exploring concepts of 'otherness', gender roles and sexual taboos, the book insists upon the spiritual ascendancy of the artist and the need for art to survive the war in the interests of civilisation.

**F**inally, Rose Allatini's book longs for Britain and Europe to be united. Dennis sees that 'the roads and railways that had been made throughout Europe to connect one country with another had been torn up to form frontiers and sever the connection.' He wishes that 'the barriers of racial hatred and racial envy be swept away; art and civilisation arise once more in place of murder and barbarity.' *Despised and Rejected* is brave; and it is balanced, generous, sane and civilised.

**Y***oung Anne* (1927), PB No. 127, was Dorothy Whipple's debut novel. It is about the first twenty years of a girl's life: she lives at home mostly looked after by the kindly Emily, goes to school, falls in love and finally marries someone else. So far, so unoriginal. Yet it *is* original. There is something about the description of Anne's life which is quite simply superb. It is also (and this is a plot spoiler) a little bit heart-wrenching. Anyone who has read DW's previous books will know that the young man she loved, George Owen, was killed in WW1. This is a tribute to him and must have been written with many tears. (The young man in the novel is even called George.)

**D**W could not be explicit about Anne's marriage because it is so much based on her own. For there is among her unpublished papers a poignant fragment of diary dated September 21st 1917 (she had married Henry Whipple, 24 years her senior, six weeks beforehand). It says: 'I want to write, I want to express myself somehow. I want to live – to live hard – and life offers me nothing but an endless round of meals, interminable evenings, and eventless days... Liberty depends on wealth... a woman is a slave even though unmarried...married she is always a slave. I have given up freedom, youth, health and solitude and companionship and for what?' (But after having written this she adds, 'I feel wonderfully better for having written all that!')

**A**s Lucy Mangan says in her *Persephone* Preface: in the novel DW's 'unmistakable voice is already there. The book that would start her on her career as a novelist is written with all the sense of command and restraint that her fans (then and now) would come to know and love so well. The temptation of the debut author is to overwrite – to show all that you can do, all at once and repeatedly, so that people Get The Message. We have all read them and been exhausted by them. But Whipple, from the off, keeps her ego and her insecurities in check. As in all her later, more experienced works, she is not a showman but a patient, disciplined archaeologist at a dig, gently but ceaselessly sweeping away sandy layers of human conventionality and self-deception, and on down to deeper pretences to get at the stubborn, jagged, enduring truths about us all beneath.'

**I**t was in 1999 that we published Dorothy Whipple's final novel, *Someone at a Distance*, and since then we have reissued six more of her novels and two volumes of short stories. Now comes this sad milestone: her first novel but the last we publish. She is our most popular writer. Nevertheless a few (very few) people don't 'get' Dorothy Whipple and we address one of the reasons why this is so on p. 23 of this *Biannually*, as do all our excellent preface writers (what an amazing bunch). Others have joined the debate. A few years ago in the *Telegraph* Claudia FitzHerbert described discovering

DW, and concluded that her discovery meant ‘that I was a latecomer to a badly kept secret. A straw poll among friends and acquaintances revealed that people had either never heard of her or repeated her name in the rolling comedic tones peculiar to addicts.’

There is a passage among DW’s surviving diaries that reads: ‘The proudest moment of my life was that in which I put on a new sailor suit, brown kid gloves and a high school hat. I would have exchanged it for no crown on earth or in heaven either. I had reached the zenith of my baby ambitions. I was then ten years old, and I felt I had started on life.’ (The photograph of her looking proud and happy has survived and is on p. 27 of this *Biannually*.) It is the fifteen years of life between this momentous event and her marriage that is at the heart of *Young Anne*, and although it is not an overtly ‘feminist’ book, like so many of our novels it is deeply feminist in its description of what does *not* happen to women and what *should* happen. DW should have gone to university or at least had a career: the description of Anne receiving her first wages is touching and unforgettable. Lucy Mangan writes: ‘The dignity offered by work and the liberation of a personal pay packet is of course explored in far more depth in *High Wages*, but it has its first celebration here in Anne’s delight at her

first job...These are the Whipple moments I most love: the recording of women’s experiences and reveling in their triumphs. 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.’ So it is no coincidence that DW’s next novel, *High Wages*, was about a young

woman forging her own career by starting a dress shop. But for DW personally this was not to be. She too was married when she was 24 to someone twice her age, and we can imagine that her reasons for marrying were exactly the same as Anne’s. One suspects she would have liked children but this did not happen. *Young Anne* has poignant synergies with its author’s life. And there is an extra poignancy: that Persephone readers can now read the entire *oeuvre* but there are no more novels to come.



This photograph of Dorothy Whipple is now a postcard which is sent free with each copy of *Young Anne*

The third springtime book is also by a very popular author, Marghanita Laski. *Tory Heaven* (1948) was her third book, another satire after both *Love on the Super Tax* and *To Bed with Grand Music*, PB No. 86. The period 1945–8 can now be seen as one of some extraordinary achievements, the most important being the creation of the NHS. But for many of those living in Britain it was an age of austerity, punctuated by regular crises. Wartime rationing not only continued, but its range was broadened. The 1945 Labour victory was based on a broad popular wish to transform the equality of wartime sacrifice into a fairer peacetime society. But the combined effects of rationing and of income tax meant that life for the middle classes was far more austere than in the 1930s, while working-class living standards were higher. Many wartime controls continued, accompanied by frequent displays of petty authority. As JG Ballard observed (quoted in David Kynaston's *Austerity Britain*): 'Middle-class people were seething with a sort of repressed rage at the world around them ... they talked as if the Labour government was an occupying power, that the Bolsheviks had arrived and were to strip them of everything they owned.' In fact the government's policies were much more moderate than some of its rhetoric. But successive crises highlighted divisions in the government and cast doubt on its competence, whether in running the coal industry or the whole economy.

The plot of *Tory Heaven* is as follows: five people return to England in August 1945 after having spent several years on a desert island (cue the 1946 *Miss Ranskill Comes Home*, PB No. 46). As they approach England 'our hero' James Leigh-Smith (think Jacob Rees-Mogg) prays, "God, let it be as it might have been. Alter the clock, fix the election, do it any way you please, but let me see the England of all decent Conservatives' dreams." He raised an anguished face to the heavens and at that moment a loud clap of thunder was heard over his right shoulder.' His prayer has been answered.

When they arrive at the port it takes him quite a while to work out what is going on. But the nub of it is that 'the whole population has been formally divided into the five classes that it naturally comprises. He is an A; 'the B's represent the middle classes'; C's are the servants of A's. They are people who've chosen to wait on A's just to be in touch with them – waiters, hairdressers, butlers, housekeepers, and agricultural workers on big estates.' D's are Trade Unionists ('don't you have a lot of strikes? 'Hardly, since all strikes are illegal') and E's 'comprise the odds and sods. No privileges at all, of course. Tramps, casuals and, of course, any such Intellectuals as the police may happen to pick up.'

