



The Persephone Biannually

1894 drawing in coloured chalks by AFASandys (1829–1904) of Marie Meredith (1871–1933), daughter of George Meredith.

Edith Ayrtton Zangwill was born in 1874 and the fictional Ursula in 'The Call' in 1885. It is likely that Edith Zangwill and Marie Meredith were friends, although there is no evidence of this.

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OUR BOOKS FOR AUTUMN/WINTER 2018–19

The title of Edith Ayrton Zangwill's *The Call*, about a woman scientist who abandons her research work (in chemistry) to be a suffragette, has several meanings – military, feminist, vocational, emotional. Although the novel has been ignored for nearly a hundred years, it is an important, and extremely readable, book. The reason for it being overlooked is closely related to the frequently-asked question, ‘how do you find your books’? Because, in this case, it was a problem finding the book in the first place...

It all started with the recent spotlight on the hundredth anniversary of women gaining the vote (some women). We decided we would like to publish another suffragette novel (to join *William – an Englishman* and *No Surrender*) and made an effort to find one; eventually we discovered two extracts from *The Call* in a 1995 anthology called *Voices and Votes*. But how to access a copy to read and from which to re-set? The five UK copyright libraries have severe restrictions on photocopying and scanning, and there was no copy in any public library or for sale. But eventually we discovered the six volume *Women's Suffrage Literature*

(cost: \$1500) and were able to borrow volume 6, *The Call*, to photocopy and send off to be typeset, proofread and turned into a Persephone book.

So now we proudly present our edition of *The Call*. Like *Despised and Rejected*, PB No. 126, it starts slowly, almost cautiously, and takes 80 or 100 pages before then shocking the reader with its radicalism. Edith Zangwill (1874–1945) – her husband was the writer Israel Zangwill – chooses to begin with a leisurely and detailed trawl round a house in Lowndes Square, ending up in the heroine's ‘lab of one's own’ (the title of a recent book about women scientists). It is clear at once that the domestic detail is a crucial part of *The Call*.

The novel gets into its stride when Ursula accompanies her mother to Henley (it is the July of 1909), encounters some suffragettes – and is appalled by them. But some months later, by chance, she sits in on a court case involving a prostitute and her nine-year-old daughter who has been sexually assaulted by a client. The leniency of the three-month sentence compared with a twelve-month sentence for a man who has stolen a pair of boots



'Poppyland', a 1904 duplex-printed cotton manufactured for Liberty in 1912. © V&A Images. (Poppies anticipate WW1 and this colourway hints at purple, green and white.)



An early 1930s design for a woven cloth by John Churton for the Silver Studio. © MODA, Middlesex University.

horrifies her. She realises that ‘it was the law that was insane, or rather the lawmakers... The suffragettes were right. There was some connection between such things and the Vote.’

‘After this,’ writes the novelist and journalist Elizabeth Day in her Preface, ‘Edith Zangwill painstakingly recounts Ursula’s first encounter with the “Leader” [Mrs Pankhurst] at her headquarters; her reluctant agreement to be a speaker; the long train journeys she undertakes to spread the message; the effort required to muster up enough energy to speak to large gatherings of people; the dispiriting cold suppers offered by well-meaning local hosts; and the inability of her family and her lover to understand her new-found zealotry.’

Finally, in November 1910 (we have provided a Publisher’s Timeline at the beginning of the book), she witnesses the police knocking down an elderly woman at a protest and ‘nothing before had ever fired Ursula with such an irresistible passion for Women’s Suffrage, with such a burning faith in the value of militancy. The Cause, from being an intellectual desirability, suddenly became a religion. Militancy was no longer tactics, it was martyrdom.’

But Ursula’s devotion to the suffragette cause means that she must give up her research. She had been/is a chemist, who was good enough to be asked to

give a paper at the British Association and used to spend her days at her workbench in her lab: the detailed descriptions of her working life are closely based on the life of Edith Zangwill’s stepmother, Hertha Ayrton (1854–1923), a physicist who became an expert on the electric arc. (When the Royal Society was recently asked to vote for the ten women in British history who

have had the most influence on science, she was one of them.)

What changes things for Ursula is the war. She spends the first few months recovering from the trauma of imprisonment and the terrifying and abusive force-feeding (which is graphically described and would surely have been used by recent writers and researchers –



Detail from 'The Bayswater Omnibus' by George William Joy 1895, Museum of London. Hertha Ayrton and her stepdaughter Edith Ayrton (later Zangwill) lived in Norfolk Square, Bayswater.

if they had been able to read the book). Then, in 1915, she returns to her lab to work on a method of extinguishing the liquid fire used by the German troops – and thus helping the war effort (just as Hertha Ayrton had invented the ‘Ayrton fan’); the last third of the novel is about Ursula’s struggle to persuade the military to use her invention at the Front.

Sadly, novels about the war and about votes for women were largely ignored during the 1920s: the former was too raw and the latter ‘too remote to be topical & too recent to be innocuous’ (a letter from Edie Zangwill, who wrote as Edith Ayrton Zangwill but was always known as Edith or Edie Zangwill). Even the theme of a woman scientist in a man’s world was rather remote for the average novel-reader. Yet there is another theme that should have sparked her (because it was

mostly her) interest. Ursula has a friend and mentor, Vernon Smee whose wife has no children and nothing to do and as a result she is nearly hysterical with boredom. Then, during the war, she runs a canteen extremely efficiently. If only Edith Zangwill had tackled the burning question: what will poor Charlotte Smee do with herself when the war is over?

Elizabeth Day concludes: ‘*The Call* gives a rare insight into a woman’s domestic life in the first two decades of the 20th century ... domestic details about running a house are, most unusually, given their due alongside Ursula’s political actions, elegantly making the point that a woman’s work behind closed doors is just as worthy of our attention as what goes on in the wider world.’ By making political points in the guise of a ‘woman’s novel’, the author stunningly reveals her commitment to feminism.

Our other writer this autumn/winter, Lettice Cooper, comes at things from the opposite direction: *National Provincial* (1938), PB No. 130, is first and foremost ‘a social-political novel, a sprawling panorama of West Riding life and politics in the mid 1930s’ (Rachel Reeves, MP for Leeds West, in her Preface); the feminist plea is made almost obliquely because the author takes feminism for granted. It is a subtle feminism, as it is in Lettice Cooper’s *The New House* (1936), PB No. 47 (a great Persephone favourite) about the day a family moves house.

The *Times* obituary writer said about Lettice Cooper: ‘What lifted her novels above those of her peers was her perceptiveness – she understood her characters’ worries, fears and indecisions; their bewilderment when faced with big intractable problems – rather than any novelty of style.



We publish a diary every other year and this *Persephone One Hundred and Thirty: Diary for 2019* is our fifth. It has, as is traditional, a page for each of our 130 fabrics plus the opening sentence of each book. This means the diary is by now quite heavy. However, it is meant as a desk diary rather than to be carried about, and because it is stitched (thank you GGP, who do our printing) it lies beautifully flat.



Indeed, her novels read so effortlessly that it was easy to overlook the excellent passages they contained. *National Provincial*, a panorama of Leeds in the 1930s, brought in so many outside references – to shop stewards, Red agitators, the Left Book Club, the Abdication and Abyssinian crises, to British Fascists and the growing fashion for psychoanalysis – that some critics complained that it was hardly a novel at all. But its great strength was its central character, Stephen Harding, a man unhappily torn between duties to politics and to wife and family.’

For indeed family is a crucial focus: the lives of the

Hardings, Marsdens, Allworthys and Wards overlap and sometimes come into conflict. Even more important is conflict within the family. And yet politics can never be ignored. (We have a provided a Historical Background, outlining the main relevant events during 1935–6.)

