



The Persephone Biannually

N° 28 Autumn/Winter 2020-21
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*'The Last of England' Ford Madox Brown 1855 oil on panel
Birmingham Museums and Art Gallery*



OUR BOOKS FOR AUTUMN/WINTER 2020-21

Wilkie Collins is rightly regarded as one of the nineteenth century's most eminent writers. Although many Persephone readers will know *The Woman in White* and *The Moonstone*, he in fact published twenty-one other novels. *The New Magdalen* (1873), Persephone Book No. 138, is about a 'fallen woman' – although Mercy Merrick is far from being a 'sex worker' (in today's idiom) because she was only briefly a prostitute and then only because she was drugged, raped (this is only hinted at in the book) and then did not have the money to escape her captor. But eventually she is helped by the matron of a women's Refuge and manages to create a new life for herself as a nurse; which is what she is when we meet her in the first chapter. From then on the nub of the book is her attempt to rehabilitate her character and her reputation; and the (often reprehensible and unkind) attitude of some of those around her.

The New Magdalen is part of a genre known as the Sensation Novel (eg. *The Moonstone*, *East Lynne*, *Lady Audley's Secret*, all written in the early 1860s) which is described in Matthew Sweet's gloriously un-highbrow piece on

the British Library website. He writes: 'You don't need an academic essay to tell you that you're reading a sensation novel. The symptoms are obvious and self-diagnosis is easy. Does the heroine have a moustache? Has the hero turned himself blue by drinking silver nitrate to cure his epilepsy? Is your heart beating a little faster? Do you feel a sickly, neurotic kind of pleasure? Is there poison in that glass of lemonade? Sensation fiction is populated by men who cannot bear loud noise and women who cannot digest cake. On its pages you will meet wives fixated on vengeance and husbands shamed by murder... The fiction of Wilkie Collins, Ellen Wood and Mary Braddon unsettles profoundly. Its accounts of sickness, insanity, identity-theft and long-suppressed family secrets tell a story about the anxieties and uncertainties of nineteenth-century life – and our own lives, too.'

The New Magdalen does unsettle but it is also an exceptionally interesting and readable book – with the proviso that a sensation novel is not subtle: you settle in for the ride, as it were, and you expect coincidence, cliff-hangers,



'Sutherland', a woven silk designed by the architect Owen Jones for Warner, Sillet & Co in 1871.



A screen-printed coarse 'crush' linen designed by Eva Croft for Donald Bros, Dundee in c. 1936

unreliable narrators, things to be overblown, people to be blind to the truth. But for those in the mood (and of course literary purists, or one might call them literary snobs, look down on ‘sensation’) none of this matters, in fact it is part of the pleasure. *The New Magdalen* is, as well, revealing about mid-nineteenth century attitudes and moral values. As James Bobin writes in his Persephone Preface: ‘Wilkie Collins’s earlier work such as *No Name* dealt with illegitimacy, *Man or Wife* centred on Scottish marriage law, and *Poor Miss Finch* was the story of a young blind woman and a romantic triangle with two brothers. Collins’s novels, throughout the 1860s and 1870s, grew markedly more angry at what he perceived as injustices.’

For there is an additional reason for reading *The New Magdalen*. The plot hinges on assumed identity (this is revealed right at the beginning so no

spoilers here): ‘Can you change my identity?’ asks Mercy Merrick. ‘Can you give me the name and the place of an innocent woman? If only I had your chance! If only I had your reputation and your prospects!’ For, as James Bobin points out (he is a film director and knows a thing or two about human nature), Wilkie Collins ‘felt injustices keenly and objectively but they were also possibly exacerbated by his own complicated personal circumstances. He never married but for his entire life maintained two women and their children: two families, two households... This complicated and unusual situation must have made his life much more difficult than it needed to be... But at the same time, it is, perhaps, better seen as a testament to his love for both women... Yet living together while unmarried was completely unacceptable in Victorian society... Unsurprisingly, his sense of slight or injustice makes

regular appearances in his work. In *No Name* he declares through a character, “I have lived long enough in this world to know that the Sense of Propriety, in nine English women out of ten, makes no allowance and feels no pity.”

The New Magdalen is unusual for another reason: at the time it came out as a novel it also had a very successful run on the London stage – which is why it is divided into two ‘scenes’ and why much of the dialogue does in fact feel like a play. (It was also made into a silent film, twice, in 1910 and 1912.) From the outset the novel was seen as scandalous due to its title. ‘Magdalen’ was the name for a reformed prostitute, a subject that was not to be discussed in proper society. (Mary Magdalene was falsely described as a prostitute for fifteen hundred years, which is why Magdalen was the ‘respectable’ name used by the Victorians for a reformed fallen woman; the Catholic



“Lady Janet! Lady Janet! don't leave me without a word!”

A picture by George du Maurier (1834-96), cartoonist, novelist (Trilby) and book illustrator, for the 1891 edition of *The New Magdalen*. Daphne du Maurier never knew her grandfather but pictures like this must have influenced Rebecca.

Church only abandoned the idea that Mary Magdalene was one in 1969.) This is why Mudie's lending library asked for a change to the title. Collins, however, refused, although he had considered other possibilities such as *Vice and Virtue*, *A Creature from the Streets*, *Sarah the Sinner*, *An Outrage on Society* and *The Priest of the People*. His dismissal of these shows that he deliberately opted for 'a more explicitly challenging application of Christian iconography to contemporary prostitution' (Beth Palmer in a recent essay about the book). In any case, contemporary reviewers did not seem to be shocked by either the play or the novel, and only a few years later, in May 1880, *The Spectator* would highlight *The New Magdalen*

as 'one of Collins's novels which 'enlighten humanity in regard to certain moral problems of deep and momentous import, and hold up to nature a mirror which educated the soul even more than it diverts the understanding'; which is why the writer thought the plot 'no more than the necessary vehicle for the inculcation of profound ideas.' Nowadays we might find 'profound' stretching it a bit. Nevertheless, *The New Magdalen* is absorbing and thought-provoking, despite the sometimes almost pantomime-ish conventions.

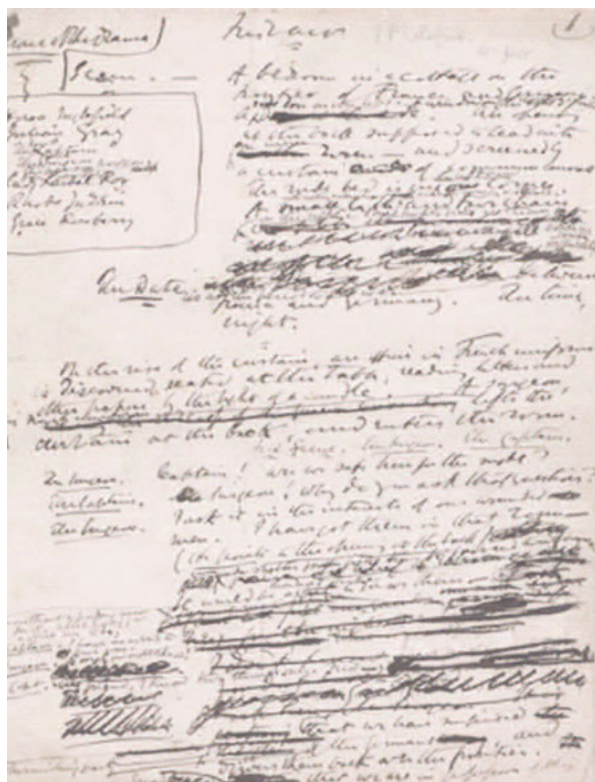
In essence, Wilkie Collins manages to challenge clichés about the 'fallen' woman; most importantly, he gives Mercy

Merrick agency and self-determination in her own story. As the Preface observes: 'This is the great strength of *The New Magdalen* and perhaps also of Wilkie Collins's work in general. He was a man who was ahead of his time not only in his attitudes to women, but also to the world around him. He was a man with integrity who fought for the less fortunate, but also who entertained and enthralled the man and woman on the Clapham Omnibus.'

The Wilkie Collins Society's (excellent) website concludes about *The New Magdalen*: 'It is not a simple redemption tale; Mercy's story transgresses the imagined boundaries of space and identity to re-invent the heroine as dynamic and capable. This re-envisioning subverts the condescension and control that often motivated Victorian rhetoric about prostitution and presents a revelation: Disorderly women were capable of "ordering" themselves after all.'

Our other Autumn/Winter 2020-21 book is by Dorothy Whipple – but a work of non-fiction. It is a short (150 page) volume called *Random Commentary* and consists of extracts from her diaries and notebooks from 1925-45; it was compiled by her in 1965, in Blackburn, to which she had returned a few years before, after her husband's death, and was published in early 1966, a few months before she died. So in some respects this is a tribute to a

A page of the original manuscript of *The New Magdalen*



novelist's life but because she chose the extracts herself it is, naturally – this is after all Dorothy Whipple – modest and self-deprecating but always extremely honest.

Yet this is a book which will only be enjoyed by someone who has already read at least some of the novels. So if there is anyone reading this who has not read any: remedy this situation immediately! The rest of us – the thousands and thousands of Persephone readers who love Dorothy Whipple (for example, *The Priory* and *They Were Sisters* have both sold c.17,000 copies and counting) – will be enchanted to read about this wonderful writer's working life. Because this is very much a writer's diary and may in a small way have been

inspired by the 1953 publication of Leonard Woolf's edition of Virginia Woolf's diaries, *A Writer's Diary* (now PB No. 98) which focuses on anything to do with the writing life and eschews gossip.

But for the Dorothy Whipple fan, as anyone who has ever read her instantly becomes, *Random Commentary* is both entertaining and fascinating. This is not just because of the details about how a writer functions, it is because Dorothy Whipple was (as her readers know) so witty, humane and knowing. One of her most admirable qualities is that she had no 'side' and to say that she was modest is a severe understatement. This is why she never won any prizes, was not in dictionaries of literary figures, did

not consort with contemporary writers (she couldn't have imagined knowing Ivy Compton-Burnett or Elizabeth Taylor, who both adored her books) and never went to London to suck up to newspaper editors, reviewers and fellow authors. In essence she was terrible at self-promotion, and indeed she would not have known or recognised self-promotion as a phenomenon or in fact as an ideal.