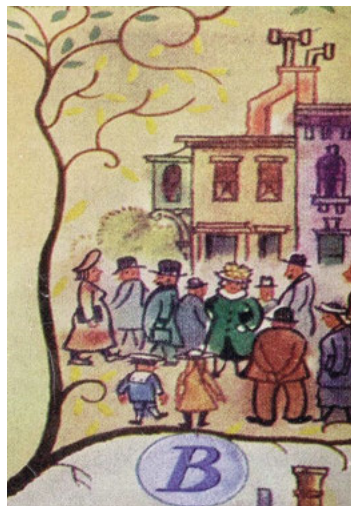
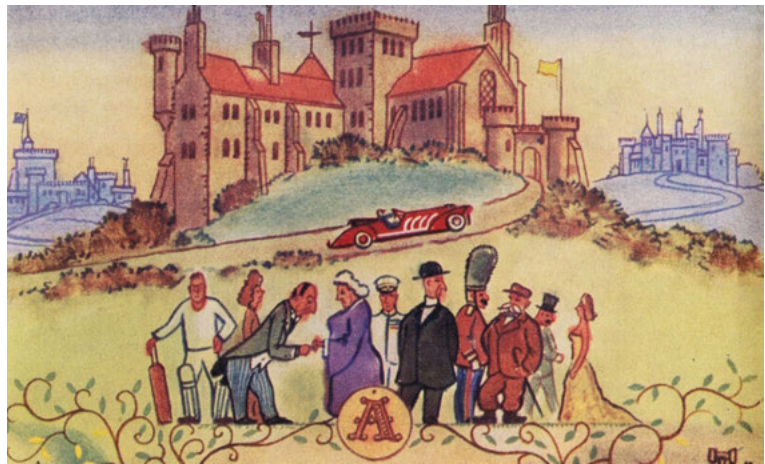
It is only when James goes home to visit his family that he realises that the system has

disadvantages. For example, during the war his parents had become very fond of the Appelbaums next door. But because they live in an A area, Jews had to go. Yet his parents miss them. And when he goes to the village for a drink (in an A pub) his father 'suddenly looked up and gave a delighted shout. "Why, if it isn't old Bouncer!" he shouted, waving madly at a little man in grey flannel trousers on the other side of the street, and the little man looked up and called in delighted accent, "Hallo, you old" and then stopped dead.' Eventually Mr Leigh-Smith explains things to his son. 'In the war we found ourselves mixing with all sorts of peculiar people, and the funny thing was, we rather liked it. That chap we passed in the street, for instance – he was my Platoon Commander in the Home Guard, and a rare old time we used to have together.' But he is a B and Mr Leigh-Smith is an A. They are therefore not allowed to mix any more. "'We've got to stick to our class," said his father miserably. That's the law. If we don't, we're liable to get degraded... if you knew how much I look back to those happy days during the war when we used to open a tin of baked beans in the kitchen.'

Advertised in 1948 as 'amusing and gay... an exquisite fantasy', *Tory Heaven*, subtitled *Thunder on the Right*, 'had a clear political agenda – being aimed squarely at those in the middle class who by now were starting to long for a return to

the familiar Tory certainties of social hierarchy, of rigid class distinctions, and of almost unquestioned privilege for those born on the right side of the tracks' (writes David Kynaston in his *Persephone Preface*). 'Like the best satirists Marghanita Laski leaves it entirely to others to draw out the lessons of her story.'

The response to *Tory Heaven* in the UK was positive: ('wickedly amusing' *Sunday Times*, 'wittily told' *Manchester Guardian*). But when it appeared in the US (as *Toasted English*) the *Atlantic Monthly* said: 'With unflinching wit, Marghanita Laski has fashioned a scorching indictment of a hierarchical society', while the *Chicago Sun* called it 'a satire in the tradition of Jonathan Swift.' There are many acutely painful scenes: one that stands out is when the electoral system is explained to James. There is no more universal suffrage and Parliamentary seats have been redistributed in accordance with the conditions existing before 1832. 'We got the Boundaries Commission onto that, and really they did a most satisfactory job. Manchester, for example, returns no member now, while our host Lord Starveleigh owns two. One is returned automatically by a gazebo in the garden while the other will be elected on Saturday.' In the tradition of *1066 and All That*, the book pushes the system to its logical absurdity: the Tory heaven is realised on earth today. There was a time when we thought a book like this was pure satire. Now we are not so sure.



*Illustrations from the dust-jacket of the US edition of Tory Heaven, which we have used as a 'bellyband' on every copy of the book.*

# SEXUAL POLITICS IN WWI

It is often said that the British only realised lesbianism existed when *The Well of Loneliness* by Radclyffe Hall was banned in 1928 ('that night they were not divided'). But the public had heard all about it when the Pemberton Billing Trial was reported in May 1918, the month *Despised and Rejected* was published.

The trial focused on dancer Maud Allan (right) who for years had been giving performances of Oscar Wilde's *Salome* privately to invited audiences. The publicity-seeking proto-fascist MP Noel Pemberton Billing decided to use these as the impetus to publish an article headed 'The Cult of the Clitoris' that implied the performances were immoral and Maud was lesbian.

But his real obsession was looking for reasons why Britain was not winning the war, and he wanted to publicise his beliefs. He asserted that apart from Maud Allan there were thousands of well-known people who were a) sexual deviants b) pro-German. He suspected, and hoped, that Maud Allan would sue, and she did. The court case then allowed him to air his views.

Ironically, Marie Stopes's *Married Love* (which very sensibly discussed the function of the clitoris) was first published at about the same time as Billing's article. Yet, he argued, even knowing what the clitoris *was* was a code for perversion; and

because Maud Allan admitted to being familiar with the work of German sexologists such as Kraft-Ebbing, she thereby rendered herself both deviant and pro-German. In her defence she linked her beliefs with Eastern teaching. However, this further distanced her both from British patriotism and heterosexual propriety.

The trial was in some ways a re-run of the Wilde trial 23 years before, but with the added gloss



of militaristic values. As a result, female homosexuality became associated in the public mind with Wildean decadence, Kraft-Ebbing, being pro-German, a weakened Britain, the Orient, and an unmentionable part of the female anatomy – all at the same time. The trial drew together contemporary British fears of losing the war to Germany and of losing the nation's morals to perversion. People could talk of little else.

Throughout *Despised and Rejected* pacifism is aligned with

male and female homosexuality. Dennis's mother says: "We could never get him to play with soldiers or steamers or any of the usual toys. His father used to get quite angry. He always wanted his boys to be manly boys.' Whereas Antoinette 'gladly, gratefully welcomed [Hester's] advent, and the rush of emotion which she had called forth; turned with relief from her fruitless search in the world of masculinity ... unaware that there was aught of unusual about her attitude...she was healthy-minded and joyous in her unquestioning obedience to the dictates of her own nature.' For she 'fits in just anywhere'; and when she realises her true nature, thinks: 'It was a shame that Dennis should have to suffer so horribly from the consciousness of his abnormality, while her own had never caused her the slightest uneasiness.' In these words Allatini reveals an emerging lesbian self-awareness.

On June 4th (two weeks after the quiet publication of *Despised and Rejected*) came the news that 'the monster maniac Billing' had won his case. 'Damn him!' wrote Lady Cynthia Asquith in her diary, adding: 'One can't imagine a more undignified paragraph in English history, at this juncture, that three-quarters of *The Times* should be taken up with such a farrago of nonsense! It is monstrous that these maniacs should be vindicated in the eyes of the public.'



# 'THE INTRODUCTION'

He stood on Mrs Fairfield's lawn and looked about him. He was rather florid, with a tall, well set-up figure and a superior carriage. His hair was fair and inclined to curl, his eyes were blue; his nose was prominent, his mouth a trifle coarse. Men said he was manly, women – some women – said he was masterful.

He was a well-known and rather important person in the neighbourhood, and was generally supposed to have a future. He was a young Liberal, spoke at local meetings, and acted as steward at gatherings addressed by Cabinet Ministers. He had a comfortable income, was unmarried, and knew that he could marry any day he pleased.

He stood and looked about him. There were girls he knew – and girls he didn't know. There was one unknown to him whom he thought he would like to include in his acquaintance. He strolled over to his hostess.

'Will you be so kind as to introduce me – over there – the girl in blue with her arm in a sling?'

'Oh certainly, of course; but I don't know – that, er – well, that she's altogether your style.'

He smiled. 'She's a style I like the look of. May I persist?'

'Delighted, of course.'