The heroine, Mary, was brought up in ‘Aire’. She went to Oxford (like Lettice Cooper) and, when the novel begins in July 1935, is 27 and has been working on the *Daily Tribune* in London for three years. She is coming home in order to look after her mother and work on the local paper. Mary is an admirable young woman: one thinks of Jane

in *High Wages* and Thea in *Because of the Lockwoods* and of Miss Ranskill; she is flawed but good and very, very human. ‘Brought up in a household that made a luxury of resigning itself to the worst, she had, ever since she was a stubborn little girl, attached great importance to not being beaten.’ Yet, now, ‘in spite of her disappointments she was also secretly and ecstatically happy. It was impossible for her to go on a railway journey without feeling that at the other end there was likely to be something interesting.’

This 600-page book begins with an enticing description of Mary’s arrival home (Lettice



Joan Hassell (1906–88) *Packing parcels for the war effort – village hall*. © Sim Fine Arts

Cooper draws us so inexorably into the Aire world that we are gripped from the first line), her difficulties with her invalid mother and then her re-entry into local life. Just like Mrs Gaskell's *Wives and Daughters* and Winifred Holtby's *South Riding*, published in 1936, the novel evokes Yorkshire life in all its facets, as well as the everyday experience of a young woman living there. But the climax of the book is a strike (as in Mrs Gaskell's *North and South*). And the main focus is on snobbery, and very British kinds of snobbery. 'Old money looks down on new, the aspirational working class despise those who remain in domestic service; established residents look down on newcomers brought to a new housing estate by a slum-

clearance programme; and some of those newcomers are uneasy about their neighbours.' Lettice Cooper, like Dorothy Whipple (another Northern writer) is amused by all this although 'her main focus is political: she is strongly committed to the centre-left and distrusts all extremists, especially the Communists' (*Reading 1900–1950*).

Rachel Reeves ends her Preface with a beautifully written description of present-day Leeds, a city which 'has a proud history and confident future, but the inequalities of wealth and power that the Left Book Club attendees in Lettice Cooper's novel sought to abolish are still with us. In an age in which tensions between the national and the provincial persist, her story is of timeless

relevance today.

The *Times Literary Supplement* (making *National Provincial* the lead review and *Princes in the Land*, PB No. 63 a secondary review – a questionable decision!) said that the author 'brings quick feeling to her commentary on a scene that is obviously in her bones' while the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* entry on Lettice Cooper observes that 'it dramatises the political differences and shades of feeling during the period.' The *Manchester Guardian* reviewer said that she 'has done for a contemporary industrial town pretty much what *Middlemarch* did for a C19th country town. It is a story that she tells beautifully and movingly, and it is a story that is hers as well as her characters.'

Clockwise from top left: Civic Hall, Leeds opened 1933; Co-op Society Chemist, Albion Street; the Co-op; General Post Office



EMMA SMITH'S THE FAR CRY

‘Our’ author Emma Smith, who was born in 1923, alas died in the summer, prompting us to look up the file. Here are some extracts from her letters.

April 10 1999 ‘Of course I’m absolutely delighted and thrilled that you would like to reprint *The Far Cry*. Never mind if I have to wait two years for this pleasure – two years will go by in a flash. But I’m very sorry, and, I must admit, disappointed that you didn’t warm equally to *The Opportunity of a Lifetime*.’

July 5 2002 ‘Thank you first and foremost for reprinting *The Far Cry* and doing it so beautifully. Thank you too for inviting me to come to your lovely friendly office, so as to

open my mouth and *speak* (terrifying!) to all those nice kind people (of whom I had absolutely no need to be afraid at all). And for telling me I hadn’t made a muddy mess of it (which I felt I had, wandering hopelessly off the point) afterwards. Incidentally, in the bus going home, it came to me what I should have said in answer to a question ‘was it from you, or someone else?’ I would have wished to have said that from earliest childhood I’d always had this secret belief that I *knew* what people were really like behind what they were pretending to be like – and those who I felt were *not* pretending to be anything other than what they appeared to be (Miss Spooner?) were the ones I trusted. And this deep-seated intuitive belief of mine I must have bestowed on

Theresa without being aware, then, of the source. Does this make sense? My eyes were turned so resolutely away from myself when I was writing (it always is – I think of writing as being a holiday from the burden of self) that I simply didn’t realise how much I was plundering my earliest childhood for the uncertainties of this anxious older child. Reading *The Far Cry* now it seems glaringly obvious.

Today (as ever, you see, obedient), I rattled off the first page of an attempt at a sort of autobiography. I’m regarding it as strictly a fun project, and it may never get beyond the first page.’ [It did of course and became *The Great Western Beach*, published in 2008.]

Emma Smith in 1944 (second from right). She worked on the canals for two years, very happily. This was a publicity photograph taken by the Ministry of Transport.



HAY BOX COOKERY

No one who has read *The Children who Lived in a Barn* (1938), PB No. 27, can forget the enchanting idea of the hay box which solves the problem of cooking supper if you have to go to school all day. Deserted after the disappearance of their parents, the children contend with actively hostile adults trying to separate them, and Sue, the eldest girl, has to cook and sew and mend for the others. Her courage and resourcefulness are symbolised by her success with the hay box.

This, however, is by no means the only sighting of one in a Persephone book. Lady Jekyll's suggestion in *Kitchen Essays* (1922), PB No. 30, for a shooting luncheon in a keeper's cottage is a lamb stew in 'a big brown marmite, piping hot from a hay-box'. In *The Country Housewife's Book* (1934), PB No. 80, Lucy Yates describes not only 'a homely Hay-box' but also a more elaborate 'Fuelless Cooker' containing 'hot iron discs placed in metal frames' so that it is 'something more than a mere heat retainer'. This cluster is not coincidental: the hay box focuses a series of anxieties and themes recurrent in Persephone books: women's work inside and outside the home, the disappearance of servants, self-help in the face of social change, the architecture of the home, the poetry of domestic life, and what Eliza Acton called 'elegant economy': the intelligent use of our resources in money and time.

The hay box idea caught on in the early twentieth century (though some classical scholars argue, on the authority of the third Satire of Juvenal, that ancient Jews kept food warm for the Sabbath in baskets of hay). There was even a cookery book by Annie Hawkins entitled *The Hay Box and its Uses, or, The Cook that Never Gets Cross* (1918). There was a hay box in the pioneering fitted Frankfurt kitchen designed by Margarete Schütte-Lihotzky in 1926. In the 1920s and 1930s it was a modern and progressive idea, because dinner could be left cooking at home in an empty kitchen while its mistress left to work or amuse herself elsewhere. Cooking over open fires, or even on the ranges which succeeded them, generally assumed the continuous presence of housewife or employee, and many kinds of cookery were arranged on this basis. As Patience Gray and Primrose Boyd observed in *Plats du Jour* (1967), PB No. 70: 'The disappearance of the stock pot is linked to the departure of the domestic cook. The kitchen is no longer the scene of continuous activity, but a place for sporadic effort.'

Nowadays the hay box figures largely on internet sites associated with survivalism and people who for one reason or another want to live 'off the grid'. That's no reason, though, not to make use of it in ordinary life, if you can provide yourself

with a suitable box. You start by heating your ingredients thoroughly on a conventional stove or fire, and you then insulate the pot so the heat is retained as long as possible. The hay box is the exact opposite of a slow cooker, which very gradually brings a cold stew to boiling point. Sue's hay box is rather sketchily described, though we are told it is large enough to contain a saucepan of stew and one of milk pudding, lined with newspaper in layers and filled with hay. More specific instructions are given by the Vicomte de Mauduit in *They Can't Ration These* (1940), PB No. 54: 'The size of the box if destined to contain two dishes should be about 22 inches by 15 inches and 16 inches deep, but if only intended to contain one casserole dish it need only be a 14 inches cube.'

Even more detail can be found in Mrs Arthur Webb's 'Haybox Cookery' chapter in *Wartime Cookery* (1939) and in Ambrose Heath's *Hay Box Cookery* (1961). Heath, whose seventy books included *Good Food on the Aga* (1933), PB No. 45 and *The Country Life Cookery Book* (1937), PB No. 109, was a cookery journalist, and many of his readers were looking for ways to simplify housework in the absence of departed domestic staff, and to save fuel, the cost of which rose terrifyingly in the early twentieth century. During World War II he had taken part

in a radio series called 'The Kitchen Front', dispensing advice about managing with rations and fuel shortages, in which the hay box figured largely. Some may bridle at his assumption that the technology was 'likely invented by an intelligent cottager to help his wife in days when fuel was hard to come by' but there is much good sense in his little book.