However, her novels sold in their thousands and thousands. She worked incredibly hard, took pride in her work, and did care very much indeed about how her books were received. For example, in 1943 (it must have been July but there are no accurate dates so this is guesswork) she received a



'Homeless in Wartime' WRVS (now RVS) Archive

telegram about *They Were Sisters*: “Congratulations. Book Society Choice November.” I have been excited many times in my life before, but I don’t think I was ever as excited as now... I rushed into the kitchen to Nelly, and sank into her chair and gave myself up to joyous realisation at this wonderful end to my book.’ These few sentences tell us so much. And it is particularly revealing that at a moment of great elation and excitement she goes and sits in the kitchen with their (beloved) cook.

This paragraph is then followed by ‘I travelled twelve hours to Tintagel’ and some very Whipple-esque vignettes about hotel life, for example: ‘Another vague woman, recounting her travels, said she’d been *up* Pompeii. “Have you been to Venice?” I said, for something to say. “I *think* so,” she said. “Yes, I think I have”.’ Then, half a

page later: ‘The advance sales of *They Were Sisters* are more than 32,000. It is published today’ (advance sales of over 2000 would have been considered respectable; 32,000 was absolutely enormous). And on the same page she writes: ‘The Ministry of Information rang up to ask me to write a short story for the MoI paper published in New York, 2000 words to be delivered in a week. I rashly agree, simply because I am flattered. I at once regret it and wonder what on earth I can write about.’ This is the story on pp. 23-26 of this *Biannually* and it’s rather touching to know that Dorothy Whipple was asked to write it in September/October 1943 and then it must have been sent by cable to America before being published there in early December. It has never been reprinted in Britain and indeed has probably not been read by anyone for seventy-seven years. It is not a ‘great’ story, but rather

moving about the hard work and resourcefulness of all the characters in the story – propaganda, yes, but one can only feel pride in British resourcefulness and kindness and good humour, and the story is a reminder that most of us do have those qualities and they can’t be crushed out of us by bureaucrats and autocrats and the petty-minded. The story also exemplifies Dorothy Whipple’s politics. Give over about politics people sometimes say to us, but we never can give over: a Whipple novel or short story is as political as any more obviously political book (*The Call*, *Cry the Beloved Country*, *Small Island*).

Back to the book itself: some readers will dislike its lack of accurate dating. But *Random Commentary* was compiled by Dorothy Whipple herself in 1965. She had kept intermittent diaries, few of which survive, and simply picked out what she thought readers would enjoy and did not care about detailed chronology. ‘We considered creating one, by dating some of the events. But none of these solutions seemed to respect her original concept and we did not think she would have liked any of them. So, in the end, we have reproduced *Random Commentary* as facsimile and merely provided the publication dates of her books to give some kind of chronological structure.’ We hope that this suffices for most of our readers. And of course we hope that they very much enjoy the book too.



This plaque has recently been installed at 35 Ebers Road, Nottingham. DW and her husband (the Director of Education for the city) lived here for thirteen years.

THE LAST OF ENGLAND

The painting on the cover of this *Biannually* is consistently voted a great favourite by the British public. What people love about it is that it 'says' so much and in this respect is a short story or a novel, in painting rather than in words. We have used it because (no spoilers) it is so relevant to *The New Magdalen*; and (as those who have read it will understand) it is also relevant to the ending of Laski's *The Village* (PB No. 52) published 100 years later.

Ford Madox Brown (1821-93) painted *The Last of England* between 1852 and 1855. It was directly inspired by the departure of his friend, the sculptor Thomas Woolner (one of the seven Pre-Raphaelite Brothers) for Australia in July 1852: both men knew, they would never meet again. 'The idea for the picture came to Madox Brown when he was deep in depression, so short of money or any recognition in the art world that he was seriously considering desperate measures – emigration to India' (Angela Thirlwell *Into the Frame: the Four Loves of Ford Madox Brown* p. 57). However, while lodging at 33 Hampstead High Street, he began the painting, visited by Emma, the mother of his 2 year-old daughter and his model, from her lodgings in Highgate. For there is another reason why we used this painting on the cover. Exactly like Wilkie Collins, FMB would have two

'wives': Mathilde Blind would be his 'companion of the mind' [as his first wife Elisabeth had been before she succumbed to tuberculosis], Emma was the mother of his children.

Because England witnessed mass emigration during the 1850s, with some 10,000 people leaving for Australia and New Zealand, *The Last of England* invites us to empathise with the psychological and emotional hardships they faced (and physical, hence the cabbages to ward off scurvy); it presents a family of three on a boat leaving England (the White Cliffs of Dover can be seen at the top right). The husband and wife clasp hands, their baby wrapped in his mother's grey shawl (Mercy Merrick in *The New Magdalen* also has a grey shawl). The husband looks brooding and bitter, but the wife looks serene and trusting. Their eyes (and this is why this is a great painting) express their feelings of loss and fear, but also change and hope.

This painting (which was sold for £150, £16,000 in today's money, in 1855) is very much a hymn to FMB and Emma's love for each other. Angela Thirlwell writes: 'FMB's artist's hand "blue with the cold" in the prominent centre foreground is drawn with acute sensitivity,

every detail of chapped knuckle, nail and pinched skin clinically observed. Emma's smaller black-gloved hand grips her husband's, just puckering the skin where her thumb holds him tight. In the adult embrace of hands is their whole love story, as well as the benumbing fear of leaving their native land... Parity between the two protagonists is signalled at the centre of the porthole composition... Their eyes are held on the same horizontal line – although their gazes are directed away from each other, across the horizon of their lost world... Detail by detail, like the skin of an onion, FMB peeled back the truth about the social and economic state of mid-Victorian England...' (pp.60-1). He even showed the middle-class traveller having to share deck space with a raffish element by inserting the drunk and disorderly, painting some 'jolly comedy without sting' (the specialism of the painter David Wilkie, Wilkie Collins's godfather and the source of his name).

The Last of England 'merged social history... with personal and universal narratives, even perhaps remaking the archetypal Christian myth of the flight of Mary and Joseph' (Thirlwell): change these names to Mercy/Magdalen and Julian and here is yet another reason why this painting is an appropriate introduction to *The New Magdalen*.

JANE CARLYLE'S DOG NERO

We now have an office dog! He is called Gilbert, named after Gilbert in *Anne of Green Gables* and specifically the portrayal of Gilbert in *Anne with an E* that kept us going during the first part of lockdown. He is a Havanese: Queen Victoria had one, and Dickens and Jane Carlyle. Her Nero (1849-60) can be seen in the famous Robert Scott Tait painting that we have used on the endpapers of *The Carlyles at Home* (detail on this page). In 2006 Beryl Gray wrote a piece about him for the *Carlyle Studies Annual*:

Nero was a 'little dog' and Jane Carlyle's objection to the Tait painting (apart from how long it took him to execute it) was that he was made to look 'as big as a sheep'. However, Tait captured his wisdom, how he was 'thinking, to most purpose of the three [in the painting] it strikes me! Could anybody look in that dear little quadruped's face; without seeing that he was "thinking" all this nonsense of keeping him motionless on a sofa-cushion, to be painted, a great bore!

To say that Jane was attached to Nero is an understatement. In 1852 she told Carlyle: 'As to Nero, poor Darling, it is no forgetfulness of him that has kept me silent on his subject – but rather that he is part and parcel of myself: when I say I am well, it means also Nero is well! *Nero c'est moi! Moi c'est Nero!*'

Nero arrived in Jane's life in December 1849. He was given to

her by a young friend, Stauros Dilberoglue (1818-78) after he heard her talking about her wish for a dog. He was sent from Manchester in a box, delivered by a railway guard, to Jane's almost disbelieving excitement at the arrival of 'this perfectly beautiful and queer looking' little dog, described by Carlyle as 'Cuban (Maltese? and otherwise mongrel)'. Jane's relief at Carlyle's amused and amicable reception of him are palpable. From the outset, he slept at the foot of her bed without disturbing



her, followed her like a shadow, lay in her lap, and generally consoled her: 'for it is really a comfort to have something alive and cheery and fond of me always there'. By March 1850 Nero had become 'chief comforter of her life. Furthermore, he was not importunate; he neither barked nor whined, and he had the perspicacity to appear infatuated with Carlyle.' When he was stolen (alas, dog stealing – for ransom – was huge in the C19th, cf. Virginia Woolf's *Flush*, PB No. 55) the ransom was paid without hesitation.

In November 1859 poor Nero's throat was cut into when he was run over by a butcher's cart. He never fully recovered and was always wheezing and breathless until his death the following year. Jane wrote: 'I have lost my dear little companion of eleven years' standing, my little Nero is dead! And the grief his death has caused me has been wonderful even to myself. His patience and gentleness, and losing struggle to do all his bits of duties under his painful illness, up to the last hour of his life, was very strange and touching to see, and had so endeared him to everybody in the house, that I was happily spared all reproaches for wasting so much feeling on a dog.' The description of the Carlyle household's grief in *The Carlyles at Home* by Thea Holme, PB No. 32, is too upsetting to quote.

After Jane died, Carlyle referred to Nero as being 'most affectionate and lively' and asserted that he was 'otherwise of small merit, and little or no training.' Yet actually he loved Nero dearly and when he died 'I could not have believed my grief then and since would have been the twentieth part of what it was – nay, that the want of him would have been to me other than riddance. Our last midnight walk together (for he insisted on trying to come)... is still painful to my thought. "Little dim-white speck, of Life, Love, Fidelity and Feeling, girdled by the Darkness as of Night Eternal."'