He followed his hostess across the lawn. The girl in blue was talking to another girl, very earnestly. 'About clothes, of course,' he said to himself.

It was usually considered rather

a feather in a girl's cap if he asked to be introduced to her; this girl hardly seemed properly to appreciate the feather; she looked almost vexed at the interruption to her conversation.

'Miss Laurie, Mr Brewster wishes to be introduced to you'; and the hostess moved away.

The girl half-turned in her chair and bowed; then a sudden alertness came into her eyes and face, and she looked intently at the man before her.

'I'm afraid I interrupt,' he began. 'I asked Miss Fairfield to introduce me –'

'It was unnecessary. We have met before.'

He smiled; it was not the first time that he had been remembered by girls he had forgotten. 'You have the advantage of me.'

'I almost think I have,' she answered, slowly.

'May I ask – er – where –?'

'At the Liberal meeting at Torchester.'

'When Mr Fitzjames was speaking?'

'Precisely.'

'Ah, yes, I was one of the stewards.'

'I know you were.'

'Ah, I see, that is how – It is kind of you to remember me.'

'Not kind, I could hardly fail to remember.'

She was really rather queer. He was used to being flattered, made much of, but in a flirtation he was accustomed to take the lead. He would give her a slight

setback, make the conversation less personal. 'We had a bit of a row that night,' he said. 'Were you there all the time?'

'Not quite. I left before the end.'

'Perhaps you were so fortunate as to avoid it, then?'

'Do you mean when the stewards went for the woman who asked questions? I was there.'

'They were outrageous, were they not?'

'The stewards?'

'No, the women, if you call them that, hysterical, struggling.'

'They were one to six, you see, and the stewards were like wild beasts.'

'You can't judge. To you, looking on, perhaps –'

'I was not looking on.'

'Then –'

'You broke an arm,' she said.

'I – I – I don't remember,' was all he found to say.

'No, I know you don't. You remember nothing of what you did, or said, or looked like. You were so carried away, you and your fellows, by hysterical fury, that you had no idea what you were doing. You were madmen – without a keeper.'

'I – I'm sure I – are you sure? I can't believe that – the arm – Are you sure?' he stammered.

'Quite sure.' She turned and walked away, but half-turned again and looked back at him; on her face was a half-smile. 'You see,' she said, 'it was *my* arm.'

*Gertrude Colmore in The Suffragette November 22nd 1912*

# FROM GERMAN VOGUE

The first thing Nicola Beauman shows visitors in her London shop is not the books, which stand there in the shelves in their uniform grey jackets. Instead she points to the basement: 'You must definitely have a look at the cellar!' Down a wooden staircase one gets to a barely-lit room with un-plastered walls and a stone floor, packed with boxes of books lightly raised on pallets. Once this was the kitchen of a Georgian town house, today it's the lower floor of Nicola's publishing company, Persephone Books. 'It hasn't changed since 1705,' she says. 'When it rains a lot the floor gets flooded, but then the water simply drains away – the Georgians thought everything out.'

In truth, the cellar is not the worst viewpoint from which to approach the phenomenon of Persephone Books: the small publisher, which since 1998 has

republished works by unjustly neglected women writers, is named after the Greek goddess of the underworld. (Although it was Persephone's other role as goddess of spring and symbol of feminine creativity, which inspired the founder to give it this name.) The company's first office was also a cellar, in Clerkenwell – 'before the neighbourhood became fashionable,' Nicola emphasises. The 72-year-old, a delicate figure in a grey linen frock coat and brown and white brogues, conveys less the spirit of today than the timeless simplicity of that elegant intellectualism that Bloomsbury represents for Londoners. Fittingly, the Persephone Books headquarters is situated in a shop in Bloomsbury, in Lamb's Conduit Street, while the entire list is available in there. 'We always have customers in the shop,' says Nicola, not

without pride. Most of them come from the UK and many from Europe and the USA: the Persephone shop has become a tourist destination.

But Nicola's background is not that of the Bloomsbury set, first created as an English literary centre by Virginia Woolf. Her parents, both Jewish and both lawyers, left Berlin in 1933. Her father, Francis Mann, participated after the War as a legal adviser in the Nuremberg trials and was a partner in the London legal firm Herbert Smith. 'My mother was a lawyer too, but when she arrived in Great Britain she could not work until she re-qualified after the war.' From this kind of background the last thing Nicola would have imagined would be one day to end up in a shop. 'Nicely brought up girls from good homes went to university, studied English literature, maybe



wrote a few books – so that is what I did,’ she says. She was a full-time housewife – her second husband works today for the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development – and mother of five: it was relatively late that she had the idea of starting a publishing company. The motivation was the feeling that there was a gap. In the early ’90s ‘I was sorry that publishers like Virago, who in principle had a splendid feminist programme, preferred well-known women writers to rediscovering the forgotten ones,’ Nicola explains. Writers such as Noel Streatfeild, Helen Ashton or Jocelyn Playfair, whom she had come across during her research, no longer had much of a reputation in the later 20th century.

If one asks Nicola what unifies Persephone Books she says, ‘it is the theme of domesticity. That has nothing to do with washing up or ironing, it is about life at home, the everyday life of many, many women. It is an ordinary world in which the extraordinary plays a major role.’ What is offered by the idea of the Home, which might seem such a limited and constrained stage, you can see if you look at the variety represented by three titles: Dorothy Whipple’s *The Priory* (1939), written in the style of Jane Austen, following the story of the Marwood family, taking a new direction when the widowed Major Marwood makes a marriage proposal to a much younger woman; Marghanita Laski’s *The Victorian Chaise-longue* (1953), a mixture of horror and science

fiction, in which a woman goes to sleep on a chaise-longue and wakes up as her alter ego 90 years before; and Julia Strachey’s 1932 novella *Cheerful Weather for the Wedding* a light, funny comedy about a girl marrying the wrong man.

To try to do justice to the writers she admired, Nicola founded Persephone Books in 1998 with a legacy from her father. ‘I don’t believe that most women start businesses *merely* to make money,’ says Nicola, ‘but of course you have to make money to be able to do what you love.’ In the early years printing 5000 copies of the books was too optimistic, and sales did not justify this. ‘It is very difficult to get publicity or reviews for reprints,’ she explains. Then Persephone had an unexpected hit: Winifred Watson’s *Miss Pettigrew Lives for a Day* became a bestseller. The story of a nanny who, through chance, joins the staff of a night-club singer ensured the publisher’s future. Persephone Books moved to Bloomsbury, where Nicola opened her bookshop. ‘I had never worked in a shop. But my grandfather ran a hardware store in Breslau – it must be somewhere in the genes,’ she says. ‘Everyone told me that publishers don’t have their own shop! But I do wonder why not.’

As well as the shop and the carefully chosen publishing programme, there is another noteworthy aspect to the brand identity of Persephone Books. The almost academic earnestness of the uniform grey jackets is

contrasted in every book with the individually-selected endpaper: RC Sherriff’s *The Fortnight in September* is decorated with a cluster of dahlias first seen on a woven silk dress material by Madeleine Lawrence.

Nicola regards her publishing business as a feminine project. But it is also a feminist one, although ‘we have male authors in the list: our feminism is not the sort which excludes men,’ she emphasises. What differentiates Persephone Books from other niche publishers is the close relationship with its readers, male and female. Of course one can order the books online, and big bookshops carry the most successful of the books, but most sales come directly by mail order. On average there are 25,000 people who receive the *Persephone Biannually* twice a year and many of them then buy at least one book.

The future looks – despite Brexit, about which Nicola feels great sadness and concern – very positive for her business. She could have expanded it beyond the two employees she has working in Bloomsbury, ‘but I’m allergic to bureaucracy’ she says, ‘and the size of Persephone Books at the moment is both manageable and enjoyable.’ The Domestic Feminism which Nicola represents is stamped not only on the publisher’s list – it is also the extremely successful business model of Persephone Books.

