



# The Persephone Biannually

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*August Haerning (1874-1961) The Tea Party*



# OUR BOOKS FOR AUTUMN/WINTER 2022-23

When we published the first Dorothy Whipple novel (although it was the last she wrote) in March 1999, we could not have anticipated that twenty-three-and-a-half years later we would be bringing out the twelfth and last of her books. Persephone Books has now published all eight of her novels, two volumes of short stories (she published three volumes but we have made our own selection for two new collections) and one volume of memoir. The second volume of memoir, now Persephone Book No. 144, is the twelfth and last book by DW we shall publish.

**The Other Day** was commissioned in 1935. The literary agent Michael Joseph told Dorothy Whipple that ‘he was going to set up as a publisher and wanted me to write a book – an autobiography – for him to publish. I kept on saying I couldn’t do it and he kept on saying I could’ (*Random Commentary* p. 60).

Despite her misgivings – a few weeks later she wrote ‘I hate my autobiography. How can I drivel on like this for 80,000 words?’ – she had finished by the New Year of 1936. Michael Joseph was delighted. ‘He says *The Other Day* is by far the best

thing I have done yet [she had by then published *Young Anne*, *High Wages*, *Greenbanks* and *They Knew Mr Knight*]. He says I don’t know what a good book I have written. I glowed with sherry and happiness.’

It is indeed a delightful book, evoking in a charming and insightful way DW’s first twelve years (she was born in 1893). Each chapter describes her at a different age, from three years old to twelve, with her large and very happy family in the background and foreground. Her parents were sensible and loving, her siblings affectionate and rumbustious, her grandmother kind and understanding (she is evoked in *Greenbanks*). The setting is Lancashire and its ‘stern, steep, stone cottages...in a bleak row along with a chapel, a shop and a school across the road... Man’s mental and physical needs were recognised with his spiritual needs in the upper village, but, as they say in Lancashire, “Obbut just”. There was no excess.’

These sentences from *The Other Day* are quoted in the Persephone Preface to *Young Anne*, DW’s first and most autobiographical novel published in 1927. The author



*A 1900 printed linen textile with stylised tulips and ogee leaf frame*



*'Leaf and Line', a 1952 printed linen furnishing fabric designed for Heal's by Michael O'Connell*

of the Preface, Lucy Mangan, adds: 'Like Dorothy Whipple, Anne is the youngest child of a respectable, middle-class Lancastrian family, sensitive yet unsentimental, and alert to the nuances of human behaviour, even if she struggles at times to understand their full meaning.' It was this theme of the sensitive child trying to understand and adapt to the tyranny of grown-ups, of adults and children living side by side in mutually inaccessible worlds, that would be explored in even more depth in *The Other Day* a decade later. And it led the critic Arthur Waugh to write in the *Spectator*: 'DW's portrayal of an English childhood at the beginning of the century is a positively beautiful piece of work, a true interpretation of the childish heart in bewildered contact with the tyrannical but incalculable grown-ups'.

Waugh continued: 'A real understanding of childhood, sympathetic but not sentimental, is one of the rarest of gifts. Mrs Ewing possessed it; so did Kenneth Grahame; among living authors Miss Eleanor Farjeon possesses it in the highest degree. DW is of the same tribe. She sees exactly what children see; she remembers precisely how children suffer; she knows the "true inwardness" of children's naughtiness. She does not patronise, nor pity; but it may well make the grown-up reader blush for his own recollections of parentage.'

A very 'noticing' child, from an early age DW had the acute eye for domestic detail which would be used to such superb effect in her novels; because one of the most extraordinary things about *The Other Day*, especially for those of us who do not remember much about our own childhoods, is DW's total recall. Here (and this is being written in September 2022, on the weekend after the death of Queen Elizabeth II)

is the passage about the death of Queen Victoria in 1901: 'A bell tolled. The bell tolled again. "She's gone," said my mother in a strange voice... I leaned against the sofa, listening. The air was like a jelly slapped by the bell. At each slap the jelly wobbled violently; then less and less; it merely quivered; but before it could set into stillness the bell slapped it again. I waited for each bell. "The Queen is dead," I said to myself. It had a solemn



sound. The bell was solemn too. It was the most majestic solemn moment I had known. I was conscious of it, but I was also conscious that the Good Queen had died just in time to save Mrs B's baby from falling into the coal-box, and me from a severe scolding, or worse.'