OUR READERS WRITE

‘The horror of Harriet’s story, the ingenuity of the novel as a whole, is the skill with which Elizabeth Jenkins manages to capture a flavour of Victorian comfort and domesticity and how the introduction of an unwanted guest slowly erodes the veneer of civility. Taking the idea of the yet-to-be-named subgenre of “domestic suspense” to its extreme Jenkins includes several excellent set pieces that highlight a Victorian household turned topsy-turvy when a family member with erratic, unpredictable behaviour upsets their comfortable routines. With incredible detail we are shown how meal times are structured, the apparently agonising selection of clothes, the mundane tasks of getting dressed and having hair meticulously styled. While all the other characters are caught up in the inundation of domestic life, the horror of what is happening to Harriet, who is being neglected and ignored by everyone but the compassionate maid Clara, becomes all the more heart-wrenching. With each new instance of Harriet’s deteriorating mind each family member reacts not with kindness, concern or even alarm but with unnerving cruelty, sometimes giving into savage brutality. *Harriet* won the Prix Femina Vie Heureuse for the novel that best presents life in England to a French language audience. The award should actually be for Jenkins’ masterful

invention of a new genre, the true crime novel. For here is a fictionalised account of a long past actual criminal case characterised by aberrant behaviour accurately imagined with vivid insight and keen observations, teeming with paradoxes and riddles of human inconsistency, that it rightfully belongs in the same category as the “non-fiction novel” – something Truman Capote claimed to have invented three decades later with *In Cold Blood*.’
PrettySinister

‘Set between the wars, *The Fortnight in September* is about a suburban family as they go on their annual holiday to Bognor. As the title suggests it is THE fortnight in September, and they have been many times before. Not much out of the ordinary happens. Much of their pleasure in the holiday comes from everything being the same as all the previous years. However, Mr Stevens is getting older and his hair is thinning. Mrs Stevens discovers that their landlady has had no other visitors that year, and frankly the digs are a bit below par. It is clear that it will be their last fortnight. It is a hymn to nostalgia. But it is also an account of change, its inevitability and the opportunities it brings.’ Book Word

‘*The Oppermanns* is a remarkable book and it’s

also remarkable that you chose to republish it, especially at this time. What’s chilling is the breathtaking rapidity with which these changes, these defilements and degradations of history and society take place. (Not to mention the removal of qualified, educated people in crucial positions and their replacement with boors and sadists.) We were both struck with the voices of the women in the family – they were regularly consulted and expected to have a say in the running of the business and later in decisions about personal safety and where, ultimately, to go. That advance obviously got lost in the tumult of war – as usual. We were a little sorry that the novel boiled down to Gustav, in the end, and didn’t follow the progress of the others much. And I wish Feuchtwanger had given us a better picture of *what* Gustav thought he was going to accomplish when he went back to Germany. That’s scary in itself! We were both sorry to lose the son who commits suicide. It might have been nice to see him join the resistance instead. But the suicide makes sense emotionally. The book is at its best when there are the greatest number of voices in it: smug, scared, satiric, angry, resigned – the whole range of differing opinions and responses to ‘the Leader’ and his mission. And perhaps what is most fascinating about this novel is that it was *published in 1933*. So

much daring prescience. That is really impressive. And frightening. Because it was already that clear – to Lion F at least – what horrors were in store for everybody: the concentration camps are much on his mind, for instance, and attacks on the arts.’ LE and TM, Edinburgh

‘On the surface, there is an absorbing story that recounts the complex tangle of relations and relationships between a group of individuals who either live in or visit Milton Place. But peeling back the layers of the story, *Milton Place* is an ode to the old English country house, the old aristocratic way of living and thinking that perished in the face of two earth shattering world wars. It is the story of the dissolution of a way of life and the attempts of the English landed gentry to hold on to the old life, and Elisabeth de Waal renders this picture, quite perfectly. Though the story-telling was quite compelling, there were other aspects of the book that made it stand out in my mind – and that was the background story of the dwindling fortunes of the English country house.’ Bag Full O’ Books

‘I highly recommend reading *The Expendable Man*. I was completely gripped from beginning to end and couldn’t bear to put the book down until I knew what was going to happen to Hugh. There’s an element of mystery-solving to the novel, but it’s much more than a

straightforward crime story. A few chapters into the book, there’s a twist – or maybe revelation is a better word to use – that changed the way I felt about what I had read so far and showed me that I had made an unfair assumption without even being aware that I had made it. It was so cleverly done and provided answers to some of the things I’d been wondering about as I read those earlier chapters. I also loved the author’s beautifully written descriptions of the landscape.’ She Reads Novels

‘I’ve been meaning to get around to reading *Greenery Street* for years and years as everyone seems to love it – and so did I. It is very much an autobiographical book which tells of the first year of marriage of a young couple. Greenery Street was actually 23 Walpole Street, London which despite apparently being too small to accommodate a growing family has now been split up into flats. PG Wodehouse also lived in this house at an earlier date. This is a lovely read, it’s funny and will remind a lot of people of what it was like to be setting up their first home.’ Pining for the West

‘Sight is a major theme explored in *Every Eye* both literally and figuratively. In her youth, Hatty struggles with a “lazy eye” which causes it to turn inward. It remains a pain point in her relationship with her mother. And yet, figuratively, it also means that Hatty is unable to fathom the nuances of what she is

actually seeing. Overall I thought this was an excellent novel. Isobel English’s prose is subtle and elegant with keen insights and there are some marvellous pieces of travel writing to sink into, all packed into a compact novella of barely 100 pages. I devoured *Every Eye* within a couple of days.’ Radhika’s Reading Retreat

‘Although I love Sylvia Townsend Warner’s writing and already own a collection of her short stories, I don’t think I have any of these stories, and also some have never been reprinted since original magazine publication. *English Climate* collects together twenty-two of STW’s stories which were published between 1940 and 1946; they’re presented chronologically, which is an effective method because it allows us to watch the change in behaviours and attitudes as the war progressed. There isn’t a dud story among them, and what was particularly fascinating was the different angles STW took. Some of the stories are less directly war-related, simply exploring the psychology of people in extreme and unusual situations (so, of course, somewhat relevant to how 2020 has been for many of us...). She’s an acute observer of the subtleties of the relationships between men and women; and her commentary on the foibles of everyday life is sharp and often very funny. She was such a marvellous writer, and these stories capture so well the changing emotions and times of

the War period. I can't recommend the collection highly enough.' Kaggsy's Bookish Ramblings

‘The holiday is driven by Mr Stevens, who works hard when in the office, but becomes the ebullient heart of the family when in Bognor. His mission is always to make the family happy, by creating special little occasions and traditions for everyone to enjoy. Part of *The Fortnight in September*'s charm is in reminding us just how much has changed since the Stevens family went off to Bognor in 1931. Who nowadays would take a bottle of olive oil down to the beach, to rub over sunburned skin?! And who would go down to the shore in flannel trousers, as Mr Stevens does? Yet our grandparents conformed firmly to these codes. This reminds us that, despite the freedom of their holidays, the Stevens family normally live in a world of strict hierarchies and manners. Sherriff is brilliant at these tiny touches, so very English in their subtle evocation of class and character, lighting on details which enrich our understanding of the whole. And he simply allows his characters to be. He doesn't hurry them along on the way to be something or somewhere else. He just gives each and every one of them their moment, gently and serenely, letting these modest people – who wouldn't dream of imposing on you – share the hopes and dreams that they keep precious and secret even from each other.

We see the way that grown-up children begin to gain a broader sense of the world, and to shape the futures they want for themselves. We see the quiet, unspoken, nostalgic anxiety of parents whose adult offspring are beginning to slip the bonds of family. This is a book about change. It has the poignant charm of a story that knows its time is slipping away even as it happens. The children are growing up; the days of the boarding-house are numbered; the holiday, perhaps, will never quite be like this again. And holidays are, by their very nature, bittersweet: you only enjoy them so much because you know they will end. Lovely.' The Idle Woman.

‘*The Village* is a powerful book which exposes the class divisions and snobbery that survived the War, but which were being challenged every day. There are some harsh words spoken, some sadness revealed, but there is also some amusement to be found in an account of a community which is still divided between them and us. The rules of hospitality, of minor slights, of misunderstandings make for a sometimes amusing, always fascinating novel. Laski can be criticised for her hyper awareness of class, but this is a truthful account of the way that people divide people along unwritten lines, and it is a very readable novel of a time seventy-five years ago.’ Northern Reader



An undated photograph of Chekov, who inspired everyone who came after him

MADELINE LINFORD

Madeline Linford (1895-1975) *the first woman on the staff of the (then) Manchester Guardian, wrote five novels between 1923 and 1930, we shall reprint one of them in the near future. For more information go to <https://madelinelinford.wordpress.com> This short story was published on 3rd June 1931.*

When the cat died the family decided that the next household pet should be a dog. They all agreed that they were a little tired of cats, with their sleek concealment of nasty traits – stealing, for instance, under a mien of proud aloofness and disdain. A dog would be friendly and companionable, fetching Father's slippers for him, going for walks with Norman. Mother said she did not want the kind of dog that leaves hairs all over furniture, and Father repeated many times that a dog, if the household decided to adopt one, must be treated like a dog and kept in his place, not spoiled by pamperings or with titbits at all times of the day. Auntie mentioned Pekes and those dear little fluffy dogs with tails curled over their backs – she couldn't remember their name for the moment – but Norman was rudely assertive that he, for one, wouldn't be seen out with an insect, and Father said he refused to accept, or pay the licence for, any dog that hadn't a bit of spunk about it, and that a lapdog was, of all animals, the most contemptible.

In the end they bought a Sealyham puppy, two months old. Cook's young man owned the mother, the father was a fairly successful winner at second-rate shows, and the young man offered to sell one of the litter for a sum which he described as a gift and Father as extortion. When the negotiations were brought to an end, which both parties



accepted without enthusiasm, Norman bought a shilling manual on Sealyham terriers and a threepenny pamphlet on 'The Dog in Sickness and Health.' He talked authoritatively about 'points' and the symptoms of distemper and told Mother the kind of dog biscuits that should be included in the grocer's list. 'Two months old!' said Auntie. 'Shan't we all seem very big and old to him?'

And so they did.

The puppy was thrust into the drawing room by cook, who had small time to spare for dogs with her young man waiting in the

kitchen. Father had just returned from the office and Norman from the Technical School, and to both of them time seemed to be gnawing very slowly through the hour that must pass before dinner was due.

'Here is the first general news bulletin,' said the wireless. 'Copyright reserved.'

The puppy shambled cautiously into the room, still rather unsteady on his short legs, his apprehensive dark eyes bright with uneasiness. He gazed at each of those four huge strangers and his formless, eager love hung poised in uncertainty as to which of them would give it the sign for release. The unfamiliar smell of the carpet stretched an eternity between him and the kennel where he had lived with the warm and friendly odours of his mother and sisters. He wagged his stump of a tail in a timid flutter of ingratiating.

Then Auntie swooped down to the floor and grabbed his fat, white body in her arms. 'Oh the beautiful, beautiful boy! Was he shy, then? Poor little chappie!'