*Translation by Persephone Books. This piece was in German Vogue in April 2017 © Alexander Menden.*

# THE PERSEPHONE 128

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, which came out 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 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 **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, weary and wise 1960s poems about marriage, children and reality. Preface: author
13. **Consequences** by **EM Delafield** By the author of *Diary of a Provincial Lady*, PB No. 105, 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, bleak 1947 short stories, twice 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 **Oriel Malet** A deeply empathetic novel about the real life of the Scottish child prodigy who lived from 1803–11; translated into French; 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** 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 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, 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 (unabridged) 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*, 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.
- 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 unique voice and dark sense of humour; they have been 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 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 **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 post-war readjustments in village life when love ignores the class barrier. Afterword: Juliet Gardiner
- 53. *Lady Rose and Mrs Memmary* by Ruby Ferguson** A 1937 novel about Lady Rose, who inherits a great house, marries well – and then meets the love of her life on a park bench. A great favourite of the Queen Mother. Preface: Candia McWilliam
- 54. *They Can't Ration These* by Vicomte de Mauduit** 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 RC Sherriff** A 1939 novel about what might happen if the moon crashed into the earth in 1946 'written' by Mr Hopkins. Preface: Michael Moor-cock, 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? 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 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 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 who marries 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 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*, 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 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 5 year-old 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** Short stories drawn from the three collections published during Dorothy Whipple's lifetime. Five stories were read on BBC R4.
- 75. *On the Other Side: Letters to my Children from Germany 1940–46* by Mathilde Wolff-Mönckeburg.** Written in Hamburg but never sent, these letters provide a crucial counter-point 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, alias 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, 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 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 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 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 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 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** 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* (No. 81): Miss Buncle marries and 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 reads six of the stories as a Persephone Audiobook.](#)
- 93. The Sack of Bath by Adam Fergusson** A 1973 polemic, with many black and white 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** A 1932 novel by our most popular author about a family and, in particular, a grandmother and her grand-daughter. Afterword: Charles Lock
- 96. Dinners for Beginners by Rachel and Margaret Ryan** A 1934 cookery book for the novice cook telling her everything in exacting detail: eye-opening and useful.
- 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** A woman gives birth to her fifth child: a rare novel (written in 1938) about the process of birth. Preface: Anne Sebba
- 104. The Two Mrs Abbotts by DE Stevenson** The third 'Miss Buncle' 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 four-part television serial in 1981. Afterword: author
- 108. The Happy Tree by Rosalind Murray** A 1926 novel about the long-term and devastating effect of WW1 on the young, in particular on a young woman living in London during the war years. Preface: Charlotte Mitchell
- 109. The Country Life Cookery Book by Ambrose Heath** This 1937 cookbook, organised by month (and thus by excellent seasonal recipes) is illustrated by a dozen beautiful wood engravings by Eric Ravilious. Preface: Simon Hopkinson.
- 110. Because of the Lockwoods by Dorothy Whipple** Her 1949 novel: the Hunters are patronised by the wealthy Lockwoods; as she grows up 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. Photographs: Thérèse Bonney. 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 by the major New Zealand writer, who published ten books in ten years and died in London in August 1939 when she was 33. 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.** This touching, funny and perceptive memoir first came out in a limited edition in 2012. Our version has many wood engravings and photographs (including one of Tirzah’s husband Eric Ravilious).. Preface: Anne Ullmann
- 120. Madame Solario by Gladys Huntington** Published anonymously, in 1956, this superb novel in the Henry James/Edith Wharton tradition is set on Lake Como in 1906. Its incestuous undertones made it a *succès de scandale*. Afterword: Alison Adburgham
- 121. Effi Briest by Theodor Fontane.** A classic of European literature written in 1895 by the great German novelist: neglected in the UK yet 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 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. An unforgettable, unusual and subtle feminist statement. Preface: Lucy Ellmann
- 124. The Journey Home and Other Stories by Malachi Whitaker** Four volumes of these startling 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 yet has dark undertones: four sisters live in the country deferring to their loveable but demanding mother.
- 126. Despised and Rejected by Rose Allatini** This pioneering 1918 novel, first published by ‘AT Fitzroy’, is about a gay conscientious objector and his friendship with a young woman who (as he realises but she does not) is lesbian. Afterword: Jonathan Cutbill
- 127. Young Anne by Dorothy Whipple** The debut work (1927) by our most popular writer: a quasi-autobiographical novel about a young girl’s journey to womanhood. All Dorothy Whipple’s novels are now in print. Preface: Lucy Mangan
- 128. Tory Heaven by Marghanita Laski** A dark 1948 satire about a Britain under Tory rule: everyone is divided up (by the As) into A, B, C, D, E and forced to stay strictly within their own grade. Funny, grim and horribly relevant to today’s dis-United Kingdom. Preface: David Kynaston



# OUR BLOGGERS WRITE

‘*The Journey Home and Other Stories* was yet another superb story collection published by Persephone. Malachi Whitaker crafts her stories with precision, not a word is wasted, yet the stories are fully satisfying. I got the impression of a down to earth, no-nonsense Yorkshire woman who understood perfectly the communities among whom she lived. Her canvas is the ordinary, the domestic, but she perfectly captures the ordinary, even the absurd, in a way that not every writer manages. Here we have a boy starting work with his father, a couple getting drunk for the first time, honeymooners, children left to their own devices, young women “in trouble”. Some of the stories are sad, a little dark, many are memorable. The whole collection paints a picture of a time and place, resurrecting the people who lived there.’ Heaven Ali

‘*Good Things In England* is a veritable encyclopaedia of all things English cooking and eating, at once a collection of recipes and an instructional text on almost every method of cooking of any sauce, herb, vegetable or animal imaginable at the time. The recipes are fascinating in their composition, educational in their context, and paint a picture of exceedingly economical and sustainable cookery. They are from a whole host of experts and laypeople passing on much-loved family

traditions; waste next to nothing; take into account good nutrition; are infused with all manner of aromatic herbs; and essentially bear all the hallmarks of modern cuisine as we know it today. This is as much a cookbook as it is an intriguing snapshot of an earlier era.’ Melody Menu

‘*Guard Your Daughters* by Diana Tutton, a strange but enjoyable little novel, is a return to the hot-water-bottle texts that Persephone became so well loved for. But it's not an entirely comfortable read. While in one sense it is a gentle read where nothing spectacular happens, in another sense it is also a stifflingly claustrophobic text where the face-value peculiarities of the Harvey sisters are peeled away to reveal a deeply dysfunctional, isolated and unhappy family. Interestingly, instead of Persephone's usual habit of commissioning a foreword to introduce the book, in this instance they have instead offered at the end a very mixed bag of reviews: some of which adore it, while others detest it with a passion that seems extraordinary for a mere novel. But of course, there is nothing “mere” about a novel.’ J-Mo Writes

‘An annual holiday, its patterns and customs established over twenty years, triggers expectations and longings, reveals insecurities, and feeds anxieties as it fosters

pleasure. RC Sherriff's simple account of the ordinary events of the Stevens family's two weeks in Bognor Regis in *The Fortnight in September* holds up a mirror to their larger lives. It's a bitter-sweet tale, utterly touching in its sincerity and its fellow-feeling for its protagonists' aspirations and its appreciation of their small joys, regrets and sorrows. It's about making the best of things, family cohesion and friendships founded on loyalty and tolerance. Charming in its detail of an era and customs long past, it's as relevant today in its portrayal of human nature as it must have been when it first appeared in 1931.’ Cornflower Books