It is essential to make sure that the ingredients are thoroughly hot at the beginning, especially if you are cooking meat. Some authorities, including the author of *The Children who Lived in a Barn*, suggest you simply bring the stew to the boil; Ambrose Heath, more cautiously, says that you should keep it at boiling point for a third of the ordinary cooking time. The worry, of course, is that a low temperature may permit the growth of bacteria. You definitely want to bring the whole thing to the boil again when you come home or wake up, and keep it just simmering (not boiling furiously to shreds) for at least ten minutes. Smallish pieces of meat, rather than huge joints on the bone, are appropriate, and there should be plenty of liquid.

Having looked unsuccessfully for the 'tea chests' and 'orange boxes' mentioned by earlier writers, and lacking any skill in carpentry, this summer we begged two wooden boxes from the local wine shop and formed them into one by stapling in a cardboard lining. In cities a small quantity of hay at a reasonable price can be hard to

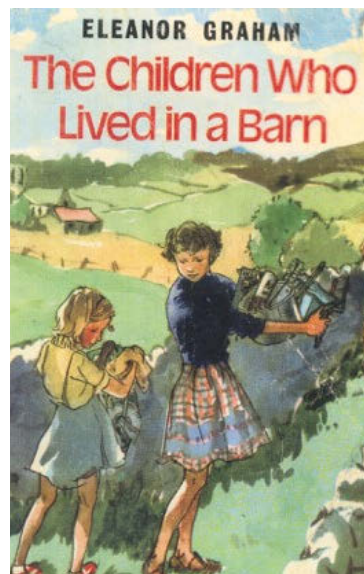
find, and many fewer of us read printed newspapers. The 'asbestos sheeting' recommended by Ambrose Heath has been discredited, though glass fibre insulation, suggested by the author of *The Yachtsman's Cook Book* (1966) is a possibility. The modern fear of identity theft, providentially, creates a supply of shredded paper – this is also a solution to the problem discovered by a friend who observed gloomily that you can't lay a fire with an iPad. The box must not be too small. The casserole should be full. The filling should be pressed down tightly around it. Since the size and characteristics of your box will affect the efficiency of the insulation, it is advisable to make a few experiments before risking a dinner party, but it is a perfectly practical system.

The method really comes into its own with tough meat that benefits from prolonged cooking at a fairly low temperature. A recipe such as Elizabeth David's *Jarret de bœuf en daube* from *French Provincial Cooking* is an example. Cook a large chopped onion and a 200g packet of bacon lardons until the fat runs. Layer this mixture in a casserole with 1.4 kg of beef shin, in 2cm cubes, 2 smashed garlic cloves, herbs and salt. Add a glass of red wine and enough water to cover, and bring slowly and completely to the boil. Simmer for an hour, then leave in the hay box all day or overnight, taking care, as above, to reheat it properly before you eat it. It will be as splendid as Mrs Ramsay's *daube*

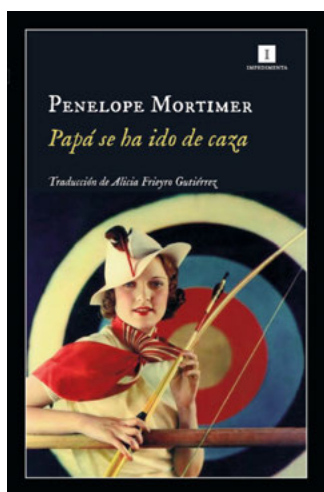
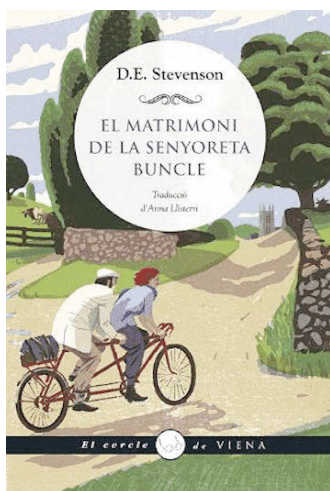
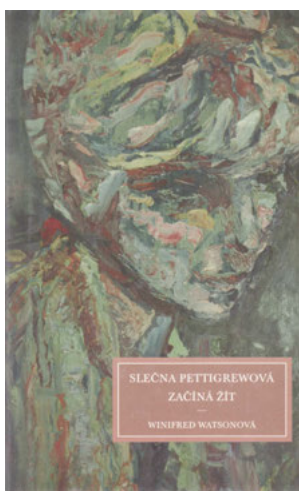
in *To the Lighthouse* (and will be served at a *Persephone Lunch* on 4th December).

Pulses, porridge, yoghurt and delicate fruit such as rhubarb and peaches also respond well to being cooked very slowly for a long time. A hay box is also a good place to leave a roast joint to rest before eating it – some people do not realise how much this improves meat, or that you can leave a large joint, or a turkey, for an hour or more to its advantage. In fact, an Urban Hay Box, filled with what is known charmingly in offices as Confidential Waste, makes a very useful addition to the kitchen. Unless, that is, you decide to run to an Aga, as in *Good Food on the Aga*, PB No. 45: the bottom oven of an Aga is equivalent to a hay box.

*Written for the Persephone
Biannually by Dr Charlotte Mitchell*



OUR TRANSLATIONS 4



OUR REVIEWERS WRITE

‘Today Dorothy B Hughes is remembered for *In a Lonely Place* (1947) but my personal favourite is *The Expendable Man* (1963). Hughes lived in New Mexico and her love of its bleak landscape comes through in carefully painted details. She knows how to use the land sparingly, so it creates mood. The narrative shifts from the sandscape to the doctor, who reluctantly picks up a teen hitchhiker. When she’s found dead a day later, he’s the chief suspect, and the secrets we know he’s harbouring from the first page are slowly revealed. Hughes’s novels crackle with menace. Like a Bauhaus devotee, she understood that in creating suspense, less is more.

Insinuation, not graphic detail, gives her books an edge of true terror. She’s the master we all could learn from.’ Sara Paretsky *Guardian*

‘*Tory Heaven* was first published in 1948 and, as David Kynaston points out in the introduction, just like 2018, that year was a worrying time for the middle classes of this country. It’s something that Marghanita Laski picks up on in this insightful and comedic novel in which it is the Tories, not Labour, who win the general election in 1945 and proceed to recreate a class system with all the trappings of the C18th. The population are now graded into social classes from A to E, with

the As paid in gold sovereigns and required to do nothing but live out the lives of the idle rich. The middle classes are Bs, the Cs are servants from domestics to hairdressers, and trade unionists, who cannot now strike, are Ds. The Es include the despised intellectuals. Laski shows that attitudes to class did shift during WWII but the possibility of an authoritarian government was still there. *Tory Heaven* may be of its era, although watching Jacob Rees-Mogg on television one can see that he would make an excellent A. Funny and ironic, it’s a book that says a lot about the British class system, then and now.’ Bernadette Hyland *Morning Star*

‘In her day Dorothy Whipple was one of the best-loved novelists in Britain. Plot and action were not her forte. What she did excel at was ordinary, recognisable relationships lived by ordinary, recognisable people. Her female characters are loyal, loving and reliable; vain, flighty and selfish; weak, scared and cowardly; but all of them are thoroughly believable. She often placed her middle-class protagonists in low-key situations, but the emotional truth that she wrung from them make her novels achingly poignant and involving. Yet the very qualities that made her so popular in the 1930s and 1940s also led to her precipitous decline. By the late 1950s she had fallen out of

fashion. Today, however, she is experiencing a gradual revival thanks to Persephone, which has been steadily republishing her since 1999. *Young Anne* (1927) is the last of the novels being brought back into print, and now surely is the time for this immensely addictive writer to be rediscovered by a wider reading public.’ Becky Barrow *The Sunday Times*