That was better. He flicked up his tongue to reach Auntie's chin in a passion of gratitude. Here was someone who would put milk in his dish and crumble his biscuits, who would be forgiving to little faults of behaviour. He pressed his ice-button nose against her neck and fell instantly into a sleep that wiped out the big room and the unknown people and swept him

back to the haven of his mother's placid side and the little grunts and whinnies of his sisters.

'Now then' said Father, who hated sentimentality and women's gush, 'stand him on his feet and let's have a look at him.'

Auntie jerked him awake and back to the carpet again. 'Those white hairs,' said Mother. 'They'll be all over the place. You've got two on your sleeve already. Wouldn't it have been better to have chosen a black dog? It will be a terrible business trying to keep him clean.'

Norman snapped his fingers at the puppy, and the bright, dark eyes, which had wistfully followed the withdrawal of Auntie, turned hopefully toward this new suggestion of goodwill.

'He looks all right to me, but, of course, you can't tell at that age. His head's miles too big now.'

'He ought to be all right,' said Father, 'considering the price I paid for him. You can get a mongrel from the Dog's Home for five shillings. Good enough dogs, too, they are.'

'He's a little lamb,' cried Auntie, 'a little white baby lamb.'

'He seems quiet enough, anyway,' Mother said. 'I can't bear dogs which are always barking or digging holes in the flowerbeds.'

'Oh, he'll learn what is expected of him,' said Father. 'A firm hand and no nonsense is the way to train a dog. Once give in to them and they're the masters, not you. He'll have to understand from the beginning that he has to do what he is told or else get punished.'

The puppy, still in the centre of the vast wastes of carpet, looked from one to the other as their voices caught his attention. He had had a long, an infinitely long, day, tumbling with his sisters, chewing the maternal tail, and hurrying in eager rushes to greet the young man when he came with plates of food. Now he was tired and a little empty ache troubled his stomach. It was surely time that someone assembled round him once more the happy bits and smells and warmnesses that made up his existence.

'There's the gong,' said Mother. 'Take him to the kitchen,

Norman, and tell cook to keep an eye on him. If her young man hasn't gone by now, it's quite time he had.'

'Come on young fellow. We'll have to find a name for him, by the way.'

'Yes, and to teach him to answer to it, and follow properly – that's the first thing,' said Father.

Auntie's longing gaze yearned after the puppy as Norman picked him up and walked to the door.

'Two months old!' she said, with a little moan in her voice. 'He's got his whole life before him.'



Charleston Farmhouse, Sussex (cf page 27). The curtains are in 'White' which we have used for PB 43 'The Wise Virgins' by Leonard Woolf; the chair is in 'Grapes' which we have used for PB 10 'Good Things in England' by Florence White in yellow and PB 96 'Dinners for Beginners' by Rachel & Margaret Ryan in blue.

THE PERSEPHONE 139

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 Beaman

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 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 Beaman

14. Farewell Leicester Square by Betty Miller Novel (by Jonathan Miller's mother) about a Jewish film-director and 'the discreet discrimination of the bourgeoisie' (*Guardian*). Preface: Jane Miller

15. Tell It to a Stranger by Elizabeth Berridge Observant and bleak 1947 short stories, an *Evening Standard*

bestseller. Preface: AN Wilson

16. Saplings by Noel Streatfeild A novel by the well-known author of *Ballet Shoes*, about the destruction of a family during WW2; a R4 ten-part serial. Afterword: Jeremy Holmes **Also a Persephone Classic**

17. Marjory Fleming by 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 Beaman

20. A Woman's Place by Ruth Adam A survey of women's lives from 1900–75, very readably written by a novelist-historian: an overview full of insights. Preface: Yvonne Roberts

21. Miss Pettigrew Lives for a Day by Winifred Watson A delightful 1938 novel about a governess and a night-club singer. Read on R4 by Maureen Lipman; now a film with Frances McDormand and Amy Adams. Preface: Henrietta Twycross-Martin. **A Persephone audiobook read by Frances McDormand. Also a Persephone Classic**

22. Consider the Years by Virginia Graham Sharp, funny, evocative

WW2 poems by Joyce Grenfell's closest friend and collaborator. Preface: Anne Harvey

23. Reuben Sachs by Amy Levy

A fierce 1880s satire on the London Jewish community by 'the Jewish Jane Austen', praised by Oscar Wilde. Preface: Julia Neuberger

24. Family Roundabout by Richmal Crompton

By the author of *William*, a 1948 family saga contrasting two matriarchs and their very different children. Preface: Juliet Aykroyd

25. The Montana Stories by Katherine Mansfield

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

26. Brook Evans by Susan Glaspell

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

27. The Children who Lived in a Barn by Eleanor Graham

A 1938 classic about five children fending for themselves; starring the unforgettable hay box. Preface: Jacqueline Wilson

28. Little Boy Lost by Marghanita Laski

Novel about a father's search for his son in France in late 1945, the *Guardian's* Nicholas Lezard's Paperback Choice, R4 'Book at Bedtime' read by Jamie Glover. Afterword: Anne Sebba. **Also a Persephone Classic**

29. The Making of a Marchioness by Frances Hodgson Burnett

A very entertaining 1901 novel about the melodrama when a governess marries a Marquis; a R4 Classic Serial. Preface: Isabel Raphael, Afterword: Gretchen Gerzina. **A Persephone audiobook (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* and not known in the UK.

35. Greenery Street by Denis Mackail

A delightful, very funny 1925 novel about a young couple's first year of married life in a (real) street in Chelsea. Preface: Rebecca Cohen

36. Lettice Delmer by Susan Miles

A unique 1920s novel in verse describing a girl's stormy adolescence and path to redemption; much admired by 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 dark sense of humour; read several times on BBC R4. Preface: Cary Bazalgette

49. Bricks and Mortar by Helen Ashton An excellent 1932 novel by a very popular pre- and post-war writer, chronicling the life of a hard-working, kindly London architect and his wife over thirty-five years.

50. The World that was Ours by Hilda Bernstein A memoir that reads like a novel set before and after the 1964 Rivonia Trial. Mandela was given a life sentence but the Bernsteins escaped to England. Preface and Afterword: the author
Also a Persephone Classic

51. Operation Heartbreak by Duff Cooper A soldier fails to go to war – until the end of his life. ‘The novel I enjoyed more than any other in the immediate post-war years’ (Nina Bawden). Afterword: Max Arthur

52. The Village by Marghanita Laski This 1952 comedy of manners describes post-war readjustments in village life when love ignores the class barrier. Afterword: Juliet Gardiner

53. Lady Rose and Mrs Memmary by Ruby Ferguson A 1937 novel about Lady Rose, who inherits a great house, marries well – and then meets

the love of her life on a park bench. A great favourite of the Queen Mother. Preface: Candia McWilliam

54. They Can’t Ration These by Vicomte de Mauduit 1940 cookery book about ‘food for free’, full of excellent (and fashionable) recipes.

55. Flush by Virginia Woolf A light-hearted but surprisingly feminist 1933 ‘life’ of Elizabeth Barrett Browning’s spaniel, ‘a little masterpiece of comedy’ (*TLS*). A ‘Book at Bedtime’ on BBC R4. Preface: Sally Beauman

56. They Were Sisters by Dorothy Whipple A 1943 novel by this superb writer, contrasting three different marriages. Preface: Celia Brayfield

57. The Hopkins Manuscript by RC Sherriff A 1939 novel about what might happen if the moon crashed into the earth in 1946 ‘written’ by Mr Hopkins. Preface: Michael 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 from East London to the country during the war. Her mother regrets it and the family that takes her in wants to keep her. Preface: Jessica Mann

61. A London Child of the 1870s by Molly Hughes A 1934 memoir about an ‘ordinary, suburban Victorian family’ in Islington, a great

favourite with all ages. Preface: Adam Gopnik

62. How to Run Your Home Without Help by Kay Smallshaw A 1949 manual for the newly servantless housewife full of advice that is historically interesting, useful nowadays and, as well, unintentionally funny. Preface: Christina Hardymont

63. Princes in the Land by Joanna Cannan A 1938 novel about a daughter of the aristocracy married to an Oxford don; her three children fail to turn out as she hoped.

64. The Woman Novelist and Other Stories by Diana Gardner Late 1930s and early 1940s short stories that are witty, sharp and with an unusual undertone. Preface: Claire Gardner

65. Alas, Poor Lady by Rachel Ferguson Polemical but intensely readable 1937 novel about the unthinking cruelty with which Victorian parents gave birth to daughters without anticipating any future for them apart from marriage.

66. Gardener’s Nightcap by Muriel Stuart A 1938 pot pourri: miniature essays on gardening – such as Dark Ladies (fritillary), Better Gooseberries, Phlox Failure – which will be enjoyed by all gardeners.

67. The Fortnight in September by RC Sherriff Another novel by the author of *Journey’s End*, and 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 cookbook 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 Stories drawn from the three collections published during the author's lifetime. Five were read on BBC R4.

75. On the Other Side: Letters to my Children from Germany 1940–46 by Mathilde Wolff-Mönckeberg. Written in Hamburg but not sent, the letters 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 Working-class life in Lambeth in the early C20th: witty, readable, poignant and fascinating – and still relevant today. Preface: Polly Toynbee

80. The Country Housewife's Book by Lucy H Yates A useful 1934 book on topics such as the storeroom and larder, garden produce, and game.