‘When the novel begins, Harriet is 32 and lives at home with her mother, Mrs Ogilvy, and her step-father. She had learning disabilities and exhibited moments of “horrid uncouthness” and was “not easily put out of the way”. She had a fondness for pretty things, which her mother relished bestowing on her daughter. Despite shuddering at Harriet's attention, Lewis realises she is quite well off and wastes no time in his flirtations and a swift proposal. Elizabeth Jenkins's treatment of this story is remarkably fair and unbiased. Each character is described in their moments of fear, repulsion, ignorance, greed, and compliance. Rachel Cooke's afterword is not to be missed. *Harriet* is a gripping page-

turner and highly recommended!' Cosy Books

**'I**nto the *Whirlwind* is a memoir: the author was sentenced to 10 years in solitary, she endures two (although in the company of Julia) before being sent to a labour camp in the East. From the moment she is sentenced she has no knowledge of her husband, or of their children (seeing only one of her sons in later life). It's a grim story, starting with the Kafkaesque accusations that began the great purge. The women support each other, learn how to deal with their warders and those who control their lives. Remaining human was a constant struggle, to do with clothes, footwear, eating and acts of generosity towards others.' Book Word

**'M**iss *Buncle's Book* is a delight from start to finish, so much so that it was only the fact that there are two more books to feature Barbara Buncle that stopped the last page from being bittersweet. It works its magic over the reader and it is a joy to see the effects the book has on the residents of 'Silverstream' slowly unfolding. Little does Miss Buncle foresee that the fictional actions she creates will be mirrored in the real lives surrounding her. This is a comedy of manners, a romance, and provides insight into life in a small village and the changing role of women in the 1930s: a warm, all-encompassing, funny book, with characters that shine from the

pages. I loved it. Highly recommended.' From First Page to Last

**'E**arth and *High Heaven* is a claustrophobic and tense novel that neatly sums up the agonies of a love that is dampened by bigoted families. To a contemporary reader, the bigotry and prejudice that Erica's parents irrationally hold towards Marc is stupefying. In 2018, this is startling to read. But in Canada in 1944 this was doubtless a common view: one that Gwethalyn Graham hoped to expose with her brutal novel showing up these ignorant attitudes. *Earth and High Heaven* has sold 1.5 million copies since 1944 and been translated into 15 languages, as well as spending 38 weeks in *The New York Times* bestseller list. And having read it, it is easy to see why this novel has become such an important book.' J-Mo Writes

**'H**ostages to *Fortune* follows the lives of Catherine and her family until the early 1930s and is utterly absorbing. Although I was reading about lives lived a very long time ago there was so much about the feeling and concerns of the people I was reading about that was both timeless and universal. Catherine finds that her children bring her happiness, puzzlement and worry, and I understood it all wonderfully well. Each child was beautifully and distinctively drawn, and I think that this might be the finest account of children and their family life that I have ever read. And I was

impressed by the portrayal of Catherine and William's marriage. A picture of a family that is finely drawn and utterly real.' Beyond Eden Rock

**'G**uard *Your Daughters* is full of the small details of a life restricted by a strong-willed parent, aided and abetted by a loving father. This book succeeds because it feels so real. The reader becomes involved to the extent of intensely disliking Mother, whose reign of repression through her invalid lifestyle restricts her clever, otherwise lively daughters. Father's slavish devotion to her wants becomes particularly wearing, as her whims must be obeyed. This is an amusing book, with a great sense of young women eager for life outside their home. It is beautifully written, engaging and an enjoyable addition to the Persephone collection.' Northern Reader

**'M**ariana reminded me of *Dusty Answer* by Rosamond Lehmann – but I find it sharper, wittier, less self-conscious, perhaps. I particularly enjoy the fact that Mary is a flawed character: she is an average girl, self-centred, at times frivolous; she seems to have no passion, no gifts, no idea what to do with her life, and for the reader that can be infuriating. But it is somehow very hard not to find her endearing. The tone is something inbetween romance, family drama, coming of age, and comedy of manners. Monica

Dickens has a gift for fully describing a character, the book is rich with texture and scent and we can almost touch the atmosphere, as if it were something solid.' The Blank Garden

‘Oh what a joy this book is. *Miss Pettigrew Lives for a Day* is one of those novels where you kick yourself for not reading it sooner and yet feel like you've discovered a gem. There is something wonderfully exuberant and almost careless about the novel. There are a couple of instances that haven't aged well but otherwise this is a timeless piece about societal structure and the self-imposed boundaries one can set. It's a lesson about living, about being able to breach the confines of expected behaviour and of re-discovering new aspects of yourself. I loved spending the day with Miss Pettigrew and her new friends. I'll be revisiting her again soon.' From First Page to Last

‘For all the characters in *The Priory*, talk of the war is constantly in the air but remains in the distance, like a threatening thunderstorm that resides over the hills. For a novel that is part comedic, part domestic, part character study, and is fully enjoyable, there is a heaviness that lingers over the last third: knowing what comes next historically and what will happen to the people in it, leaves the reader with a sense of sadness, for this world will cease to exist at the end of the war.

The characters may have avoided a conflict for now but it will come eventually, and that knowledge is what made me sad because hadn't the characters already endured enough? *The Priory* is one of my favourite books I've read all year. It stands up to modern literature, while also scratching that itch for something that should be a classic. The writing is witty, deep, and modern.' December Tea

‘*Lady Rose and Mrs Memmary* is a charming, light read, a sort of fairy tale about a little girl growing up in Victorian

times on a massive Scottish estate called Keepsfield. This book starts out rather saccharine and almost twee. But after Lady Rose goes off to boarding school her life takes some interesting turns when it appears it isn't such a fairy tale after all. Overall, this book was charming, but with a sad undercurrent about the position of women. It made some very good points about the choices women had in the late Victorian period – but mostly didn't have, even the very wealthy and privileged.' Books and Chocolate



Persephone & Hades, gouache by Miranda Gray, the daughter of Patience Gray (co-author of *Plats du Jour*)

# CWD BY NICOLAS WALTER

‘Charles William Daniel (1871–1955) [publisher of *Despised and Rejected*] is one of the forgotten odd-men-out of the 20th century. He is forgotten because he didn’t do or say anything particularly dramatic, or follow any powerful person or join any powerful party, or belong to any of the favoured groups of fashionable left-wing biography. He wasn’t a member of any socialist or anarchist or pacifist organisations; he wasn’t female or Jewish or Marxist or working-class; he was a publisher and editor rather than a writer or speaker; he never held any position other than director of his own little company; he never made or lost much money; he didn’t write his memoirs.

Nevertheless, he deserves to be remembered, for several reasons – as an odd man (which is what he called himself) and as a crank (which he also called himself), who had a great sense of life and fun but above all as the man who was responsible for the publication of more libertarian and other alternative writings in English during the first half of the 20th century than any other person.

He promoted homeopathy, health food, herbal medicine, organic farming, the occult and reincarnation and was a committed and lifelong Tolstoyan. Then in 1902 he began the thing for which he is now remembered – his own publishing company. For forty years CWD occupied various

premises in the City and in Bloomsbury, often with a bookshop as well as an office. He published translations of Tolstoy, dozens of pamphlets, several periodicals, ‘People’s Classics’, and he was the main publisher of unorthodox, progressive and left-wing material for several decades.