‘Imagine a Britain where the population has been rigidly graded into five bands. Dystopian fantasy? Of course. But there is much in *Tory Heaven* that resonates. It tells of a country in which a right-wing Tory administration embarks on a whirlwind campaign of social engineering. Smocks are reintroduced for agricultural labourers and pubs and shops strictly segregated. And there’s no need for a Labour party now that there is no one left to vote for them – the Reform Act has been repealed and elections reduced to a carnival straight out of *Middlemarch*. Laski has a deft touch when it comes to describing everyday life in this class-ridden land. There are some nice comic moments. But essentially this is a dark tale which plays on the class structures and prejudices which seem almost as strong now as they were just after WWII. Laski is ridiculously far-fetched yet somehow strangely plausible.’ Kate Murray *Fabian Review*

THE PERSEPHONE 130

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 Beaman

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 Moorcock, Afterword: George Gamow

58. Hetty Dorval by Ethel Wilson

First novel (1947) set in the beautiful landscape of British Columbia; a young girl is befriended by the lovely and selfish 'menace' – but is she one? Afterword: Northrop Frye

59. There Were No Windows by Norah Hoult

A touching and funny 1944 novel about an elderly woman with memory loss living in Kensington 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. Also a Persephone Classic

68. The Expendable Man by Dorothy B Hughes

A 1963 thriller about a young doctor in Arizona which encapsulates the social, racial and moral tensions of the time. By the author of *In a Lonely Place*. Afterword: Dominic Power

69. Journal of Katherine Mansfield

The husband of the great short story writer (cf. *The Montana Stories*, PB No. 25) assembled this Journal from

unposted letters, scraps of writing etc: a unique portrait.

70. Plats du Jour by Patience Gray and Primrose Boyd

A 1957 cookery book which was a bestseller at the time and a pioneering work for British cooks. The line drawings and the endpapers are by David Gentleman.

71. The Shuttle by Frances Hodgson Burnett

A 1907 page-turner about an American heiress married to an English aristocrat, whose beautiful and enterprising sister sets out to rescue her. Preface: Anne Sebba

72. House-Bound by Winifred Peck

This 1942 novel describes an Edinburgh woman 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-Mönckeberg.

Written in Hamburg but never sent, these letters provide a crucial counterpoint 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 explaining 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** This superb novel in the Henry James/Edith Wharton tradition is set on Lake Como in 1906. Published anonymously and with incestuous undertones, thus a *succès de scandale*. Afterword: Alison Adburgham
- 121. Effi Briest by Theodor Fontane.** An 1895 classic of European literature 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: a subtle, unusual 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 has dark undertones: four sisters living in the country have to defer to their demanding mother.
- 126. Despised and Rejected by Rose Allatini** A pioneering 1918 novel about a gay conscientious objector and his friendship with a young woman who also opposes the war. Afterword: Jonathan Cutbill
- 127. Young Anne by Dorothy Whipple** A quasi-autobiographical and extremely readable novel by our bestselling writer about a young girl growing up. Preface: Lucy Mangan
- 128. Tory Heaven by Marghanita Laski** A dark 1948 satire about a Britain under Tory rule with everyone divided up (by the As) into A, B, C, D, and E. Preface: David Kynaston
- 129. The Call by Edith Ayrton Zangwill** A 1924 novel about a young woman scientist (based on Hertha Ayrton) who gives up her work for ‘the cause’. Preface: Elizabeth Day
- 130. National Provincial by Lettice Cooper** A 1938 novel about politics in Leeds in 1935–6, surprisingly page-turning despite its often serious subject matter. Preface: Rachel Reeves, MP for Leeds West

‘JOURNEY’S OTHER END’: A 1932 STORY BY RC SHERRIFF

‘Mind you,’ warned Trotter, ‘I can’t guarantee anything. It’s – what is it? – thirteen years now since it stopped. They’ve had all that time to clear up and put things straight. Maybe there won’t be very much to show you now. In any case, it won’t be like it was, after all these years.’

‘It’ll be wonderful to see the dugouts and things,’ said Mrs Trotter.

‘That’s just what I mean,’ put in her husband, ‘I don’t know whether there’ll be any dugouts now. But, as I say, I’m going to try my best to show you things. It’s the boys I’m thinking most about. They oughter see round, before it’s too late.’

He paused, glanced down at his wife, stuffed his thumb into the bowl of his pipe, and lit a match. After a moment he strolled to the window and stood for a long time gazing into the garden.

Dusk was gathering in the sky beyond the houses on the other side of the road, but the days were drawing out now, and he had spent this last evening mowing the lawn and putting things straight against his departure.

Thirteen years ago! It was a long time since he had measured the span, and it almost frightened him to think that close upon a quarter of a lifetime

separated him from that final, freezing night in France.

It had always remained so fresh in his memory. Muffled in their greatcoats, with ice-cold noses and aching ears they had waited in the darkness, stamping up and down the rusty, old, camouflaged troopship, cursing the delay.

Many a time he had longed and prayed for that moment: the moment when he would be heading for the last time away from France; yet, strangely, all his irritation had left him and a lump had risen in his throat as they had crept slowly away towards the open sea.

For dawn had begun to glisten behind the ragged outlines of Boulogne, and he had stood silent among the scattered cheers that rose around him.

Why did it mean nothing to the others – to see the dawn rising for the last time over the dark, broken land where they had lived and toiled and fought?

More times than he could say had he watched that glowing light creep up behind the twisted wire of No Man’s Land, silvering the dark, stagnant pools.

Home lay ahead; the dawn was something different there – something that happened silently and unseen beyond drawn bedroom curtains. Maybe he would never see the dawn like that again – from the bows of a creaking, weather-beaten old

ship.

‘I reckon I’d like to go back there one day – just for a nose round the old places for a last time.’

A croaking laugh had come from the muffled figure beside him. ‘You’re welcome. You can have the bloody place.’

Even in the biting north wind he had dozed, and in his fitful dreams had come friendly faces, drawn and haggard in the light of star-shells, yet smiling, and bidding him goodbye...

Trotter had not been a man to fumble long with the threads he had laid down four years before. Home, wife, his garden, and little Bert, who had arrived in the world three months before his last return; his old job waiting for him and some old friends coming back.

In a little while things were very much the same. Life was good – very pleasant – with slippers in the evening and unbroken sleep in the night. And yet through the years that followed, Trotter never went back upon the words he had spoken on the troopship as he had left France in the dawn.

An urge that he could never truly understand – a restless yearning – called him to go back again, to wander over the old ground once more and take a last look round the old places where he had lived and fought.

But little Bert was followed two years later by a small but lusty brother, christened Fred, and the air of Margate, to lusty babies, was more essential than the fields of France.

'I'll take 'em over there one day,' said Trotter – 'when they're old enough to understand.'

And he grew fiercely and unreasonably angry sometimes, when he came upon pictures in his paper of 'the battlefields today' – of lines of trim, cheap villas where the gaunt, black ruins had stood, and stretches of waving corn where trenches had wound across churned-up, deserted plains.

For he wanted it to be the same; he wanted to show Bert and Freddy the things he had known: he wanted to take them through old, grass-grown trenches and twilight dugouts – to tell them the story of the men he had lived with in the broken woods...

It was hard to believe, as he stood looking out on his garden, that the moment of his great adventure had arrived. People were passing up and down the road as they had passed for more than thirteen years, since the evening he had come through the gate with his pack and luggage. An age had passed since then.

Would his wife, and the boys, understand? Ought he to have waited, perhaps, until the boys were a little older? Perhaps he should have sent them off to Margate, and gone to France alone. Could a road over a hill, or a monument in a valley, mean

anything to Bert at fourteen and Freddy at twelve?

It was too late to worry about that now; the bags were packed and the tickets in his pocket. For several years he had been putting aside a little regularly for this day, and even when the crisis had come, and he had found his money would not buy so much in France, he had still kept stubbornly to his plans.