There is a marvellous verisimilitude about this: it is obviously true. And also, evidently, accurate. So that when we read *The Other Day* we discover everything there is to know about someone's childhood. And in fact DW's total recall is one of the reasons it would be impossible to write her biography. She said all there was to say, about her childhood and young adulthood in this volume of memoir and in *Young Anne*: no biographer could say it better. In any case, there are no papers, no evidence, nothing, apart from the chapters in *Young Anne*, to explain the years from 1905-10 when she was at school, or the time just before the First World War when, we assume, like Anne, DW was delighted to have her first job: 'magic word to unemancipated femininity' (Lucy Mangan). But, again like young Anne, rather too soon DW was married; and we can sense we are being told the unvarnished truth when, with subtlety and without bitterness, she conveys that it was a marriage of affection rather than passion. For there is a hint that she realises (thinking of

the great women novelists who did not have children – Austen, George Eliot, Woolf) that a marriage of expedience would allow her to be a writer.

In any case, no biography is needed. DW has told us in charming and perceptive detail about her childhood. She has told us about her writing life in *Random Commentary*. Also, crucially, we have the novels. And although we do not know exactly what is autobiography and what is fiction – was her marriage like that of Lucy and William in *They Were Sisters*, did she know a family like the one in *The Priory*? – we have the bare facts and there is actually nothing more we need to be told. As Adèle Geras writes on page 10: 'Readers of Dorothy Whipple's novels will seize on this memoir, as I did, to learn more about a writer they admire and love.'

Except to add that DW was clearly an outstanding and admirable person – perceptive, funny, kind, lacking in vanity, someone whom every single Persephone reader would love to have known. *The Other Day* will tell Whipple admirers a great deal about her as a child and how she became the adult and the writer that she did. And now we have published and adored every single one of her books and with great sadness we must accept that fact and that there is nothing more to come.

**T**he *Waters under the Earth*, Persephone Book no. 145, is one of those novels which did spectacularly well when it was published in 1965, was indeed a bestseller, but then, despite the timelessness, and the timeliness, of its theme, disappeared from view. Sadly, there are some reasons why this happened: the book is very long; the author died not long after it was published; the title is unmemorable and meaningless until you have read the book; and the main theme of the novel – that the approaching 1960s would mean 'the end of the age of deference' (James Naughtie) – was less interesting when it was actually being lived.

**W**aters 'is a story of class conflict, social mobility in both directions, and the state of the nation in the 1950s' writes Amanda Craig in her Persephone Preface. Thus it is a panoramic novel in that it does not just describe a tiny segment of life or one family or one event, but tries to tell the reader about the bigger picture, about a particular era and about the changes just over the horizon. As the *Sunday Times* reviewer said, 'the book is less a pure novel of the countryside than a kind of rural Cavalcade of 1950-56. The Korean War, the Festival of Britain, Mau-Mau, the death of George VI, the New Elizabethans, the fiasco of Suez – all this does not merely serve as a background but is felt and endured by the characters.' 'In

essence, *Waters* is a novel about a changing Britain on the cusp of seismic social and political change' (Amanda Craig).

It begins in 1950. The war still casts its shadow and there is an atmosphere familiar to Persephone readers of the English middle-class being forced to adapt: just like the people in Mollie Panter-Downes's 1950s short stories, Ferdo and Janet in *Waters* are learning, painfully, to give up polishing (inherited) silver, having three course meals, changing for dinner, expecting the fire to be lit by someone else, all symbols of course of much larger changes.