CWD was one of the founding members of the Cranks Table, a group of progressive journalists and publishers who met and talked at vegetarian restaurants in central London. One of his friends was the novelist Dorothy Richardson. She described him and his wife Florence as ‘George and Dora Taylor’ in *Revolving Lights* (1923), the seventh volume in her *Pilgrimage* sequence. The heroine ‘Miriam’ says: ‘They are wonderful. Their atmosphere is the freest I know... You go there, worn out, at the end of the day, and have to walk, after a long tram-ride through the wrong part of London, along raw new roads, dark little houses on either side, solid, without a single break, darkness, a street-lamp, more darkness, another lamp... Then you are in their kitchen. White walls and aluminium and a smell of fruit. You are all standing about. Happy and undisturbed. Tranquillity... Making everyone move like a song. And talk. You are all, at one, bursting with talk. All over the flat, in and out of the rooms. George washing up all the time, wandering about with a dish and a cloth. It’s the only place

where I can talk exhausted and starving... He has a feminine consciousness, though he’s a most manly little man with a head like Beethoven. So he’s practical. Meaning he feels with his nerves and has a perfect sympathetic imagination.’

CWD published several pacifist books when WW1 began and at the end of 1916 was involved in the clandestine production and distribution of a pacifist pamphlet called ‘A Knock-Out Blow’, a bitter critique of the aggressive war policy of the new Lloyd George government. His office was raided by the police, and in the spring of 1917 he and the editor and printer were prosecuted under DORA (Defence of the Realm Act). He was fined but refused to pay and went to prison for two months.’

We can imagine Rose Allatini at one of the Daniel evenings. And we can imagine why CWD agreed to publish *Despised and Rejected*. When he rather than Rose was prosecuted in 1918, it was because the authorities knew he was a pacifist and may even have thought that he was the real author of the book. For CWD was an eccentric but courageous man who was unafraid to stand up for his own beliefs.

*Nicolas Walter (1934–2000) a well-known activist and anarchist writer, was an expert on banned books. He wrote this piece about CWD in 1988.*

# ‘WOMEN NOVELISTS ARE BEST’

Every few years, there’s a kerfuffle when a male writer or aged university professor declares he doesn’t read or teach novels by women (*wrote the novelist John Boyne*). The Nobel laureate VS Naipaul, for example, has said that there is no female writer his equal: because of women’s tendency towards ‘sentimentality’, and also because a woman is not ‘a complete master of a house’.

I’m not sure if Naipaul has read anything by Toni Morrison, Alice Munro or Penelope Lively, all born within a year or so of him. But if he has, he should recognise that sentimentality is a crime for which none of these could be convicted. And, however they run their homes, they are certainly masters of a good sentence.

It’s the same story whenever the world feels the need to declare a new Greatest Living Novelist. Most recently, in a daring and original move, the dubious honour of ‘greatest American novelist’ was awarded to a white male, Jonathan Franzen, despite his having produced only one novel of real merit, *The Corrections*. His two subsequent works – *Freedom* and *Purity* – were so wrapped up in their own self-importance that they only needed single word titles to signify their status as Significant Works of Literature.

Throughout the mid to latter part of the 20th century, it was always the men who, like more bookish but less witty versions of Muhammad Ali, declared themselves the Greatest. In the US, it was John Updike, Norman Mailer, Gore Vidal, Saul Bellow and Philip Roth, all carping at each other from the sidelines, or having dust-ups on chatshows. The first four are dead and the fifth is retired but, despite their determination to survive into posterity, can you imagine anyone today picking up a copy of Mailer’s *Harlot’s Ghost* or Vidal’s *Live from Golgotha*? I can’t. But I could certainly see myself revisiting Harper Lee’s *To Kill a Mockingbird* or Carson McCullers’ *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter*.

In a recent speech, Anne Enright explored how books by women are rarely reviewed by men, as if it is beneath their dignity, while books by men are appraised by critics of both genders. The implication is that literary editors believe books by male writers express universal concerns while those by women are regarded as much narrower in scope, lacking the subtlety needed to engage the mind of the cerebral male.

I’ve been publishing novels for almost 20 years. In that time, I’ve become increasingly aware of similar double standards in the industry. A man is treated like a literary writer from the start, but a woman usually has to earn that commendation. Last summer, I attended a literary festival where a trio of



© Emily Feaver

established male writers were referred to in the programme as ‘giants of world literature’ while a panel of female writers of equal stature were described as ‘wonderful storytellers’. And I recently debated with a friend the merits of a highly praised novel by a male author whose depiction of women made me wonder if he’d ever even met one. My friend disagreed, suggesting the book was a study of masculinity, so what mattered was how incisive the author was on that subject. But how are we to write about masculinity, or femininity, without reference to the other? And, if the men in a novel behave as if women are simply there to have sex with or to tell them how brilliant they are, what does that say about the novel’s relationship to gender?

I’ve read 113 books this last year, 84 of them published in 2017. Of those new titles, 39 were written by men and 45 by women. For me, the best were written by Min Jin Lee, Polly Clark, Elizabeth Day, Molly McCloskey, Gail Honeyman, Kamila Shamsie, Francesca Segal and Celeste Ng, while the best non-fiction was *Gone* by the violinist Min Kym.

So I’m going to make a claim now. I think women are better novelists than men. There, I’ve said it. However, I’m going to try to back up my sweeping statement. First, perhaps it is the historically subservient role women have played in society that has made them understand

human nature more clearly, a necessity if one is trying to create authentic characters. Having been expected to bring up families while running a home and catering to society’s expectations of what women should be, they have a better grasp of human complexity.

Second, many male writers approach their work as if they – and not the books – are what’s important. They obsess about establishing a reputation, while ignoring the importance of just writing something good. Female writers seem more concerned with just writing good books. At literary festivals female novelists

are usually more interested in talking about books, in engaging with their readers and in sharing a platform with another writer rather than trying to dominate it. They seem grateful for the opportunities publishing has brought them, rather than accepting it as their due. And they seem to read a lot more.

One last thing. The Greatest Living Novelist? Easy. It’s Anne Tyler. Or maybe Sarah Waters. Or Margaret Atwood. Or Rose Tremain.

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# WHAT IS MIDDLEBROW?

Middlebrow is a word that first became part of everyday vocabulary in the early 1930s: Virginia Woolf wrote a piece in which she called herself a highbrow who sided with the lowbrow, but ‘if any human being, man, woman, dog, cat or half-crushed worm dares call me “middlebrow” I will take my pen and stab him, dead.’ (This is why she had mixed feelings about *Flush*, PB No. 55, being a best-seller: did it mean she was within the category she despised?)

In 1999 an article about the Royal Society of Literature in the *Independent* said: ‘For as long as anyone can remember, the RSL’s 800 members have gathered to discuss – over sherry, of course – the respective merits of Trollope, Chesterton and even Dorothy Whipple, who was, in her day, as popular as Joanna Trollope.’ However, in order to ‘spruce up its fusty image’ the society was enlisting the help of contemporary writers such as Stephen Fry, Simon Armitage, Will Self and Philip Hensher. And, yes, women were admitted, although the only one mentioned in the article was Elizabeth David: ‘I remember when we elected her, a lot of members could not understand why,’ said the chairman Michael Holroyd. ‘But when you read her summer pudding recipe you would realise why.’

Jilly Cooper was asked for a quote and replied: ‘I would never be invited to tea at the

RSL because my novels are bestsellers. But Balzac and Shakespeare all wrote for money. What is panned when the author is alive could be considered great writing after their death.’

A week later the chairman responded in the *Independent*. ‘We cannot invite Jilly Cooper for tea or for sherry because we don’t have tea or sherry parties, but she is very welcome to become a member of the RSL. If she joins, I doubt if she will hear the name Dorothy Whipple.’

Soon the founder of Virago, Carmen Callil (who some years before had paid Michael Holroyd the incredible sum of £625,000 to write a biography of a Very Important Man – George Bernard Shaw) told an interviewer that Dorothy Whipple was Virago’s benchmark for the unpublishable, so that anything even faintly Whipplesque would elicit dismissive frowns from her and her colleagues.