'It isn't unpatriotic,' he said, 'to go to the battlefields.'

And in his heart he knew it was now or never – he knew that sometimes he felt the urge failing and that in a year or two he might not feel the impulse to go.

He had arranged to land at Boulogne instead of Calais because Boulogne had always been the place of his arrival, and he wanted, as nearly as possible, to retrace his steps.

Boulogne, too, would take him by train, past Etaples, and from the windows he would be able to show the boys the place where he slept his first night in France.

Then to Bethune, where his early trench warfare days were spent – then southward to the place that mattered most of all...

'Look at all those funny men!' shouted Freddy.

'Those're French sailors,' said Trotter. 'They're –'

But his words were cut short by the plunging of propellers and a clanging bell. A rope whizzed through the air, to fall on the quay and squirm off with a splash into the water.

'They've missed!' shouted Bert. 'Look!'

The rope was out again, dripping on the deck; it hummed through the air once more, and fell into the hands of a fat, excited sailor.

The passengers had gathered in a crowd round the gangway, and the foremost were already filing on to the quay, before Trotter gave a start, and turned. With a trace of embarrassment he gathered the bags and led his family to the fringe of the waiting crowd.

It was not often that he was caught by daydreams, for the present and the definite things around him were usually his world, but as he had glanced away from the sailors who wrestled with the ropes his eyes had fallen on the broad, cobbled trackway that skirted the station and swung round towards the town.

A few nondescript porters shambled to and fro, and shabby piles of crates and baskets littered its sides, but the sight of the trackway, glittering in the sun, sent Trotter's memory leaping over the years, far beyond the winter dawn of his last leaving, to a spring morning when he had stood there, with his coat flapping round his knees, with men stretching in a long line to either side of him – white kitbags beside them, home behind them and the war ahead.

Limbers had rattled by, anxious officers in coloured armlets had hurried to and fro; the whole place had seethed with life and adventure – this deserted place with one or two shambling porters and its piles

of derelict boxes...

'Tickets, please! The yellow cards, please!'

'Sorry,' said Trotter, and the family, hurrying behind, collided with his back like a line of shunted goods-trucks, as their father belatedly fumbled for his tickets.

Evening had fallen before the turmoil of Boulogne was left behind and the train gathered speed as it came to the sand dunes of Etaples. It threw long shadows away from the sunset, but the barren little hillocks beyond caught the pale glow now and then.

'That's Eatapps,' said Trotter; 'place where we used to stay a day or two before going up the line.'

Here and there, in the parched, sandy grass, he thought he could see the circular heaped-up ridges where the tents stood; the lines upon lines of tents that had made this deserted, almost forgotten place the biggest canvas city in the world.

Once they passed a dark, old hut standing in a hollow as if it had been missed by the giant broom that had swept away the vestiges of war – and then the train had passed into a ragged fringe of wood, and Etaples had gone.

'Fancy you having to live in a place like that!' exclaimed Mrs Trotter.

The train roared through the night. Mrs Trotter followed her boys into a restless doze, and Trotter sat watching them wondering how he could ever

explain, and fearful lest his pilgrimage, after all these years of waiting, should be a hopeless failure.

His wife had said those words just for something to say. Etaples had meant nothing to her – even the boys had looked with expressionless eyes, and turned once more to the exciting foreign advertisements in the opposite fields.

Yet from that fleeting glimpse there came to Trotter the far-off music of mouth-organs, the squelching rhythm of muddy boots, marching down the endless lines – muffled figures and swinging lanterns – the Last Post floating out with all its infinite sadness over the dark huts and the silent plains around them.

There came, too, the memory of hope – the memory of his first pride as a fighting man in France.

Still, it had been a wonderful day for the boys – a wonderful day for them to talk about when they went back to school – that crossing through the misty sea... the cakes in the teashop at Boulogne...

It was his own fault if he felt dispirited and sad. His imagination had built up a picture of the battlefields as he wanted them to be; he had not made enough allowance for time.

France was foreign again – it was no longer the corner of England that he had known; he should have been prepared for the stony indifference of the

French men in Boulogne – it was their country after all. He and the men he had lived with here were shadows – just a few shadows that had passed across this country years ago.

Near to midnight a forlorn little English family, with sleepy, wondering eyes, crept into their beds in the battered, old hotel behind the station of Bethune, and listened, for a while, to strange foreign voices murmuring below.

There was a time when motor-coaches toured the battlefields, and passed along old No Man's Land as frequently as a bus service between English country towns.

But those days have gone now, for those who came merely for curiosity can now see little to reward them. The pilgrims only remain, and pilgrims make for secret places, remote from the tracks of the casual tourist ten years ago.

Transport is difficult today, for those like Trotter, for some of the places he wished to visit lay remote from the main roads. The efforts of a travel bureau had done a little to help him, and it remained for him to do the rest.

Bethune was to be his centre for the first part of the tour, and Bethune next morning dispersed the depression that had weighed upon him the night before. It was a beautiful, early summer morning, and before breakfast he walked out alone towards the square.

Smooth new cobbles rang under his stout walking boots,

and the freshness of the air thrilled him to the sense of his adventure.

The same kind of people were taking down the same kind of shutters that he remembered so well, and, although the town had been all but destroyed in the last year of the war, the spirit of old Bethune lingered in the alleys, where a few old buildings, patched and scarred, still told their story to passers-by.

Rays of memory shine over the past, lighting up unexpected little peaks, leaving the mountains in the shade. One little corner of Bethune had remained in Trotter's memory: the boot-shop at the corner of the street that led eastward from the square towards the trenches.

To many another man, this corner remains lit up in memory, for in the boot-shop, all through Bethune's first years of torture, served two very lovely girls, whose beauty became legendary from Belgium to the Somme.

Weary, mud-stained officers, freed for a few hours from the line, would go, strangely excited to this shop and buy a pair of bootlaces to feast their eyes for a few fragrant moments on a scene that bought to them the memory of another world.

Excited, almost fearfully, Trotter crossed the square. There was the boot-shop in the distance – not the same building that he had known – a different, new building, but even from a distance he could see the shoes that decorated its windows.

He had long thought of this moment; he had even determined to go boldly into the shop and buy some laces again, for the loveliness of those girls had haunted him.

His heart gave a bound as he approached the door, for someone was just coming out. But it was not one of those girls, it was a stout, comely woman near or passing forty.

She gave him a shy half-smile as he passed, then turned her attention to the window she was dressing. She was gone by the time he had turned at the corner, and he paused irresolutely on the kerb. Perhaps the girls were inside – and yet – could it possibly be?

He almost laughed at his stupidity – what a fool he was! Had he really forgotten that it was fifteen years ago? – fifteen years ago since he marched southward to Bapaume?

* * * * *

'It'll be a four-mile walk,' said Trotter; 'we're going up the line now – just the way we used to go.'

They had left the 'bus on the outskirts of Vermelles, and were walking between the dreary mining cottages that had been the frail haven of many a resting company in years gone by. Little had changed here, except that shabby women stood at street doors where only men had lounged.

These little houses had never been entirely destroyed, and bright new tiles glared down from the pock-marked walls. Clouds of dark smoke hung above the pits to either side,

though Trotter had only seen them in the past as silent, brooding slag-heaps.

In Vermelles he pointed to the new red-brick houses that had risen over the cellars of his memory, and led his family up the grass-grown lane he knew so well – that ended on the silent, open plains of Loos.

He could have walked blindfolded to the old, red wall with the hole in it. The hole had given entrance to the great communication-trench that led for two miles across the plain.

He was confident of finding that trench, for surely, in such a wild, neglected country, no hand would have taken pains to fill it in? His heart quickened: there lay the wall ahead – new pieces gleaming in it here and there – but the same old wall.

'The 'ole ought to just be about 'ere,' he said.

But no hole remained. A patch of new brick where the hole had been, but no trench – no sign of trench. He tiptoed and gazed over. Before him lay a trim cabbage patch and a few lines of young, stripling apple trees. A dog barked, and a woman looked suspiciously from a house.