The main character in the book, Ferdo, whose family has lived at Doddington for generations, fought in the war and as a result is more realistic about the future than his wife Janet, who simply wants everything to remain as it always had been. Their daughter Susan is 18 when the novel begins. Nothing is expected of her except to get married. And the choices she makes by the end of the book symbolise the future.

The other main theme of the book is change in the landscape and the environment. John Moore was a conservationist long before the term was in general use and indeed 'there was something of the Rachel Carson (born the same year,

1907) and the Jane Jacobs (born ten years later) about him.' His biographer David Cole wrote: 'John Moore conducted a long campaign against despoilment of the countryside by those motivated by profit margins and a careless disregard for ecological structures. Eventual achievements included sympathetic management of rural roadside vegetation, controls in the use of

harmful pesticides, preservation of hedgerows, trees, wetland and wildlife habitats, and prevention of stubble burning.' *Waters*, his last book, incapsulates all his most deeply-held beliefs. He, almost alone, tried to alert the media to the effect of technological change on the countryside, especially the use of pesticides and, presciently, the end of natural pollination.



(How tragic that, 55 years after John Moore's death some of his deepest forebodings are coming true before our very eyes.)

He also worked towards the preservation of historic architecture, enlisting the help of John Betjeman to stop the town council demolishing a row of Tudor houses in Tewkesbury. Betjeman described them in a television programme. He 'could do nothing for buildings already razed, but did ensure the preservation of the Abbey cottages. Had he lived John Moore would be pleased to see the row now restored to its former glory and one of the cottages housing a countryside museum in his name. A number of preservation orders saved many other notable structures from rapacious wholesale development... and the campaign spearheaded by Moore saved many of Tewkesbury's unique characteristics' (David Cole again). Moore even, with his long description of the Queen's coronation in 1953, wonders, by implication rather than aloud, whether the monarchy should survive in the new Britain. Through it all the house where the waters lie under the earth, Doddington Manor, symbolises English continuity and tradition in the same way that *Howards End* did in Forster's novel fifty-five years before.

Moore grew up in Tewkesbury, in Gloucestershire, the son of a local auctioneer whose family had lived in the town for generations. His mother was his father's second cousin and also very much part of local life. At an early age John Moore 'knew the names of most wild flowers, could recognise most butterflies and moths and tell you their life histories, knew the bird songs, their nests and eggs, and had read the whole of Geikie's *Geology*... I swallowed poetry with the voracity of a sea-lion swallowing fish.' Denied his country pursuits, he was unhappy at school (yet it is rare to find a writer who was happy at school) and at the age of 16 went into the family auction business. Although he learnt even more about local life and customs he never really fitted in. Then, aged 22, he wrote his first novel and asked a friend, who was Barbara Cartland's brother, if she could recommend an agent. With the acceptance of his book, he left the family firm and became a full-time writer, supporting himself with newspaper articles, book reviews and more novels.

Ten years later, when he was 32, he published what was to be one of his very best books (he was to write forty in all), a life of Edward Thomas. (Cf. PB no. 142, *As It Was* and *World Without End* by Helen Thomas.) Alas, the book was forgotten with the

outbreak of war. But Moore himself had a 'good' war: he had interesting work, was not fatally wounded, and made several close friends. And as the war ended he published the first of *The Elmbury Trilogy* about Tewkesbury/'Elmbury', a unique description of life in and around an English country town; 'Mr Moore has few living equals as an exact and vivid recorder of country scenes and pastimes' wrote the *TLS*. (The three volumes are in print with Slightly Foxed.) Finally, after publishing several other books, both fiction and non-fiction, in 1965 he wrote what is generally considered his best book, *The Waters under the Earth*.