But the real reason for this hostility? It was Callil and Holroyd’s terror of being associated with the middlebrow. So should we be ashamed that Persephone books are middlebrow? They are, after all, mostly by women, sold by women to women, and they cover topics that supposedly appeal to women (marriage, motherhood).

Nevertheless, in the words of Lili Loofbrourow in the *Guardian*: ‘We don’t imagine female texts to have universal things to say. We imagine them as small and

careful, or petty and domestic, or vain, or sassy, or confessional. We might expect them to be sentimental or melodramatic, but not experimental, and we don’t expect them to be great.’

Because the word middlebrow is associated with female values, it has always been considered pejorative, indeed an insult. And naturally the middlebrow is miles away from either Modernism or ‘literary fiction’, the benchmarks to which ‘proper’ writers should aspire. ‘Highbrow art is associated with intellectual elitism, the middlebrow with bland ordinariness’ (the academic Emma Sterry).

So it seems that our authors are associated with bland ordinariness. But hands up any Persephone reader who has ever found Dorothy Whipple either bland or ordinary.



*The novelist, journalist and suffragette Evelyn Sharp c. 1900*

# ‘TO PRISON WHILE THE SUN SHINES’ EVELYN SHARP 1910

Once, when I went to Holloway Gaol to visit a friend who had been sent there by a puzzled Government, the wardress who led me across the echoing stone yard was inspired to make a little pleasant conversation.

‘It’s pretty here in summer,’ she remarked sombrely.

At the time it was natural, perhaps, to credit her with a grim sense of humour; but a morning spent not long afterwards in a London police court suggested another explanation. You cannot sit in a police court and watch while men and women pass out into captivity, without realizing how many there are of us who go through the world snatching desperately at the air for some of the colour of life. I think my wardress-guide would scarcely have burst out with her involuntary remark had not some one come in from the outside to remind her that she lived in a grey semblance of a world, full of people who had tried to take a short cut to happiness and managed to get lost on the way. It was her instinctive human defence of a system that thinks to cure a desire for sunshine by shutting it out.

All the people I saw convicted in the police court that morning went to prison while the sun shone; for it was one of those irrepressible summer days that even London smoke cannot

succeed in dimming. The brilliance of it had touched the official soul of the constable who guarded the door; and the little crowd on the pavement, clamouring with or without justification for admittance, was at least being handled with wit and good humour.

‘Only those under remand, if you please!’ remonstrated the door-keeper politely, placing on one side the little woman who was waving a visiting-card at him. ‘Press, did you say, madam? Pressing to get in, I should call it, wouldn’t you? Well, well, I can’t say what might happen presently



*Duncan Grant: winning design for Artists' Suffrage League/National Union of Women's Suffrage poster competition 1909.*



if you care to wait on the chance. Those under remand only. Yes, yes, to be sure! If you were let out on bail the previous evening, you're under remand; but you're not a prisoner yet, or you wouldn't be out here, would you now? Pass inside, please. The other lady is your mother? Some of you ladies can show a lot of mothers today, it seems to me. Right along the footway, ladies, if you please. Those under remand only!

A man with a blue paper in his hand made a path with some difficulty through the crowd of waiting women who continued to throng the pavement with courageous patience. He was admitted without question, but wore the air of a man who felt that his natural prerogative as a frequenter of police courts was being infringed. Certainly the constable who guarded the door took far less interest in him than in the ladies on remand; and he was received without any wit at all. After him came the gentlemen of the press, who were also passed in without comment; and seeing this, the lady with the visiting-card resumed her plea.

'Oh, come along,' said the indulgent constable; and she found herself at last inside, confronted by more constables and an inspector. They were all smiling. She dived in her bag for credentials, but was instantly waved aside with fresh humour.

'We don't ask any questions, and it's best to give no answers,' she was told pleasantly, as they took her across an empty ante-room that seemed unnecessarily

large, into a crowded court that was certainly unnecessarily small. It was all very still; the wit and the clamour and the sunshine outside seemed suddenly very far away.

Admitting freely that tradition and fact are at variance in most countries, one felt that the little judgment hall, with its want of space, of sunlight, of air and sound and all the things that matter, was strangely at war with the accepted notion of the publicity of British justice. The British public was there, it is true – a dozen strong, perhaps, very self-conscious, and eaten up with pride at having succeeded in getting past the constable at the door. But it was a distinctly exclusive, not to say private, sort of public.

One forgot all this, however, when the magistrate came in and began to hear the cases. There were a good many, and they were heard with extraordinary rapidity. I suppose the offenders knew beforehand what they were charged with – an advantage they sometimes had over the magistrate when he mixed up the charge sheets. But the British public, jammed together on the one bench reserved for it, could only gather occasionally why this or that person was fined or sent to prison or remanded. One thing could be clearly deduced from the progress of that heart-breaking procession of human failures, as they passed, generally in hopeless silence, from the greyness of the police court to the more complete greyness beyond. They were all people who had

snatched desperately at the air for some of the colour of life, and had succumbed helplessly before they found it.

No court of justice could help them. You could not expect a magistrate, faced with something like forty cases, to stop and consider the terrible monotony of existence that had driven the little scullery-maid to be 'drunk and disorderly,' or the poor clerk to steal his employer's money, thinking to steal his happiness with it; or the lad with the jolly fearless face to beg in the streets because he was 'out of work' – at fifteen! – or the boy, whose eyes were swollen with crying, to be so unmanageable that his father had to bring him to a place where no child should be, at an age when, in happier circumstances, he would be just starting for Eton with a prospect before him of unlimited opportunities for 'ragging'. The magistrate was not unkind; nobody was unkind. All the prisoners were scrupulously asked if they had anything to say, if they would like to call a witness. Anything to say! You might as well try to discharge a mountain torrent through a bath tap. As for witnesses, a bewildered woman, convicted of drunkenness because she had been found lying unconscious on the pavement, could not be expected under the circumstances to have secured a witness to prove her contention that she was merely faint. One by one, they all shook their heads mutely, and went away to prison while the sun shone.

Then the remand prisoners, the women who had thronged the

doorstep in the early morning, who were there to answer for their rebellious manner of demanding a human and a political right, were brought into the dock by ones and twos; and there crept a change, a subtle change, into the musty atmosphere of ages. The court was still bathed in its queer half-light. There was the same feeling in it of spectral unreality. You knew even more certainly than before that the machinery of the little judgment hall was entirely inadequate to deal with the prisoners in the dock. But the hopelessness of the whole thing was gone. These were not people whose spirit had been driven out of them by monotony and bad luck, as it had been driven out of the derelicts who stood in the dock before them. These were not people who were going to give in before they had won from life what they demanded from it. It may be a perilous business to hunt down the colour of life for other people; but it is a less hopeless kind of job than hunting it down for yourself.

The great British public, represented by the handful of spectators who had evaded the censorship of the constable at the door, might, without cudgelling its brains unduly, have found some connection between the dreary convictions it had just witnessed, between the clumsy if kindly handling of habitual offenders, and this passage through the dock of imperturbably serene young women who, by the grace of God and the aid of a good cause, did

not belong to the criminal classes. It might even have discovered that the one set of offenders had brought the other after it, into a police court on a summer morning.