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

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

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

84. A New System of Domestic Cookery by Mrs Rundell 1816 facsimile edition of an 1806 cookbook: long, detailed and fascinating. Preface: Janet Morgan

85. High Wages by Dorothy Whipple Another novel by Persephone's bestselling writer: about a girl setting up a dress shop just before WW1. Preface: Jane Brocket

86. To Bed with Grand Music by Marghanita Laski A couple are separated by the war. She is serially unfaithful, a quite new take 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 granddaughter. 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 In 1938 a woman gives birth to her fifth child: a rare novel about the process of birth. Preface: Anne Sebba
- 104. The Two Mrs Abbotts** by DE Stevenson The third 'Miss Bunclie' book, published in 1943, is about Barbara Abbott, as she now is, and the 'young' Mrs Abbott, keeping the home fires burning during the war.
- 105. Diary of a Provincial Lady** by EM Delafield One of the funniest books ever written: a 1930 novel, written as a diary, about everyday family life. Illustrated by Arthur Watts. Afterword: Nicola Beauman
- 106. Into the Whirlwind** by Eugenia Ginzburg A Russian woman is arrested in 1937 and sent to the Gulag. Filmed as *Within the Whirlwind* with Emily Watson. Afterword: Rodric Braithwaite
- 107. Wilfred and Eileen** by Jonathan Smith A 1976 novel, based on fact, set in the years 1913–15. Wilfred, badly wounded in France, is rescued by his wife. A 4-part television serial in 1981. Afterword: author
- 108. The Happy Tree** by Rosalind Murray A 1926 novel about the devastating effect of WW1 on the young, in particular a young married woman living in London during the war years. Preface: Charlotte Mitchell
- 109. The Country Life Cookery Book** by Ambrose Heath A 1937 cookbook, organised by month (and thus by excellent seasonal recipes) illustrated with a dozen beautiful wood engravings by Eric Ravilious. Preface: Simon Hopkinson.
- 110. Because of the Lockwoods** by Dorothy Whipple A 1949 novel: the Hunters are patronised by the wealthy Lockwoods; 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 this major New Zealand writer. Preface: Ann Thwaite
- 118. *Every Good Deed and Other Stories* by Dorothy Whipple** A 1944 novella and nine short stories written between 1931 and 1961 which display the author's 'wonderful power of taking quite ordinary people in quite unromantic surroundings and making them live.'
- 119. *Long Live Great Bardfield: The Autobiography of Tirzah Garwood*** A touching, funny and perceptive memoir which has many wood engravings by the author, and photographs (eg. of Tirzah's husband Eric Ravilious). Preface: Anne Ullmann
- 120. *Madame Solario* by Gladys Huntington** This superb 1956 novel in the Henry James/Edith Wharton tradition is set on Lake Como in 1906; published anonymously and with undertones of incest, it was a *succès de scandale*. Afterword: Alison Adburgham
- 121. *Effi Briest* by Theodor Fontane**. An 1895 classic of European literature by the great German novelist: 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 and reprehensible anti-semitism. Preface: Emily Rhodes
- 123. *Emmeline* by Judith Rossner** A 1980 novel, set in the 1840s, about a 13-year-old girl working in the mills at Lowell; she is seduced, and tragedy ensues: a subtle, and unusual feminist statement. Preface: Lucy Ellmann
- 124. *The Journey Home and Other Stories* by Malachi Whitaker** Four volumes of these startling stories came out in the early 1930s; we reprint twenty of them. Preface: Philip Hensher. Afterword: Valerie Waterhouse
- 125. *Guard Your Daughters* by Diana Tutton** A 1953 novel written in a light, very readable style which has dark undertones: four sisters living in the country have to defer to their demanding mother.
- 126. *Despised and Rejected* by Rose Allatini** A pioneering 1918 novel about a gay conscientious objector and his friendship with a young woman who also opposes the war. Afterword: Jonathan Cutbill
- 127. *Young Anne* by Dorothy Whipple** A quasi-autobiographical, extremely readable novel, her first (1927), about a young girl growing up. Preface: Lucy Mangan
- 128. *Tory Heaven* by Marghanita Laski** A dark 1948 satire about a Britain under Tory rule with everyone divided up (by the As) into A, B, C, D, and E. Preface: David Kynaston
- 129. *The Call* by Edith Ayrton Zangwill** A 1924 novel about a young woman scientist (based on Hertha Ayrton) who gives up her work for 'the cause' ie. to be a suffragette. Preface: Elizabeth Day
- 130. *National Provincial* by Lettice Cooper** A 1938 novel about politics in Leeds in 1935–6, surprisingly page-turning despite its often serious subject matter. Preface: Rachel Reeves
- 131. *Milton Place* by Elisabeth de Waal** A novel set in a large house in the English countryside just after the war. A young woman from Vienna changes everything. Preface: Victor de Waal, Afterword: Peter Stansky
- 132. *The Second Persephone Book of Short Stories*** Another volume (to follow our hugely successful first volume, PB No. 100) of thirty stories by women writers.
- 133. *Expiation* by Elizabeth von Arnim** Inexplicably omitted from the von Arnim oeuvre until now, a 1929 novel by the author of *The Enchanted April* and *Vera* about marriage and deception – many consider it to be her best book. Preface: Valerie Grove
- 134. *A Room of One's Own* by Virginia Woolf** Based on the path-breaking 1929 lectures given at Cambridge. Preface: Clara Jones
- 135. *One Woman's Year* by Stella Martin Currey** Recipes, poems, observations, woodcuts: a fascinating 1953 pot pourri.
- 136. *The Oppermanns* by Lion Feuchtwanger** Written to alert the world to the horrors of fascism, an unforgettable novel about a Jewish family in Berlin from 1932–33. Preface: Richard J Evans
- 137. *English Climate: Wartime Stories* by Sylvia Townsend Warner** Twenty-two short stories set from 1940 to 1946, few previously reprinted. Preface: Lydia Fellgett
- 138. *The New Magdalen* by Wilkie Collins** An 1873 'sensation novel' by the great C19th novelist about a 'fallen woman' and society's attitude to her. Preface: James Bobin
- 139. *Random Commentary* by Dorothy Whipple** A 'writer's diary' (cf. Virginia Woolf's diary PB No. 98) covering the years 1925–45, selected by the author herself in 1965.

OWEN JONES & EVA CROFT

We rarely write about the designers of the fabrics we use, indeed often their identity is unknown. But the two textile designers for the October books, *The New Magdalen* and *Random Commentary* are unusual, one for being very influential yet now overshadowed by his starrier contemporaries, the other for being forgotten because she was overshadowed by her starrier sister.

Owen Jones (1809-74) 'was an architect and designer who looked to the Islamic world for inspiration [writes the V & A website]. His bold theories on the use of colour, geometry and abstraction formed the basis for his important book, *The Grammar of Ornament* and he finally introduced his colour theories to the wider public when he was asked to decorate the interior of the 1851 Great Exhibition building. His simple yet radical paint scheme for the interior utilised only blue, red and yellow. These were applied in carefully prescribed proportions in order to distinguish between the iron columns, creating depth and perspective within the building.

Britain in the nineteenth century was dominated by historical revivals such as Neoclassicism and the Gothic Revival, design movements imbued with religious and social

connotations. Jones sought a modern style with none of this cultural baggage. Setting out to identify the common principles behind the best examples of historical ornament, he formulated a design language that was suitable for the modern world, one which could be applied equally to wallpapers, textiles, furniture, metalwork and interiors. *The Grammar of Ornament* would act as a collection of the 'best' examples of ornament and decoration from other cultures and other periods. Besides his architectural and educational work, Jones practised a wide range of applied design, including textiles and wallpaper and, from 1870-74, woven satin furnishing fabric for Warner. These closely resemble those found in Indian woven silks.

Eva Croft (1875-1946) was given the name Eva Crofts in the booklet where we found her textile design, *Seed and Spirit of*



Modernism: an Exploration through Textiles (2007) by Esther Fitzgerald and Amy Hibbert. But we only discovered that she was given the wrong name after we had gone to press. So in every single copy of our edition of *Random Commentary* it says Crofts not Croft. Worse things happen! We found out what her name really was when we read the most recent, 2013, biography of Laura Knight by Barbara C Morden and there are a few details about her elder sister Eva. Both were artistic when they were young and both went to art school. But Eva did not have the good fortune to marry a fellow artist, as Laura did, and unlike her sister she had children: in 1910, when she was 35, she married a pharmacist from Canterbury and went on living in Nonington (where she had been housekeeper for her uncle) nearby. Sadly her sister did not get on with her husband Robert Croft and although the two women corresponded and met when they could, they were never as close as they once had been. However, Laura Knight painted her sister Eva in 1945 (left). It is impossible to discover anything more about Eva Croft, only that she designed some ceramics for Clarice Cliff's Bon Jour range and in the '30s designed textiles for Donald Bros. Apart from that, the rest is silence.

OUR REVIEWERS WRITE

‘**T**he *Oppermanns* is an astonishingly vivid and moving account of the immediate impact of the Nazis’ accession to power. It was published in German in late 1933 in Amsterdam, quickly followed by English versions in the US and UK. It was an international bestseller, and yet somehow it hasn’t been in print in English on this side of the Atlantic since then. Now Persephone Books has reissued the novel, with a new introduction and notes by the historian, Richard J Evans. The Oppermanns are an upper middle-class Jewish German family. Gustav, who turns 50 as the novel begins in November 1932, is an urbane man of letters. The next brother, Martin, runs the family business, Oppermann Furniture Stores. Their brother Edgar is a celebrated surgeon and their sister Klara is a housewife. Like many Germans of their class, the Oppermanns initially see the rise of the nationalists and their boorish leader as a joke or an irritation. But, first slowly and then shockingly quickly, things start to change. One of the characters is taken from his bed in the middle of the night by brownshirts and, after a cursory questioning, locked in a cellar for hours. There, along with others, he is forced to stand for hours under harsh, bright lighting, facing a wall, while the Nazi anthem, the Horst Wessel Lied, is played at top volume. If he

moves, he’s beaten. When they finally let him go, he has to sign an official form stating that he was well treated and, in a final insult, pay his captors two marks for lodging, board and “services rendered”. “The music was free,” he thinks.

Twenty-five years ago I didn’t see many obvious connections between the events in *The Oppermanns* and contemporary politics. Now it’s impossible not to get a jolt of recognition when a character warns her husband, who “always believed everything was all right as long as one could prove one’s statements”, that “nowadays accuracy meant nothing”. Or when a family friend reminds Edgar that “our opponents have one tremendous advantage over us: their absolute lack of fairness. They have always employed such primitive methods that the rest of us simply did not believe them possible”. In his introduction, Evans describes *The Oppermanns* as “the first great masterpiece of anti-fascist literature”. For a modern reader, the horrors of the Holocaust inevitably hang over the book. But Feuchtwanger tells the story of the Oppermanns and their friends and colleagues with such stunning immediacy that most of the time the reader’s attention is firmly on 1933, sharing their bafflement, anger and terror as a familiar, stable world collapses around them, to be replaced by barbarism.’ Anna Carey in *The Irish Times*

‘**F**railty, folly and the fragility of love are brilliantly explored in Whipple’s perfect, engrossing deckchair read, *Someone at a Distance*. Happily married Avery and Ellen are well-off, adore their teenage children and treasure their lovely village house which is handy for Avery’s London commute. Ellen is a cheerful domestic goddess and family life is idyllic despite Avery’s lonely widowed mother, who lives nearby. When she advertises for a companion, a sophisticated French girl arrives who is probably the nastiest piece of work ever to enliven modern fiction. What a viper! Selfish, scheming, heartless, she worms her way into Granny’s affections and bank balance. Then she worms her way into handsome Avery’s awareness. Reading this terrific book, with its unexpected twists and turns, is irresistible, mesmerising agony. A truly great discovery.’ Val Hennessy in the *Daily Mail*

‘I’ve been discovering the work of the amazing between-the-wars Dorothy Whipple. *They Were Sisters* is the most extraordinary and brilliantly subtle but moving look at three sisters, and the interplay between them as they grow into adulthood. This is the kind of book that doesn’t get published much any more, because it doesn’t seem very high concept or thrilling. But it’s such a wonderful character study.’ Elizabeth Day in *Stylist*

A LADY AND HER HUSBAND

'Service Please': Labours of Love in James Joyce's Ulysses (1918) and Amber Reeves' A Lady and Her Husband (1914), PB No. 116, is a two-part dissertation, here summarised, written by Katie Buckley as part of her degree in History of Art and English at Edinburgh.