Moore himself described this as 'a story about the decline of a landowning family, whose fortune was founded in the days of the first Elizabeth, and the uprising of the new, brash, tough, adventurous children of the squire's gardener – about the going down of the old England and the rising up of a new.' Nevertheless, as Amanda Craig says, 'the abiding spirit of the novel is one of melancholy hope.' And as Moore's friend Eric Linklater wrote after his untimely death: 'His territory was England, an England which has vanished, or is vanishing, but deserves a loving remembrance.' We are extremely proud to be publishing this very fine novel as a Persephone book.

# THE BATH SUFFRAGETTES

Bath was always a focus for the suffrage campaign, unsurprisingly since, to take one statistic, in the 1870s one in three of its householders were women. Bath organised and presented several petitions to Parliament. And in the years before the First World War there were seven different pro-suffrage societies in Bath. Some were militant and some not, yet they all supported one another's efforts. One symbol of their collaboration was the arboretum at Eagle House, Batheaston where the Blathwayt family planted nearly fifty trees to commemorate individual suffragettes (a different species of conifer was planted for each woman who had been imprisoned, as well as holly trees for those involved in the movement in general). (Sadly, all the trees but one were destroyed in the 1960s to make way for housing, although Eagle House itself remains.)

The Blathwayt family – Emily and her daughter Mary, and the admirably supportive Lt. Col. Linley Wynter Blathwayt – grew flowers in white, green and purple but, more importantly, they provided hospitality (in a summerhouse called Suffragette Rest) to dozens of women who had recently been imprisoned and needed rest or medical care. Mary worked every day in the WSPU shop/office at 12 Walcot Street, bicycling in from Batheaston.

Along with thirty other

women, Mary boycotted the Census of April 2nd 1911 by spending the night in an empty property in Lansdown Crescent. Unsurprisingly, suffragettes felt that 'if we don't count, why should we be counted?' And so, to avoid the census, they gathered in skating rinks, restaurants, schools, theatres, and private homes. The WSPU secretary for Bath, Mrs Mansel, was energetic and organised enough to take a one-week lease on 12 Lansdown Crescent, which she then furnished so that when the women arrived to spend the night they found a kind of opera set. A reporter described the house glowingly in the April 3rd edition of the *Bath Herald*, applauding 'the simplicity of the plan' for 'there was nothing illegal ... [in] obtaining a house and becoming the tenant for a week. Receiving a number of lady visitors was no crime. The events of the night, music, speeches, readings, and sleeping, offended against no laws. No offence, indeed, was actually committed until the "head of the house" made a false return to the enumerator who called for the census paper.' After praising the furnishings, the reporter observed that 'the bareness of the walls [was] effectively broken by tastefully arranged tufts of foliage. Over the fireplace was a suffrage banner, and, in pride of place on the mantelpiece, for all to see, the fateful census paper which was going to mar the accuracy

of the Bath figures.' The reporter added that the 'night was entertaining and pleasant' and despite the provisions made for sleeping, 'astonishingly few took advantage of them ... the excitement sustained them, and there was the primitive feeling abroad that they could go to bed any night, but might not have the opportunity to take part in such a meeting again.' The excellent Mrs Mansel had made the house look beautiful *for the sole purpose* of delighting the thirty Bath suffragettes; domestic feminism at work. She was also brave, as a few months later she took part in the London window-smashing campaign and was imprisoned in Holloway.

However, in contrast to the convivial events of April 2nd, the remaining story of suffrage work in Bath is one of tension and violence, both against suffrage workers and on the part of suffragettes themselves: arson increased during these years, as did hot tar attacks on letterboxes, and false fire alarms.

In November 1911 a suffrage meeting was organised at Bath's new skating rink – the Pavilion, North Parade Road had been built the year before – at which Lloyd George was to be the speaker. An advertisement was published in the *Bath Herald*: 'Due to the limited space and tremendous demand... only MEN will be allowed to attend' meaning women were excluded from the very space where votes

for women would be discussed. Speedily, a group of suffragettes rented a building close to the Pavilion and once the meeting had started they climbed onto the roof and caused a big distraction, undeterred by the crowds yelling insults at them. The meeting was successfully disrupted and they disappeared over the roof as the police arrived. However, on the way home one of the group went to the Post Office at the junction of Walcot Street, Broad Street, Northgate Street and New Bond Street (several women's suffrage societies had their offices nearby), broke several windows and

waited for the police to arrive.