'We'd better go across the open a little way,' said Trotter. 'We'll pick the trench up where the plain begins.'

They reached the end of the lane – and there before him, to his astonishment, lay a field of fresh, green corn.

For a moment he could scarcely believe his eyes; he had prepared himself for rebuilt

houses, new roads and smoothed-out land where cultivation must have been before the war, but no mind-picture he had ever made had given waving corn to the barren plains of Loos.

A narrow track lay round the field, and as Trotter began to follow it, a man appeared from somewhere and excitedly waved him back.

'J'étais ici pendant la guerre,' said Trotter – and he rolled the oft-rehearsed words carefully and proudly off his tongue.

For a moment the man stood irresolute; a little light seemed to come, his dark scowl faded, and he pointed sullenly to the path.

* * * * *

Very hot and tired were the family as they climbed from the 'bus and dragged their aching feet back to their hotel. The day for Trotter had been filled with the surprise of disappointment, lit now and then by treasured gleams of triumph.

For once he had strayed into a stretch of tangled undergrowth beside the Hulluch road, and suddenly, before them lay a great, gleaming mine-crater in the chalk.

For half an hour they had sat on the edge while he told stories of the men who hacked and listened at the tunnel face: how once he had helped to lay the explosive for such a mine, and watched the vast mushroom-shaped cloud of soil rise in the air.

Towards evening they had passed a little farmstead, and he had pointed excitedly at some

chickens wandering lazily in and out of a German concrete pillbox. A crater and a pillbox; little enough for a full day's exploration.

But as the days went by Trotter learned to adjust himself – to wipe out the fantastic pictures of his imagination and replace them with reasonable understanding and thought.

Except for small fragments that remained in memoriam, the trenches had gone as surely as a lash across the surface of still water.

On the last evening – in the fields beyond St Quentin – Trotter and his wife with Bert and Freddy, said goodbye to the battlefields.

They stood in that lane that

wandered through the meadows like their own home, hallowed so deeply in Trotter's memory that no words would come to him. He could only jerk his head towards a little mound that rose from the wild tangle of flowering gorse, and say: 'The dugout would have been somewhere over there.'

A farm cart came slowly up the lane, creaking behind two mud-stained, sleepy horses, and the driver looked curiously down at the strange little group that leant against the gate.

A summer mist was rising off the fields as they turned to walk back to St Quentin, and the silence whispered to Trotter that the pilgrimage had been worth while. *John Bull March 12 1932*



Dora Carrington 'The River Pang' 1918

OUR BLOGGERS WRITE

‘*Young Anne* conveys the immaturity of youth, especially of those growing up in a constrained, repressed society, and the beauty and purity of first love: Anne’s early romance is sweet, heady and intoxicating. Whipple is brilliant at conveying the magic of life – the feeling of security and complacency that comes with a protected childhood, or a single unnerving incident. In some ways she reminds one of Katherine Mansfield: “Life, like a cross nurse, had slapped her hands away from every thing she had held, and she was left like a child sitting on the floor, blank, bewildered, uncomprehending.” The characters are flawed, the situations perverse; like all of the author’s most excellent creations, we are on the edge of our seats to find out what happens next.’
Bag Full O’ Books

‘A quietly desperate book which is beautifully done, *Princes in the Land* raises the question very forcefully about how valid it is to pour all your love and care and concern and friendship into raising children when they will apparently throw it all off at the first opportunity. And we’re not talking a smothering mother here but a fair, friendly and liberal one. Kind of the opposite of the mother in *Guard Your Daughters*. A devastating, quiet portrait of the change that family life brings. Poor Patricia is blind to the

interior, independent lives of her children but she tries so hard.’
Librofulltime

‘*Tory Heaven* is a novel of its era, although watching Jacob Rees-Mogg on television one can see that he would make an excellent “A”, required to do nothing but live out the life of the idle rich. It is funny, ironic, and says a lot about the British class system although of course in 2018 the Rees-Moggs and Boris Johnsons are seen as buffoons by most of us. Persephone have brought back a lively satire set in a crucial period of our history. It is not just an important novel but as with all Persephone books it is also a beautifully produced one.’
Lipstick Socialist

‘One of the things Jane Hervey does very effectively in *Vain Shadow* is to move seamlessly between each character’s spoken words and their own private thoughts. In several instances, these two things are the direct opposites of one another. I really enjoyed it as a darkly comic insight into dysfunctional family dynamics at a time of heightened stress. It also has some interesting things to say about ways in which women’s lives were often controlled by the men of the family back in the 1950s – the bullying husbands and disapproving elders. A very, very good novel, if a little claustro-

phobic at times – deliberately so, I think.’
JacquiWine’sJournal

‘If someone tells you that a book where nothing happens is boring, then show them *The Fortnight in September* and tell them they are wrong. Everything happens in this book because it is about life and its simple pleasures. It is about the joys of family, of the familiar. It is about acceptance that things will inevitably change, it shows how breaks from the norm allow for introspection, reassessment, a chance for growth and change. The sense of excitement a holiday brings, the counting of days when there, the regret that time seems to pass at an inordinate speed are all encapsulated in this delightful novel. A charming, warm, encompassing read, it has become one of my new favourite Persephone books.’
From First Page to Last

‘It is clear Marghanita Laski was capable of turning her pen to whatever genre she preferred... and then layering it with nuance; her light-hearted style of writing makes *Tory Heaven* an easy and enjoyable read but this certainly doesn’t detract from the message. The parallels readers can make between the Britain of 1948 that Laski writes about and the Britain of 2018 that we inhabit today are, sadly, plentiful. And remain shameful.’
Madam J-Mo

“Mrs Lockwood decided to invite Mrs Hunter and her children to Oakfield for New Year’s Eve. It would be one way of getting the food eaten up... and by whom better than the Hunters.” This understated spark of an opener turned into a slow burn, that soon had me eager to read on. Like Jane Austen, Whipple turns her attention to the jostling paranoia and acute awareness of social place within the middle classes. Throughout the novel it feels as if Whipple is quietly shouting between the lines: ‘Who cares what the Lockwoods think? Who cares what anyone thinks? Find your own happiness, and make your own future.’ *Because of the Lockwoods* should not be a page-turner, and yet it is. It folded me up in its arms and wouldn’t let me go, and I put this down to Whipple’s skills as a storyteller. She creates believable, flawed, nuanced characters, and lets them draw you through a perfectly paced plot to a deeply satisfying conclusion.’ My Summer with Dorothy

“Last week I re-read *Tell It to a Stranger* (1947) from cover to cover and feel it’s a shame that Elizabeth Berridge’s writing isn’t more widely known. The stories are every bit as good as *The Gipsy’s Baby* (1946). The difference in popularity may be down to Berridge’s shying away from publicity whereas Rosamond Lehmann’s personal life and activism created plenty. There are eleven stories in this collection: my top pick is ‘The

Prisoner’, the type of short story you wish could go on for another hundred pages. This book is a must-read for anyone interested in WWII fiction.’ Cosy Books

“*The Hopkins Manuscript* was first published in 1939 – a year which we now look back on with a painful sense of foreboding. Edgar Hopkins is one of the first people to find out that the Moon has left its orbit and started hurtling towards the Earth. The book chronicles the public reaction, the government’s attempts to make preparations without inducing panic, and the newspapers’ flat-footed attempts alternately to reassure and terrify people. But this is still not the real story. Hopkins survives the big night: the Moon politely parks herself in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean. Now everything begins to go wrong. Sherriff, with Hopkins as his shrill and rather testy mouthpiece, shows how society falls apart. People are selfish and hasty; but they can also be unexpectedly good – sometimes. *The Hopkins Manuscript* is a good yarn, and very witty, especially if you have experience of the English temperament.’ Inconsistent Pacing

“In *A House in the Country* there is a lot of thought on the war and how or when life will return to normal. Or if normal ever really can return. After all, they are now engaged in a life that requires ‘kitchen-friendly dining conversation’ (p. 64). Then there is Tori, lovely (male)