Part One suggests that, via the act of 'service', women become the collective property of the men who happen to be standing on the other side of the bar: by positing the bar as a space heavily sexualised by its customers, JJ suggests that barmaids had no choice but to sexualise themselves in order to survive in an economy that valued them for this alone.

Part Two argues that Amber Reeves' examination of female subjectivity in marriage parallels Joyce's exploration of the subjectivity of working women. *A Lady and Her Husband* (a traditional novel) may seem an unlikely counterpart to *Ulysses* (a modernist one) yet their themes are similar. AR's political interest in waitresses is tightly focused around their working conditions, as she demonstrates how women are commodified through labour. All the time the sexually fraught space occupied by waitresses hovers in the margins. Mary's husband, James, reflects that 'he liked to see them cheerful and well fed', yet they are underpaid and overworked, trapped in a

system which assumes that they live in 'decent homes', which allows him 'to pay them pauper's wages'. When he claims, 'I don't give them higher wages than they're worth', Mary retorts that 'those girls...work very hard and I can't feel that they are getting a proper return.' She realises that the 'poor girls... were not James's charge, but hers' and walks out of the marriage because 'in living off the profits, she is complicit' (Samantha Ellis in the Persephone Preface). AR suggests that if one is to help workers, one must take responsibility for the role the privileged play in their oppression.

AR's book engages with the Victorian 'angel in the house' and deals 'trenchantly with domestic finance, patriarchal authority, and the nature of capitalism itself.' Meanwhile, Mary struggles with the notion that 'suppose the thing she wanted most was not to help the girls, but to keep on affectionate terms with James.' Yet her political journey is not linear, she experiences bouts of self doubt, and her attempts at independence mirror the sexual self-awareness of JJ's barmaids; but eventually she begins to rebel against the traditional rules of gendered exchange.

While Mary might be able to survive financially without engaging in emotional

labour, she too is performing some kind of unpaid service; without her labour, the relationship is in jeopardy. Yet AR's examination of the labour of love in marriage contrasts sharply with JJ's exploration of the more liberated sexuality of his barmaids. In this context, the vilification of the sexuality of waitresses seems even more obscene. Their attempts to carve out space for their public subjectivity may rest on self objectification, but if the other option is the servitude embodied by Mary, it is not hard to comprehend their desire for power.

Money, labour, and sex are central concerns for the waitresses and for Mary, breaking down barriers between public women and private women, an eruption that is reflected in Mary's flight from the marital home. Like the barmaids in *Ulysses*, she no longer wants to participate in the patriarchal marketplace. She thinks of 'women she knew who were restless, and whose husbands gave them diamonds to keep them quiet'. She doesn't want to haggle over her subjectivity, she is no longer willing to pay that price. By questioning who owns sex, and who owns space, both Joyce and AR demonstrate that ownership of these two assets are prerequisites for subjectivity; ultimately, they suggest that women, ironically, have to work for their autonomy.

‘CHRISTMAS FOR MRS SMITH’

Mrs Smith turned over in bed and thought sleepily that Agnes would soon be coming with early tea. Then she woke. There was no Agnes. Agnes had gone long ago to join the ATS and had never been replaced because there was no one left in domestic service to do so.

Mrs Smith started up and shone her torch on the time. Half-past six again! She had meant to be up at a quarter past this morning.

Alarmed to be so late Mrs Smith put her feet too hastily to the ground and suppressed a groan. When she first got up her ankles ached intolerably. But it was nothing, she knew, since it went off when she had been going about for a while. It was nothing but the stiffness of age. After all she was nearly sixty. A very good sixty too, she thought sturdily, and meant to remain so. The boys mustn't come home to an old woman for a mother.

She felt about for her clothes. No need to wake Walter by putting on the light. He went to bed late enough and got up too early. He was to be on duty all night too tonight, Christmas Eve though it was, poor man, thought Mrs Smith, stealing towards the bathroom, where she washed in icy water.

She crept stiffly downstairs and put a match to the kitchen fire. It was very cold. It would have been nice to have a cup of tea and take Walter one, but the milk wouldn't run to it. Three days a week they

didn't get any milk; on other days they got a pint between them.

There was an inch of the precious stuff in the bottle now, but that must go on Walter's porridge. She could make the coffee from dried milk, though she must be careful too with that. One tin each every two months didn't go far.

When she opened the back door to put out the ashes she paused. There, pricking the dark for miles around, the lights were on to guide the bombers in. So they hadn't come back yet?

At the back of Mrs Smith's mind, as at the back of most women's minds in wartime, there was always anxiety, pity, horror and a nameless sorrow. She called these dark inhabitants 'the war'. She kept them back, as everyone did, but something or other kept letting them loose. When she heard the bombers go out night after night, roaring low over the roof beneath which she lay praying they would all come safely home again; when she read in the papers fresh tales of the starvation of children in occupied countries, of the persecution of the Jews, of the sufferings of Russia; now when she opened the backdoor unthinkingly and saw the waiting lights, 'the war' overwhelmed Mrs Smith, and she had hard work to get the dark thought back into place. The best way to do it was to get too busy to think.

All one's feelings seemed to be more complex in wartime, she thought, putting the kettle on the

stove. This was the fifth Christmas of the war; the boys were still away from home in constant danger, Philip a prisoner in Japanese hands, Douglas fighting with the Eighth Army, Walter overworked as all engineers must needs be, she herself, she admitted, secretly ashamed, always seems to be tired – yet this Christmas Eve was full of happy anticipation because Eileen was coming.

Eileen was going to have a baby very soon, Douglas's child, Mrs Smith's first grandchild, and a baby in the family awakens such a warmth of love in some women's world that even a world at war is irradiated. As she stood cleaning her husband's shoes, the wings of Mrs Smith's spirit were sheltering Eileen and the baby in a passion of protectiveness. Her son's young wife and his baby would be all right in his mother's care, determined Mrs Smith, going up the stairs with Walter's shaving water.

But Mrs Smith decided to waste no more indignation on the old man. Eileen was coming. She was coming. She was coming for just a few weeks before she was due to go into the nursing home in town where Mrs Smith had booked a room half a year ago to make certain of it, and afterwards she was bringing their baby back to her mother-in-law's house indefinitely. The thought of having Eileen and the baby brightened all Mrs Smith's horizons.

Good things were always

happening, she thought, coming downstairs again; like that postcard coming from Philip after two years without news. Two years' silence and then a card! Since then other cards at long intervals, but all cheerful. Philip and Douglas were alive, thank God, though she didn't know what they might be going through at this very moment, she thought, 'the war' stirring in her again.

She must get on, she admonished herself, moving briskly – as she could now because her ankles had come right. She worked swiftly but the time went fast. Her husband came down, was given his hot breakfast beside the fire and generally fussed over, because Mrs Smith felt she was parting from him for a considerable time.

'Goodbye, my dear,' he said. 'See you tomorrow.'

'Goodbye, my love,' she said, keeping her cheek against his. 'Bless him,' she thought, 'going off for twenty-four hours on end. If it hadn't been for the war he'd have retired by now, and so should I. But thank heaven we're not useless at a time like this.'

She heard him get the car out – he was allowed a car to get backwards and forwards to his work five miles away. She ran to call goodbye once more into the dark – the airfield's lights were out now – and came back into the house.

When she was taking the blackout down she saw from the windows dark shapes moving down the road on bicycles: Mrs Robinson, Mrs Broad,

Mrs Cummings going to their factory. Whenever she saw these neighbours of hers Mrs Smith felt at one and the same time respectful, amazed and guilty. They were all over forty. True, their children were beyond the age which would have exempted their mothers from taking on war-work, but they needed washing, cooking, mending and shopping for as much as if they had been under. Their mothers had been women with help and leisure once: now they had none of either, they would turn out to spend prescribed hours (some of them during the night) with those, to Mrs Smith, incomprehensible and terrible things – machines. Mrs Smith was respectful to them for being able to do it, amazed that they could, guilty she wasn't called upon to do the same. To placate these

feelings little Mrs Smith did all she could for the women in question. She'd done Mrs Broad's mending yesterday, had Mrs Cummings' shopping list for today, and would go up to see that Nora Robinson, who was in bed with bronchitis, had a hot bottle and a hot drink before she herself went into town that morning. But still, for these three and all other middle-aged women called out to work, there was a vast reserve of respect, amazement and guilt which Mrs Smith couldn't exhaust.

Now it was daylight. The red sun glowed behind the elms. Mrs Smith could see to get about the house, and get about she did: by half-past ten all was done. The supper was ready to put into the oven, for Eileen must have a good meal tonight because she would miss a proper lunch –



There is going to be a new film about Eleanor Marx starring Romola Garai. We hope her friend Amy Levy (above), author of Reuben Sachs, PB No. 23, will make an appearance. Eleanor Marx translated Reuben Sachs into German in 1889.

so incidentally would Mrs Smith. The cakes were baked, the tea was set. In Eileen's room there were berries in a green pot, scarlet hips, black wild privet, snow-berries from the bush beside the gate.

Her own work done, Mrs Smith scurried up the road to take a look at Nora Robinson. It took longer than she expected, because she felt it was dreadful for poor Mrs Robinson to come home and find so much to do. But at last she got to the end of the lane to join the group of matrons who craned their necks for a sight of the bus like sea-lions at the zoo for a keeper with fish.