It was violence like this that led to Mary Blathwayt's resignation from the WSPU: her parents had very much encouraged her suffrage work but both disapproved of violence or extremism. By April 1913 Emily Blathwayt wrote: 'I am glad to say [Mary] is writing to resign membership with the WSPU. Now they have begun burning houses in the neighbourhood I feel more than ever ashamed to be connected with them.' As opinions over militancy intensified, divisions among the pro-suffrage community in Bath

began to show. The Blathwayts' more radical neighbours, the Tollemaches, stepped up their work, but this ended their close friendship with Mary Blathwayt. When 'Westwood' in Lansdown was burnt down in December 1913 the Tollemaches were the prime suspects, although nothing was ever proved. By then Mary had stepped back from her suffrage work.

*Taken from notes made during a talk by Lucienne Boyce at Persephone Books, from Suffragette City by Cynthia Hammond, and Elizabeth Crawford The Women's Suffrage Movement in Britain and Ireland.*

## 'PLUCK' BY GERTRUDE COLMORE

She came into the ABC tearoom almost timidly, yet with complete self-possession.

The room was nearly filled, chiefly with very young men, and it was not easy to find a seat. She paused at the door, looking to right and left; then her eyes lighted on a free table, and she made her way to it.

She was daintier than most of the women who came to that particular shop; she had what the youth at a neighbouring table called a genteel air. She was dainty, too, in her ways. When her cup of coffee, her boiled egg and roll and butter were brought her, she ate and drank in a leisurely, somewhat fastidious

fashion, opening the egg carefully so that the yolk did not overflow and stain the plate with a yellow stain, as was the fate of so many plates in that close room, where haste or habit or hunger trampled on the graces of life.

The youth at the neighbouring table watched her with admiring and curious eyes. He had finished his meat pie and tea, and had nothing to do but read the racing news or look about him while he smoked a cigarette. The girl was more attractive even than the tips given by his favourite racing expert, and he looked at her more than at the paper in his hand.

She was a cut above the girls he was used to, so he told himself;

more stylish, more of the lady; too modest-looking, he thought for an actress, yet as cool in her ways as if she were used to being looked at by all the world. Wasn't she perhaps an actress after all? Surely – in the shop window – or was it the papers –? Somewhere – he became more and more sure – somewhere – he had seen the face – certainly – with other faces. In a row of portraits was it? – or a row of photos? – or – or –

Suddenly he knew. Like their cheek to give herself such airs! They had plenty of that. But he knew; he wasn't to be taken in. Of course, of course, that was it; he remembered now. She was a well-known suffragette.



The youth's face had changed; the naive admiration had gone; in its place was a smirk of contempt. The girl, as unconscious of the one as she had been of the other, continued slowly to eat her meal, pausing now and again to make notes in the margin of a book which she had taken from her bag and which lay open on the table beside her plate.

She did not notice that a youth had left a neighbouring table and taken a seat at her own; she was certainly startled when a voice said close to her: 'I know who you are.'

Startled she was for a moment, but her eyes were calm as she returned his gaze: 'Indeed!'

'Yes, and I could –' He looked round the room. 'I know most of the fellows here, and they're dead set, I can tell you, against you and your lot. You might have a rough time of it if I was to give you away.'

Her look would have been pathetic but for its fearlessness. 'I'm used to rough times.'

'Rough times are for rough women. I wonder you aren't ashamed of yourself.'

'I suppose you are the kind that would wonder.' She looked at him scrutinisingly. 'And yet – you might be amongst our admirers, if you could only manage to understand.'

'Understand? Understand, indeed! 'Tain't my understanding that's wrong.'