Tori who muses “is Christianity strong enough?” (p. 136) for all of this. They wondered a bit.’ I found this to be very prescient of today, especially as it followed a discussion of hatred and how the Germans had whipped it all up with propaganda. I loved how the inhabitants of Brede Manor got on with life, found satisfaction in doing what had to be done and, for women like Cressida especially, found some freedom. Why women like her especially? With the men and servants gone they had time to do things that mattered and to test themselves, to see what they were truly made of. It let them become persons in their own right. I liked that.’ Hopewell’s Public Library of Life

“*They Can’t Ration These* is another superbly chosen and tailored book from Persephone Books on Lamb’s Conduit Street in London. (This is not a grisly reminder of where lambs were run to market, but named for William Lamb, who paid for a water conduit from the Fleet River, as well as “120 pails for poor women”.) In 1940, England was facing the “Goering Four Year Plan”. In a keep-calm-and-carry-on tone, the Vicomte de Mauduit suggests “it would be wise to prepare ourselves to the use of commonly found produce...” and so directs his readers to hedgerows, fields, moorlands, and lakes. And once you’ve hunted, fished, and gathered everything from oak galls and rose hips to wild bird eggs and carrageenan moss, he

instructs you on how to cook and preserve these nutritious and claimed-to-be delicious foods. Today's reader will be in awe of cooks who can make do with hay-box cooking and all manner of dishes constructed from oatmeal or lentils.' Appetite for Books

‘**W**hat life was there for older women, especially an older widow, in post-war England? That Louise in *The Winds of Heaven* is pathetic, lacks agency and is far too obliging, is a condemnation of the time she lived in and its attitudes to older women. She tries to do right for others, but it often goes wrong. An ill-judged remark, an inappropriate gift, helpful actions that turn out to undermine the settled order of things; such moments reinforce her sense of being unwanted and outside society. Other widows in fiction have faced similar difficulties: I think of Elizabeth Taylor's wonderful *Mrs Palfrey at the Claremont* and Lady Shane in *All Passion Spent* who simply ignores her children's decisions for her when she is widowed and chooses her own rather surprising path.' Book Word

‘**M**ariana is my new favourite Persephone Book, it was a joy to read. Monica Dickens' characters feel like old friends, and I enjoyed every moment I spent with them. Mary is an endearing protagonist; and I adored her mother and her final love interest as well. The ending was beyond perfect. This is a comforting, and comedic

coming-of-age novel. I cannot recommend it highly enough. I so wish Monica Dickens had written a sequel; but I'll have to be satisfied with reading this gem again and again in the future. I'm already eagerly anticipating my reunion with Mary and her family and friends.' Dwell in Possibility

‘**N**ot strident, not mentioning the campaign for the vote that was going on, *A Lady and Her Husband* manages to question the role of women both in the family and the workplace. The writing is so careful yet so successful that this is an immensely readable novel which works on several levels. Read it for the enjoyable story, but also come to appreciate the overwhelming sense of a challenge to the *status quo* beyond the vote. The preface in this book is particularly interesting, as it gives a fascinating view of the author's life and times.' Northern Reader

‘**I**n *Young Anne* there is no suspense, no big surprises; just an ordinary life of a young girl and the circumstances that she endures. I found a strong resemblance in the plot to Elizabeth Taylor's *A Game of Hide and Seek*. But while Taylor offers an emotional tale of two lovers suffocated by their love, Whipple presents a simpler tale of a young girl and her indecisiveness when it comes to love. I loved Anne for how flawed she is. Sometimes she ponders on why tasks like folding laundry are limited to her and not to her

brothers, pale signs of a feminist awakening. Whipple's magic lies in her simple writing about life taut with the emotional complexities of her characters.' The Book Satchell

‘**O**scar Wilde called *Reuben Sachs* “a novel that probably no other writer could have produced. Its directness, its uncompromising truth, its depth of feeling, and, above all, its absence of any single superfluous word, make it, in some sort, a classic.” It reads at times like a Jewish Jane Austen, and at others like a prefiguration of Virginia Woolf. Jane Austen's irony receives another layer of brilliance when combined with the slanted tone of the Jewish joke; in terms of Woolf, I offer this from the last pages of the book: “On the pavement the people gathered, thicker and thicker. A pair of lovers moved along slowly, close against the park railings, beneath the shadow of the trees. The pulses of the great city beat and throbbed; the great tide roared and flowed ever onwards.” Out of context, this could be *Mrs Dalloway*. If Amy Levy had lived, she would have been one of the great Modernists. She realised that the self-ironising habits of Jewish humour are an ideal vessel for literature: self-reflective and distinctively aware of others' perspectives, she needs to be read. So I urge you to read her.' Bluestocking Oxford

HOW TO RUN YOUR HOME

Home *I'm Darling* by Laura Wade was on at the National Theatre. The central premise is that Johnny and Judy live as if it's the 1950s (although it's never quite clear why they chose to do this). Near the beginning Judy's friend Fran asks her how she gets her taps so shiny.

Judy 'Um, half a lemon. Rubbed round.

Fran Huh

Judy Old ways are the best ... It's all there on the internet, all the hints and tips. You can do most things with lemon juice, vinegar, soda crystals. Better than all the chemicals people use now... There's a book if you're interested... It's my bible, this.

Fran *How to Ruin Your Home Without Help.*

Judy *Run. How to Run your Home.*

Fran Sorry, it's very small writing.

Judy 1949, so it's a bit early. Middle-class women doing without servants for the first time, after the war... She splits it all down into daily tasks, weekly things. Every room gets a light going over every morning, air the bedrooms, make the bed, then each afternoon you do one or two rooms properly – behind things and under things, vacuum, dust, wipe, polish. Then dinner cooking. Plus Monday is your washing day and Friday is baking.

Fran So much to do
Judy It's manageable when you break it down. Plus we're not dealing with all that coal dust anymore.

Fran You really do all this?
Judy Have a borrow if you like.

Fran Can I? Thank you.

In the programme there is an extract from the first chapter of *How To Run Your Home Without Help*, Persephone Book No. 62. The difficulty is that it is presented to the theatre-goer 'straight': they would have no idea that we published the book AS A JOKE in 2005 and thirteen years later, nearly seventy years after the book first appeared, it still makes people both laugh and groan. Obviously the book was not a joke in 1949. But only a few years later, certainly by the early 1960s, it had become one. No one born after 1940 would have considered dusting books or turning out a room every week or even doing the living room every day. In fact cleaning became a symbol of the oppressed. (So when the *Guardian* interviewed a friend of ours as an example of the Hampstead Liberal in the late 1980s she was not offended that the interviewer commented that her house was 'covered in a fine anti-materialist layer of dust', she took it as a compliment – for it meant that she did not waste time doing the things recommended in *How to Run*). Of course anyone born after the

1940s was lucky enough to grow up in an era of machines, but even so their standards were far, far lower. Which is what makes Judy and Johnny too implausible for the play to have verisimilitude. Also, the idea of a woman without children staying at home in order to keep the house clean is kind of ridiculous. (However, this theme is pursued, albeit in a different way, through the character of Mrs Smee in *The Call*, cf. page 4).

There is also an article in the NT programme by the late and much lamented Jessica Mann, one of our Preface writers (*Doreen*). She puts paid to the idea that the 1950s were the good old days and wonders about women's acceptance of the status quo then. 'How did it come about that inequality seemed natural and discrimination acceptable?' (The answer lies in several Persephone books eg. *A Woman's Place*.)



'DECISION' BY EM DELAFIELD

'If I do this – it will change the whole course of my life,' thought Elaine.

She was trying to be detached, clear-headed, and calmly resolute. But it was foreign to her temperament to be any of these things, even at the best of times – and for purposes of detachment, clear-headedness and calm resolution, the climax of an illicit love affair may be looked upon as the worst of times.

She had met Louis five times, and on each of these occasions, he had made love to her.

Progressive love, Elaine candidly characterised it to herself.

She had succumbed almost instantly to his admiration, his audacity, his undoubted charm.