These people lived three miles out of town. The buses, infrequent because of petrol restrictions, picked up passengers over a long country route. On busy days such as today, which was not only market day but also Christmas Eve, they were fuller than ever and wouldn't stop but sped on towards the town. Mrs Smith feared this would happen now. It did. The matrons, including Mrs Smith, had to walk three miles. Mrs Smith went at a rate unsuited to her years, because after her shopping she wanted to put in some time at the station canteen.

The town was crowded. Mrs Smith hurried from shop to shop getting what she could for Mrs Cummings and herself. She joined the long queue outside the pork butchers hoping for some sausages. The queue was let in at the shop door but out through the pro butcher's back yard to avoid congestion. Ticked in the face by the fur of the woman in

front, prodded in the back by the basket of the woman behind, Mrs Smith found herself at last in front of the counter where Mr Parker was handing out wrapped packets from a pile.

'What is it?' asked Mrs Smith, more out of curiosity than from any fear of buying a pig in a poke, for she would have been glad to have bought a pig in any way at all.

'Oh, good morning, Mrs Smith,' said Mr Parker. 'Well,' he said sheepishly, handing her a parcel: 'It's half a pork pie and half a pound of sausage. A lucky packet as you might say for Christmas. But a bit different from the old days, Mrs Smith. Many's the Christmas I've sent you up a five pound pie, to say nothing of a loin of pork with it, and I don't know how

many links of sausage for your boys and their friends.'

'Never mind, Mr Parker,' said Mrs Smith, pressed on inexorably by the queue: 'Those days will come again.'

'Aye! Perhaps they're nearer than what we think,' cried Mr Parker cheerfully. 'Happy Christmas, Mrs Smith, and good luck to you and your boys.'

'Thank you, Mr Parker,' called Mrs Smith, now passing the dustbin. 'Same to you and yours!'

Soon she was at the last stage of the approach to Eileen. She'd nothing to do now but go to the canteen. So for the next two hours Mrs Smith busily and happily served tea, buns, sandwiches and cigarettes to heavily-laden but cheerful soldiers.

But Mrs Smith was only human: her legs ached. And not



Cedric Morris, Cobyledon and Eggs (1944)

only her legs, but her back and her head. She began to think how luxurious it would be to be driven home in the taxi she'd had to order a week ago to make certain of it. And what a good rest, apart of course from the housework, they would all have – Walter included – this weekend. Three days actually when she didn't need to get up at half-past six but could lie in bed till nearly eight if she wanted.

Here at last was Eileen's train, dragging its great length in to the platform and drawing up, with its blackout paint round the windows and its carriages dirty for want of cleaners. Here was Eileen, looking tired but somehow splendid in her maternity. How proud Douglas would have been of her, thought Mrs Smith, kissing her warmly.

Eileen's luggage was brought to the taxi by a girl porter, a thin young thing with a frizz of fair hair under her jaunty cap and a blouse of pale blue rayon silk like electro-plate under her porter's jacket. She was cheerful and willing but she looked tired, thought Mrs Smith compassionately, getting into the taxi and sitting down at last.

They were at home, they were having tea in front of the newly lit fire. They were exchanging news from Douglas's letters. They were poring over the baby things, ready packed in a case by themselves to go to the nursing home in a few weeks' time with Eileen.

They had supper. Mrs Smith cleared away and washed up, she laid the kitchen fire and set breakfast so she could rest longer

than ever in the morning. She put bottles in the beds, and came to sit down with Eileen.

'There now,' she said with a sigh, 'everything's done, and we can just sit back and enjoy ourselves.'

But fate decreed otherwise. At half-past ten that night Mrs Smith rang up Dr Thorne. He was out on a difficult case, they said. Yes, they would tell him when he came in, though they didn't know when that would be.

In growing agitation Mrs Smith rang up the nursing home. But no bed was available, and there were no nurses to spare.

Dr Thorne hadn't come in yet. Dr Sims had been out since lunch. Dr Bradley was in bed with pneumonia. These were the only doctors left in the town, the others were all with the forces. Mrs Smith stood in the hall with her hands over her face, thinking.

Suddenly she remembered Daphne Carr. Daphne Carr's fiancé was over on forty-eight hours' leave. Wasn't he in the Royal Army Medical Corps? He was probably a doctor, then. Mrs Smith sped out into the night. She burst in on the Carrs' family party. The young man, though momentarily taken aback, followed her out at a run.

'I've nothing whatever with me,' he cried behind her.

'That doesn't matter,' said Mrs Smith.

What a night! What strain and anguish, what waiting, what prayers! And what relief when at ten minutes to six, just after Dr Thorne, haggard from his night's vigil, had come in, the baby

– a boy – was born at last!

Now two hours later all was peace. Dr Thorne had gone, the kind young man, never to be forgotten for all he'd done, had gone back to the Carrs. The mother and child were sleeping. Everything was tidy again.

Once more Mrs Smith took down the blackout. The sun was red again behind the elms. She opened the window wide and sank down before it. She was so tired she couldn't stand up any more.

The church bells were ringing. What for, wondered Mrs Smith confusedly. Was it Sunday?

'Why of course it's Christmas!' she cried, getting up from the floor and leaning far out of the window to listen to the bells. 'Christmas, and I'd forgotten! Christmas and our little boy is born!'

It seemed so wonderfully, tenderly apt that he should come at this season of innocence and love that Mrs Smith laughed and cried together from happiness and sheer fatigue.

'And the bells are ringing,' she thought incoherently. 'This year we've got bells. Last year we hadn't. Things are getting better all the time. The war will get over. It will. I'm so happy. That postcard from Philip after all that time, and now the baby!'

Wiping her eyes she went down to see about Walter's breakfast.

This short story by Dorothy Whipple was written in the late autumn of 1943 for a Ministry of Information magazine called Britain distributed only in the USA.

‘ALWAYS THE BELL RINGS’

This piece was written for the Charleston Magazine in September 1983 by Nicola Beauman. Go to www.charleston.org.uk

There are many reasons why, to Friends, Charleston matters. It is Bloomsbury in pastoral mood; it still has its beautiful wall paintings and decorated furniture; it has held out against the dreary, confident flow of stripped pine and wall-to-wall carpeting; it epitomises the English country home (something grander than cottage and less grand than house); up a track, just under the Downs, the garden full of sweet peas and thyme, the front door wedged by gardening gloves and boots, the kitchen smelling of coffee grounds, oranges and puddings.



Most people would allot greater importance to the first two reasons than to the second two. Quite rightly, they want to preserve the work of Duncan Grant and Vanessa Bell; and they want to establish a place of pilgrimage, a Keats House or Haworth Parsonage, to which admirers can come, buy their guide book, do the tour and depart with memories that will comfortably transfigure their imagination. The domestic, everyday reasons for restoring Charleston would be deemed delightful but incidental.

To me, they come first. Naturally, I care about the paintings, and I care about the ‘place’ Charleston (particularly when the all-devouring University of London has destroyed much of Bloomsbury proper). But there is another aspect of Charleston that draws me towards my cheque book – the aspect that inhabitants of the world of ‘telegrams and anger’ would dub unimportant but, to others, is crucial.

The name has of course always been part of a particular romantic dream (for there is the coincidence of shared nomenclature with those balconied, wisteria-draped, Southern Belle houses described in *Gone with the Wind*). It is one of those names, like Tara or Clouds or Brideshead or Knole, that speaks, for the initiated,

a shared language.

Ever since, as a pig-tailed child in Holland Park, I heard stories about ‘Virginia’ from our neighbour Beatrice Mayor and was encouraged by her to read *Flush* (PB No. 55) and *Orlando* and Julian Bell’s poems, the name has glowed for me. But for a long time a name it remained.

Meanwhile, I searched out the small number of places that were always going to mean more to me than any Versailles or Longleat, for example the Anne Frank House in Amsterdam or the Georgian House in Edinburgh: those houses that explain how ordinary people spent their days (their declining or their tragically curtailed) and give such a clear picture of everyday life either because they make Nazism a haunting reality or because the blue, fly-repellent walls of a basement kitchen give everyday eighteenth-century life another kind of reality.

Three summers ago I added Charleston to my private list. When I first went to see it I was firmly transmogrified and understood more about human nature and human aspiration. At first my impressions were entirely sensuous, that smell of damp books, apple smoke, pipe tobacco and mustiness, the grey paint (so wonderfully unlike the gleaming white we so often use

today) and the faded painting and the odd splash, as it were, of a green pepper or orange marigolds.

Then, retrospectively, Charleston came to mean even more to me than the pastoral dream. I still hold on to that romantic image familiar to anyone fond of the English countryside, redolent of stone floors, spaniels flopped on faded rugs, spluttering taps, roses slumping onto oak tables and apples wrinkling on slatted trays.

But, more than this, Charleston has become a picture on that endless merry-go-round so familiar to modern mothers when they perform as wife, lover, mother, friend, writer, cook, chauffeur, gardener, laundrymaid and so on. For it was a place where all of life happened, where people painted, wrote, gathered for meals, picked blackberries, walked to Firle Beacon, had friends to stay, read in the sun, gardened in the drizzle; everything in a whole, a magical combination, that is to me the essence of life.

And at the centre of all this was Vanessa, whom I have loved from afar for so long, the unsung heroine of Bloomsbury. Like Lady Slade in *All Passion Spent* she managed 'simply to be herself', to paint. Like Mrs Ramsay, she presided over her household. Like the heroine of Enid Bagnold's *The Squire* (now PB No. 103) she gave birth in

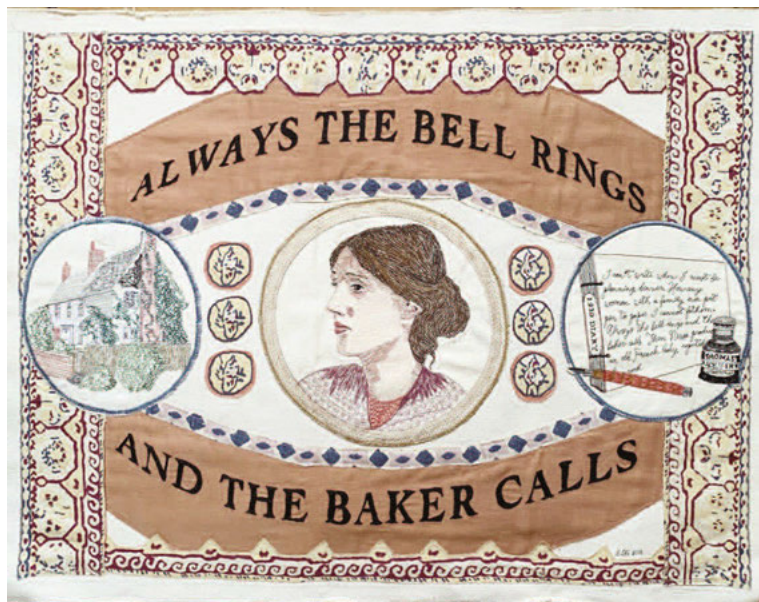
the house to her last baby. And, as Germaine Greer observed in *The Obstacle Race* (which is about women painters), she loved deeply and devotedly, her love for Duncan Grant remaining (as yet) one of the great undocumented affairs of the century.