'You're quite sure of that?' She

half smiled as she spoke.

'It don't take any particular understanding to know what's decent behaviour.'

'Decency is a difficult question.' She was still quite good-humoured. 'You must admit, though, that we have some good qualities – pluck, for instance.'

'Not my idea of pluck – to go –'

'What is your idea?'

'Well, I heard of a plucky thing the other day – a woman, too, it was. There was a child by the canal, Regent's Park way – you know how these little beggars will play close down by the water – fell in, and a woman fished him out.'

'Went in after him, do you mean?'

'Yes, that's what I mean; deep water. There's pluck for you, the real article.'

'Could she swim?'

'Pears she could. She was off with her coat and shoes in no time, the fellow said who told me, and into the water like a knife. What do you think of that?'

The girl shrugged her shoulders. 'It doesn't take half the pluck to do a thing like that it does to go on a deputation.'

'You mean to tell me –?'

'Well, she could swim, you see. And besides a good deal of water isn't a quarter as cruel as a flood of brutal men.'

'All very well to say that, but...'

'Say! I know it. You haven't been in a mob of savages; I have.'

'And you haven't been in the

water and risked your life to save a child. And to sneer at a woman who'd do a thing like that, well, it's – it's all of a piece –'

'I'm not sneering. I only say it doesn't take half so much courage to do the one as to do the other. And I know what I'm talking about.'

'Oh you do, do you? And pray how do you know what sort of pluck it takes to jump into the water like that woman?'

Again she shrugged her shoulders. 'Because, as it happens, I was the woman.'

'You? You?'

At the sight of his face she laughed.

'You're kidding me,' he said, 'making fun. By Jove –'

'Oh no. You ask your friend. I had a purple coat and skirt on and a green felt hat and a white blouse; and in pulling me out – for I had been in some time and was rather done – my arm got hurt.' She turned back her sleeve and showed a bandage. 'You ask your friend.'

'That's right, I remember,' he said. 'And you did that – you?'

'Yes, I, and I tell you it wasn't half as bad to do as many of the things I've done. Now I must go. Good morning.'

As she rose, he rose too. He could not take off his hat to her since it hung upon a peg close by; but he moved a chair aside for her to pass, and stood with bent head as she made her way between the tables to the door.

*Published on 24th January 1913*

# THE OTHER DAY BY ADÈLE GERAS

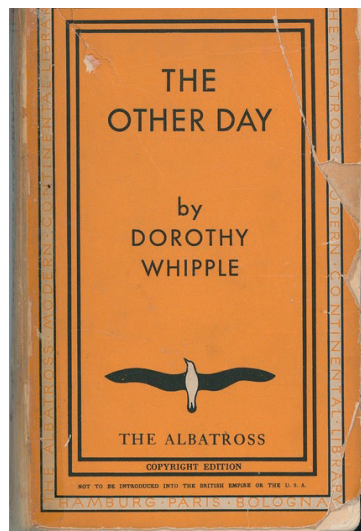
At the beginning of this memoir, Dorothy Whipple exhorts herself to go back through the years. She recalls the satisfaction of returning straying cows to their field and hopes that she can do the same with her memories. Back and back she goes and ends up, she tells us, in a terraced house on a hill in Lancashire, with two brothers, one older and one younger. They're the children of an architect and his wife and DW describes herself as 'a rather pale child with straight fair hair and a sleepy expression.'

Readers of DW's novels will seize on this memoir, as I did, to learn more about a writer they admire and love. Seeing the actual book was a moving experience. The copy I was lent has been read and loved and is falling to pieces. Even the bits of Sellotape that still adhere to some pages is yellowed and no longer sticky. The publisher is The Albatross Press (Leipzig, Paris, Bologna) and it says expressly on the cover: 'Not to be introduced into the British Empire or the USA.'