He was everything that Charlie was not, and Elaine, after being married ten years to Charlie, found that this, in itself, was stimulating and attractive.

Elaine, in common with the vast majority of her sex, considered that one thing, and one alone, constituted unfaithfulness in a wife. She had listened to Louis's impassioned declarations, she had told him the story of her life, she had received his kisses, and returned them – but she had not been unfaithful to her husband.

Yet.

The honesty that is so often the penalty of intelligence, compelled her to add this qualifying monosyllable.

For she was at least as violently in love with Louis as he was with her, and it was her nature to proceed to extremes in all matters of the emotions, but never to do so whole-heartedly and without misgivings. It was either her supreme misfortune, or else her one redeeming quality – she was never quite sure which – that she had a conscience.

It was now at war, hysterically and inopportunistically, with her inclination.

'Charlie trusts me.'

'So does Louis. He thinks I love him enough –'

'I can't deceive Charlie –'

'I can't let Louis down.'

'It's not too late, even now –'

'It's too late. I've promised Louis –'

So she had. She had promised to let Louis join her for a week in Brussels, where she was going under pretext of sketching with a Painting Club.

Louis had advanced arguments that, if not new, had at least been moving.

'It's not as if I wanted to break up old Charlie's home – neither you nor I, darling, could bear to hurt him... But you've got a right to some life of your own, and don't you think you owe me something, after all... Elaine, my sweetest, perhaps? You've made me care for you as I didn't think I had it in me to care for any woman...'

A part of Elaine's consciousness was aware that Louis had

undoubtedly been made to plumb the depths of its own powers of caring on the other, previous occasions – but all the same, it was this part of his pleading that finally induced her to speak the words of yielding.

Perhaps she did owe something to Louis after allowing him to make love to her as he *had* made love.

To lead a man on, and then to turn round and put on the airs of virtue... On the other hand, to be married to a man who, if dull, was kind and faithful, and then to turn round and...

'I shall go mad,' reflected Elaine.

She stood in the dining room of her nice and respectable suburban home, her suitcase packed and labelled, her passport in her handbag, and her new and becoming little orange travelling-hat on her head.

She gazed at herself in the glass that intersected the many fumed-oak convolutions of the sideboard, and idiotically wondered whether she would look quite different when she came back, *afterwards*.

But it was not – was just not – too late.

Even now, she could decide not to go. She could tell Charlie that the whole thing had fallen through at the last minute. He was not a person who required many explanations.

And that would end it – for always.

Louis was not the man to give

any woman a second chance of fooling him. She would have to live the rest of her life without Louis – and without the thrills, the excitement, the secret glow, that the thought of Louis had engendered.

There would be nothing left. Except the inner knowledge, that must belong to herself alone, that she had had the courage of renunciation.

‘I’ve never done a decent thing in my life,’ Elaine abruptly told herself, and this inaccurate generalisation, curiously enough, seemed to make it suddenly easier to be brave.

‘It’s now or never – only I must not give myself time to think –’

She went to the writing table, and with shaking hands snatched at paper and pencil.

‘Louis’ she wrote, ‘I can’t do it. Forgive me – but of course you won’t. We had better not see one another again.’

Tears blinded her.

But it was done.

The piercing ring of the telephone bell made her start violently.

‘Hullo!’

‘Elaine, what’s happened? I’ve been nearly mad – waiting at Victoria. You know you’ve missed

the boat-train?’

‘What? Oh my good Heavens, this clock is nearly an hour slow and I’d forgotten it – Fool!’

‘You can still do it, if you get into a taxi this minute—I can reserve places on the second half of the train. You’ve got just twenty minutes – Race –’

‘Right!’ Her voice was clear and excited again as she slammed down the receiver and, almost in the same moment, tore open the door and dashed into the hall, on the chance of finding a taxi on the rank at the end of the street.

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‘Decision’ was published in *Time and Tide* in January 1928 [writes Catherine Clay in the recently published *Time and Tide: the Feminist and Cultural Politics of a Modern Magazine*]. The story provoked a letter of protest from a Miss Mitchell, who objected to its condoning of adultery. EMD responded by saying that in the story ‘there is no question of treating the subject of adultery at all. The interest of the sketch,

which is purely a psychological one, lies in the exposure of the capacity for self-deception that enables a woman to think her mind irrevocably made up – whereas a sudden deviation of circumstances instantly causes her to change it again.’ More letters followed. One reader joined Miss Mitchell in protest against the ‘tendency ... towards promiscuity of the sexes in modern drama and fiction’; another criticised ‘the narrow-minded intelligence’ shown by Miss Mitchell and congratulated *Time and Tide* on publishing a story that ‘creates an artistic joy which your correspondent does not seem to be capable of appreciating.’ A third letter said that a writer who ‘can develop in a few paragraphs an entertaining refreshment and a stimulus, not only to thought but to imagination and reasoning power, is

valuable and useful – especially to the busy woman... ‘Decision’ was ‘a story for the reader to interpret... This is a kind of food, a mental exercise, and I hope *Time and Tide* will never resort to improvement of other people’s morals after the manner of the old-fashioned tract.’

Both in the risk of moral impropriety posed by its subject matter, and in its ‘plotless’ form, Delafield’s story ‘Decision’ is atypical of the short fiction published in women’s magazines of the time. Commercial magazine editors were very sensitive about matters of public morality and they were also insistent on the requirement for plot rather than character sketches. *Time and Tide* in general published the latter, which are distinguished by their psychological rather than narrative interest.

EVENTS

On *Wednesday 21st November* at 4 o'clock Alec Forshaw will welcome a group of us to 49 Great Ormond Street: he will talk about his book *An Address in Bloomsbury* (we sell it in the shop), about the house and the surrounding area, show us over the house and very kindly give us tea.

On *Saturday 24th and Sunday 25th November* from 10–5 we shall be selling our books at Great Dixter in Sussex. We are also planning an informal book group in a nearby pub on the Saturday evening but this is tbc..

Elizabeth Day, who wrote the preface to *The Call*, will talk at a lunch on *Tuesday 27th November* – about the book and its author Edith Ayrton Zangwill, and about her own work, especially her latest novel *The Party*.

Friday *November 30th* marks 75 years since the death of Etty Hillesum. Eva Hoffman, who wrote the Preface to *An Interrupted Life* 20 years ago, will come to the shop at 6 and over a glass of wine we shall pay tribute to Etty.

There will be a hay box lunch in the shop on *Tuesday December 4th*. Charlotte Mitchell will explain the principle (cf. her article in this *Biannually*). One hay box dish will be meat-based, the other vegetarian.



PERSEPHONE BOOKS
020 7242 9292

Our annual *Open Day* when all books are wrapped free of charge and mulled wine and mince pies are served will be on *Thursday 6th December*.

The film of *They Knew Mr Knight* will be shown in the shop on *Thursday January 24th, 2019*. Tea will be served at 4 pm and the film shown at 4.30.

On *Wednesday February 6th 2019* Valerie Waterhouse, who wrote the Afterword to *The Journey Home and Other Stories* and is working on a biography of

Malachi Whitaker, will talk about her over a drink in the shop at 6 pm.

On *Wednesday March 20th* it will be twenty years since we published our first three books. From three o'clock onwards there will be tea, madeira, cake and champagne at the shop. Also there will be some kind of unmissable special offer, tbc.

Please ring the office to book for an event. The *Lunch* is £20, the *Film* £15, the *Tea* £10 and the other events are free.

Finally: you may notice that the texture of the plastic wrapping for this *Biannually* is different. It's made from potato starch, thus compostable, and more expensive than 'normal' plastic, but worth it, we felt. Also for ecological reasons the latest *Persephone Catalogue*, covering 130 books, is unlikely to be reprinted. So please, if you request a copy (they are free) do hold on to it. Finally, as mentioned above, next year it will be 20 years since we started publishing our books. We are planning some kind of change – not exactly a relaunch or a new direction but something different; we have not decided yet what form this will take and welcome suggestions, but thought we would alert our loyal readers that in 2019 there will be changes.

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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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