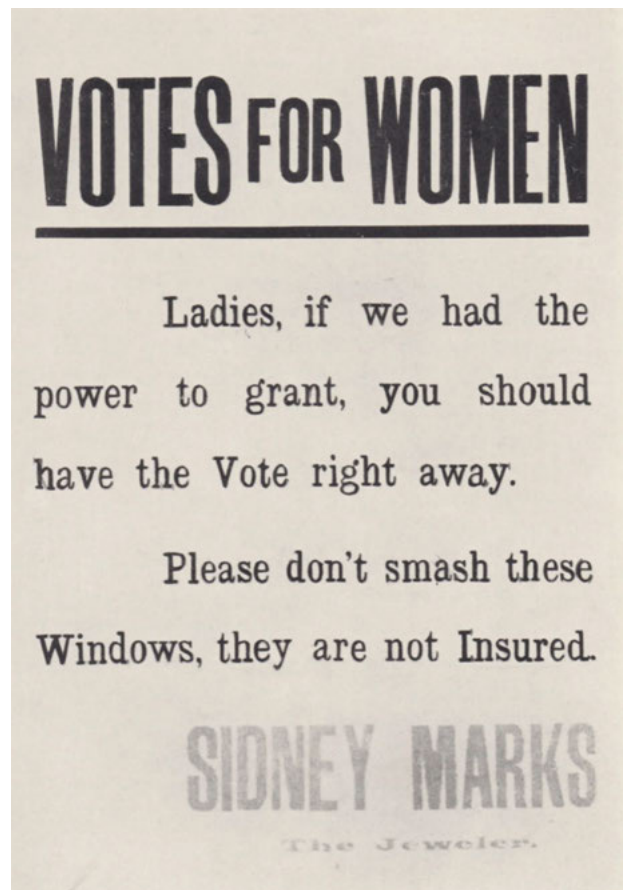
There was the same rapidity in hearing the cases, the same courteous farce of asking for questions that could only be answered outside the police court, and then, perhaps, only once in a hundred years or so. And there was the same unimaginative treatment of those who thought it worth while to accept the invitation to speak.

'Have you anything to say?' came the regulation enquiry, hallowed by centuries of official

belief in the innocence of unconvicted prisoners who yet felt their cases to be prejudged. Then, as the woman in the dock showed every indication of having a great deal to say, this would be followed up with a hasty 'Yes, yes; but I have nothing to do with that. I am here to administer the law as it stands.'

So the law was administered as it stood; and the colour of life still flickered elusive beyond the grasp of all of us, as thirteen more offenders, a rebel woman every one of them, went away to prison while the sun shone.

*From Rebel Women 1910, a collection of suffragette stories by*



*A new Persephone Postcard, now available to buy in the shop*

# FINALLY

I had never heard of “understatement” writes Fred Uhlman (author of that fabulous novel *Reunion* which we sell amongst the fifty books we wish we had published) in his autobiography *The Making of an Englishman* (1960). ‘I could not for the life of me see why when asked, “How did your show go?” it was wrong to answer, “Splendid. I sold the lot” instead of saying, “Not too badly” – which seemed to me sheer hypocrisy. I could not understand why I should not ask a man about his profession, income, how much he paid for his suit and whether he voted Tory or Labour and why it seemed to be “not done” to get excited or indeed passionate about a subject. I could not see why people should be embarrassed by my notion that to read a good book was more important than to chase a leather ball.

‘England – or so it seemed to me – was a paradise, a country without suffering, changeless, excluded from the common lot of mankind, a happy isle of lotus eaters. I cannot imagine any other country where one could live with so little interference from others. Yet England has a powerful influence. It is in the quiet voices of people in buses and underground. It is in the polite way in which you are treated when you have dealings with the authorities at the police station, or the food office. England is an amazing country.’

A US reader asked why we had had so much on the Post about votes for women and we explained. Evelyn Sharp’s story on pp. 24–6 is a reminder that it is mostly the poor and disadvantaged who go to prison. She writes in her memoir *Unfinished Adventure* (1933): ‘The sight through the grating [in her cell door] of the dreary procession of derelict men and women that went past in the night on the way to neighbouring cells, some drunk, some obviously only starved and dazed, all of them pitiful beyond description, did



more than any other of my Suffragette experiences to make me understand the need to pray daily for all prisoners and captives.’ Lydia (who wrote the preface to *No Surrender*) recently went to a women’s prison to take part in a book group that was discussing it. She found it a sobering but very positive experience.

GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation) comes in at the end of May. This means Persephone readers have to ‘opt in’ in order to remain on our email list. We are sending out an email (at about the time you receive this *Biannually*) to check that you really want to be on it. Sadly, this will reduce our list of 30,000 to (we estimate) 10,000. Of course, if we have a record of you buying a book from us, you will stay on the list to receive the *Biannually*; although if someone receives a book as a present, they will no longer be added to the postal mailing list: they need to ask to be on it. We can see why GDPR is a necessary way to stop the unscrupulous from exploiting people, but it’s annoying for the small company that would never ‘share’ its data and may lose a lot of potential customers.

The books for the Autumn/Winter are *The Call* by Edith Zangwill, (1924) about a woman scientist (modelled on Hertha Ayrton) who gives up her research to concentrate on women’s suffrage. The Preface is by Elizabeth Day. And *National Provincial*, a 1938 novel by Lettice Cooper set in Leeds in the 1930s. The Preface is by Rachel Reeves, MP for Leeds West.

Lastly: our author, Rose Allatini, has appeared as a character on the R4 series *Home Front* on March 28th and April 9th. This is a first!

# EVENTS

There will be a conversation about *Etty Hillesum* on **Tuesday May 22nd** at 6pm between the actress Susan Stein (who tours with her one woman show about Etty, ettyplay.org) and Tina Beattie, Professor of Catholic Studies at the University of Roehampton. Wine will be served.

Lucy Mangan (who wrote the Preface to *Young Anne*) and Harriet Evans (who wrote the Preface to *Because of the Lockwoods*) will be in conversation about Dorothy Whipple at a **Lunch** from 12.30–2.30 on **Wednesday May 23rd**.

On **Friday June 8th** *Nicola Beauman* will talk at the **Derby Literary Festival** about our suffragette novels in particular and feminist fiction in general.

On **Sunday June 10th** there will be suffragette events in Cardiff, Edinburgh, Belfast and London. ‘Thousands of women from across the UK will walk together in public processions, forming a living portrait of women in the 21st century and a visual expression of equality, strength and cultural representation.’ A group from Persephone Books will be there: to march with us please come to the shop for a cup of coffee from 10.30 onwards.

At 11am in Westminster on ‘a Wednesday in mid June’, **June 13th**, Lydia Fellgett will lead

a *Mrs Dalloway Day Walk* (following a slightly shorter route than last year). Lunch will be served at Lamb’s Conduit Street afterwards.

On **Tuesday June 19th** *Elizabeth Crawford*, suffrage historian and author of *Art and*



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*Suffrage: a Biographical Dictionary of Suffrage Artists* will give an illustrated talk on the subject at a **Lunch** from 12.30–2.30.

On **Wednesday June 27th** at a **Lunch** from 12.30–2.30 *Lucy Ellmann*, author of the Preface, will be in conversation with *Nicola Beauman* about PB

123, *Emmeline* by Judith Rossner.

On **Tuesday July 10th** at 4.30 we shall show *twenty black and white suffragette films*, in all just over an hour in length, made between 1910 and 1923. Tea and cake will be served at 4pm.

On **Wednesday September 19th** at a **Lunch** from 12.30–2.30 *Dr Matthew Ingleby*, author of the excellent book called *Bloomsbury* which we sell in the shop, will give an illustrated talk about – Bloomsbury.

On **Tuesday September 25th** at 6pm the novelist *Philip Hensher*, author of the Preface to *The Journey Home and Other Stories*, will talk informally about Malachi Whitaker and then answer questions. Wine and cheese straws will be served.

We shall show the rather good but difficult-to-find 1953 film of *Little Boy Lost* (with Bing Crosby) on **Thursday October 4th**. Tea will be served at 4 and the film shown at 4.30.

All the events take place in the shop. Please ring us to book a place. Lunches are £25, all other events are £15 (apart from June 10th for which there is obviously no charge).

The book group is on the first Wednesday of the month at 6.30 in the shop. It costs £10.

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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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