DW's youngest brother, Gordon, is born quite early in the book, and she describes most beautifully and completely unsentimentally the love the older girl feels for the new baby. Gordon falls ill and I was holding my breath for the outcome with all the anxiety that I remember well from my first encounter with *Little Women*.

The young DW is a writer from an early age. One of her efforts is disapproved of at school because the teacher refuses to believe she hasn't copied it from somewhere. She attends a convent which later reappears in *Young Anne*, and is constantly aware of nature: birds, trees, flowers and the landscape are all written about carefully and appreciatively.

She has ideas of glory. She



makes what she thinks is going to be a wonderful Christmas present for her brothers: a Silver Bough. Her brothers can't imagine why she's decorated a perfectly good branch with fruit and other ridiculous appendages. "She's potty as usual," says one. DW explains, in what is perhaps the most revealing remark she makes about the writing process, and still talking about the Silver Bough, '...now that I looked at it again after they had spoken

disparagingly of it, I saw that it was nothing wonderful after all. It was even silly.... I was slow in learning that if you wish to save your vision from destruction at the hands of other people, you must keep it secret. It was years before I recognised the formidable power of other people's opinion to destroy one's visions.'

Although the book is short, everyone we meet (family, servants, fellow schoolchildren, teachers, neighbours) is economically but thoroughly described. All of them are there before us, vividly brought to life. To this is added DW's talent for description, and understanding of emotions and the result is prose of such immediacy and energy that you have to go on reading.

I think that what draws readers to a writer is the authorial voice. Just as in real life, there are some people you're immediately drawn to, and others you find a bit difficult or annoying, so in fiction. DW's voice is one of the most agreeable and intriguing you could hope to encounter. I never tire of, so to speak, listening to what she has to say, whether she's making stories up or telling us more about herself.

This is a delightful glimpse of life at the turn of the twentieth century, written in the 1930s by a writer who is both shrewd and sensitive. I loved it.

*Adèle Geras, Cambridge 2022.*

# OUR READERS WRITE

‘Dorothy Whipple’s novels of fraught family dynamics are compellingly readable, and *They Were Sisters* ramps things up a notch over the others; there is some really dark stuff going on here, including but not limited to psychological spousal and child abuse. Sounds depressing, doesn’t it? It is, very much so, though it’s so fascinating in its depictions that one cannot ever quite look away. It is also a story built around the power of love, and, yes, sometimes the powerlessness of love to “make things better” for the loved ones. Moral failure or spiritual failure or whatever you call it, makes such a vicious circle... *They Were Sisters* is very much a novel about relationships versus large happenings. There are dramatic events, but they are of a small, familial nature, kept as much under the rug as possible due to the need to keep up appearances. An intense, unputdownable read. Dorothy Whipple, accomplished documentarian of domestic drama, excels herself here.’ *Leaves & Pages*

‘How difficult it is sometimes to talk about a book that I loved as much as I loved this one. *Random Commentary* is a compilation of pieces from Dorothy Whipple’s journals and notebooks, which she kept intermittently then years later she simply copied out extracts that she thought might interest

her readers. Nothing was ever organised or dated – though of course it all runs fairly chronologically, therefore the title fits absolutely. In these extracts she doesn’t just reveal the writer she was, the struggles and the constant self-doubt, the highs, and lows, she shows us the world around her, and her appreciation of it. This book is a delight for any Whipple fan – and perhaps best enjoyed by those who have already enjoyed her fiction. Now all I long for is that Persephone reissue her childhood memoirs too. That’s not too much to ask is it?’ *Heaven Ali*