Charleston is filled with Vanessa, as the cottage at Nether Stowey is filled with Coleridge or Grasmere Cottage is filled with Wordsworth. And so, although I care about the beauty of the house and garden (yet it is not so different from many other farmhouses), most of all I care about that aspect of Charleston that I must needs call domestic.

I hope that when the restoration is finished Charleston will still seem a home where a woman painted and presided and rocked the cradle; that, as much as the upstairs bedroom window where

Maynard Keynes sat undisturbed writing *The Economic Consequences of the Peace*, we will see the original kitchen where Vanessa organised meals; that, when the guide book explains the decorated cupboards and the embroidered chair covers, it will not forget a brief monograph on Pither stoves, on whether the Studio model at some point replaced the Gothic.

I do not want to reduce life to a private *Cranford* or WI meeting; merely to put in a plea for those, like myself, who love Charleston for reasons that are inward-looking and domestic and quite unconcerned with questions of aesthetic tradition or greatness; who hold on to the remark made by Virginia Woolf *Letters Volume IV* p. 176: 'How any woman with a family ever put pen to paper I cannot fathom. Always the bell rings and the baker calls.'



A tapestry by Lisa Borgnes Giramonti commissioned this year for a house in Bath

THE EXPENDABLE MAN

When *The Expendable Man*, PB No. 68, came out in the USA, Christine Smallwood wrote about it in *The New Yorker*; the full piece is available free online.

Dorothy B Hughes told stories about and from the points of view of psychotic men, black men, Spanish men, Native Americans; jazz musicians, fashionable women, soldiers, doctors. Crime was never her interest, evil was, and to be evil, for her, is to be intolerant of others, of the very fact of the existence of something outside the self. With her poetic powers of description, she makes that evil a sickness in the mind and a landscape to be surveyed.

The Expendable Man begins with Dr Hugh Densmore, a UCLA medical intern, on the road to Phoenix, headed for his niece's wedding. On his way into Arizona, he makes the mistake of picking up a hitchhiking girl out in the desert. She's rude and ugly and snaps the gum he gives her ungratefully. She seems to be in trouble, but even after he drops her at the bus station, he's the one looking over his shoulder. Soon the girl shows up at his motel and demands that he give her an abortion. He refuses. Then she turns up in the papers, some time after her body has been found in a canal.

For fifty pages before the girl dies, a humidity of suspicion and paranoia hangs over the novel. Densmore is bizarrely jumpy,

unfree, concerned with being observed. He does not want to be out on abandoned roads. He is desperate to get to Phoenix. 'Phoenix was a city. In a city, people were too busy with their own affairs to wonder about a strangely assorted couple.' After the girl is found, he gets a visit from two detectives. They've got a tip – 'This guy says a nigger doc driving a big white Cadillac brought Bonnie Lee to Phoenix.'

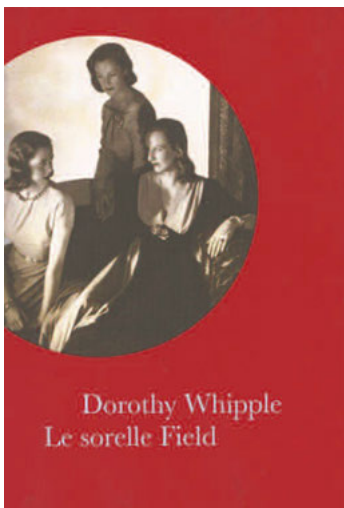
In six letters, all the pieces rearrange – a strangely uptight and bland character has become someone else entirely. 'Hugh took a long breath,' Hughes tells us, and so does the story. We enter another world, where a black man is being framed for a botched abortion and the murder of a white woman. His name in the papers is as good as a life sentence. And he can kiss good-bye to his honey-skinned love interest Ellen, a wealthy and well brought-up north-east judge's daughter. It's not the Deep South, Densmore reminds himself. Things are changing. Ellen can swim in the motel pool. But he's a stranger in town, and things aren't changing fast enough...

In this novel, any one character's psychological depth is arid compared to the interactions between them, how they test and threaten each other. Difference is defined by opposition of power, after all – black, white; accuser, accused. Noir provides a language and a rhythm for such

differences. The contrasts of heat and coolness, light and shadow, create the setting for stagey confrontations – accusations, interrogations, discoveries, confessions – that move the plot forward.

Morality, too, is a matter of contrasts. Blackness in *The Expendable Man* occupies a position of ethical superiority. Densmore is so peaceable that he isn't even threatened by the appearance of Bonnie Lee's father, who rages against him; 'his sympathy for this shell of a man, distraught, bewildered, out of his depth, was stronger than any rancour...' In noir, depth is often figured as fallenness – the fact of having a past. This is a privilege that Densmore, the fall guy, can't afford. He's in no position to insist on his imperfections or ambiguities. Hughes has been accused of 'whitewashing' the Densmores, and it's true that they conform to a white ideal: they fulfil every upper-middle-class expectation, whether it's reading Longfellow, quoting Milton, or achieving scholastically. But Hughes's point in all this is that the family can never be 'whitewashed' into blamelessness. Densmore is exemplary, but he is still expendable. His guilt precedes him, he was born with it. *The Expendable Man* does not suggest that racism can be combated by action or waited out in time; it is a disease, and it must be quarantined.

OUR TRANSLATIONS 5



FINALLY

First of all we want to extend a very warm thank you to all our readers for their wonderful support during lockdown and beyond. It has meant that we are one of the few businesses that have not been wrecked by the pandemic. Many of you will know that for weeks things weren't easy – we had a backlog of orders, unprecedented for us when we pride ourselves on our speed – but hey! that was trivial in the context of what has been happening in the world.

So we are trying to be normal and are sending out this *Biannually* to our 20,000 UK readers (we keep it at this number by 'culling' people who have not bought a book for two years). However, whether this is the result of the pandemic or it would have happened anyway, postage prices abroad have shot up. So we are now putting the new *Biannually* on our website (in Archive at the bottom right of the Home Page) and will only be

sending 'hard copy' to the UK, Europe and North America. Apologies, but it is too great an expense. However, we are having an option on our website whereby the *Biannually* can be bought for £5 including postage (anywhere). Also we have put up the cost of sending the books abroad; again we apologise, but needs must.

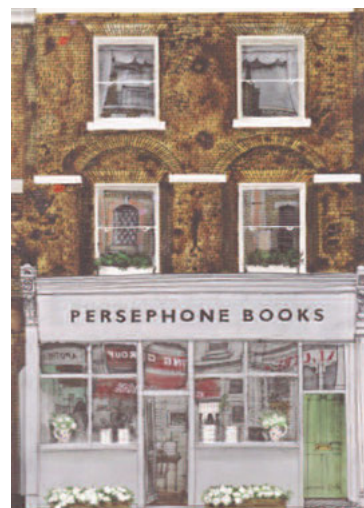
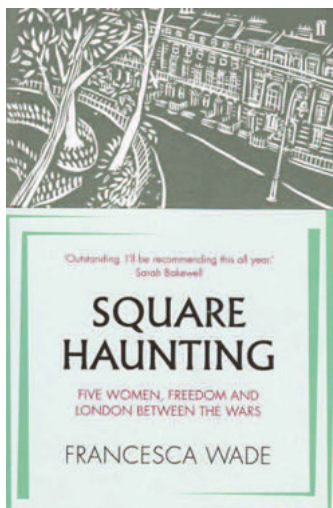
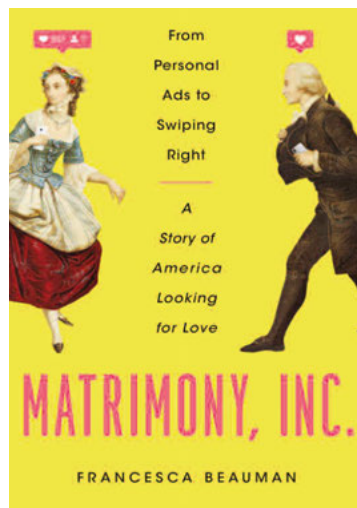
The Spring 2021 books are *The Deepening Stream* by Dorothy Canfield Fisher, this beloved author's stunning 1930 novel about WW1 (America's *Testament of Youth*) with a preface by Sadie Stein; and *The Rector's Daughter* by FM Mayor, a superb and important 1924 classic about unrequited love, with a new preface by the author's great-niece Victoria Grey.

And we want to alert you to Francesca Beauman's *Matrimony Inc: From Personal Ads to Swiping Right, a Story of America Looking for Love* which comes out in the USA in October (and is available

from the shop). Fran works at Persephone one day a week (normally); she also writes about our books and often reads one of our short stories on *Fran's Book Shop* on Instagram. 'She has uncovered a treasure trove of fascinating detail,' said Amanda Foreman. '*Matrimony Inc* is the ultimate proof that we humans are fools for love. But also desperate, courageous, and occasionally lucky.'

Also we want to alert you to the book by the other Francesca who works at Persephone Books – when she can – Francesca Wade, whose book, *Square Haunting*, about five women writers who lived round the corner from the shop in Mecklenburgh Square at the same time, has been shortlisted for a prize; it comes out in paperback in January.

Lastly, in November Penguin publishes *London Postcards* by David Gentleman (£15). He drew the shop in 2001 (below).





Rue Saint-Lazare, Paris 1897 by Camille Pissarro

Printed by the Lavenham Press, Lavenham, Suffolk CO10 9RN

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

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