‘Nearly half of the stories in *English Climate* by Sylvia Townsend Warner dwell on the “mobile” subject, whether it’s soldiers returning to homes, evacuee experiences, or varieties of refugee consciousness. The 1943 title story follows a gunner returning home as his village collects old books for salvage; he finds his volumes in the long line of print-salvage and accuses his mother of burning them like the Nazis. The returnee tales are accompanied by several refugee stories, while the sudden homelessness created by bomb threats is played out in “From Above”, which inhabits the mind of a woman finally released from the tyrannical control of her husband by a time bomb. The stories about wartime mobility of mind and body stretch from acerbic and sharp-witted social

comedy to more existentialist explorations of the homelessness arising from the years of violence. What the stories most passionately and wryly observe are the resources, wit and range of communal experience of the home front women as their WVS-style organisations took over the rural economy and culture: an experience that was no mild comedy of genteel manners, but an exercise in a revolutionary form of loving and being together, whether under fire or no, staged with superbly unsentimental, sharp-witted, inventive élan. The brevity, precariousness and quick communal bonds – so poignantly accessed by the short story form, only to be rapidly snatched away – suited the quick and sudden changes and mobile transformations of that precarious wartime STW saw as inaugural of a new age.’ *The Journal of the Sylvia Townsend Warner Society*.

‘We have just finished *Family Roundabout*, and thought Juliet Ackroyd’s introduction was beautifully written. Like Noel Streatfeild she had a completely knock-out honest and direct perception of the world through a child’s eyes, (and the comedy comes from the disjunction between adult and child’s values) but wasn’t anything like as sure of herself with complex, sexual adults. We thought that, in this novel at

least, RC equates ugliness with goodness. We really liked the balanced portrait of two mothers, and the subtle reconciliation that takes place between them, and the even more subtle and unexpected refusal to credit Mrs Fowler with “success” and Mrs Willoughby with “failure”. They each had both, and admitted that chance and their own children were responsible for some of the “failures” or sadnesses. Belle and Rachel were very two-dimensional, but perhaps RC was really wanting to study the family itself, as an organic phenomenon, rather than the people these particular children got involved with? I enjoyed Juliet Ackroyd’s observation about clothes.’ *THM and PH, Swanage*

‘**W**hen F M Mayor’s second novel, *The Rector’s Daughter*, was published by the Hogarth Press in 1924, the Woolfs were surprised to have a bestseller on their hands. It was a runner-up for the 1925 ‘Prix Femina-Vie Heureuse’ (Forster’s *A Passage to India* won instead). Yet *The Rector’s Daughter* is still a novel that seems to exist just below the literary radar, much loved by its readers, but also, somehow, not widely read. In a recent piece for *The Times*, the writer D J Taylor describes *The Rector’s Daughter* as “one of those curious novels in which a cauldron of suppressed emotion and unrequited love boils away

behind a landscape in which, for all practical purposes, hardly anything happens” and says that as a novelist, F M Mayor ranks with Jane Austen and George Eliot. I would agree, and *The Rector’s Daughter* is Mayor’s masterpiece.’ *Cambridge Ladies Dining Society 1890-1914*

‘**E**tty Hillesum, whose diaries and letters are published as *An Interrupted Life*, PB no. 5, had hopes of coming through the war alive. She longed to channel her prodigious literary talent into writing Dostoyevskian novels, as well as documenting the history she witnessed. Her overriding impulse was not self-preservation but to share the fate of her people. “I don’t think I could feel happy if I were exempted from what so many others have to suffer.” Despite offers of help, she refused to go into hiding. During her months at Westerbork, thanks to her special mail privileges, she sent dozens of letters to friends. Composed with a finely developed novelist’s eye, the letters illuminated her day-to-day life and work in the hospital barracks, the squalor, the desperation, the awful spectacle of weekly deportations to Poland, the tension of not knowing who would be next. She insisted on meeting death on her own terms: with an unbroken spirit and without letting hatred reduce her to the moral level of “the savage, cold-blooded fanatics.” The evolution of her strange

and disconcerting capacity to transcend personal suffering, and to resist hatred in the face of the ultimate provocation, can be traced in the diary she kept for the last two years of her life. She doesn’t regard this as literature, but as a means of self-exploration and psychological unblocking: “You don’t put things down on paper to produce masterpieces, but to gain some clarity.” Yet many of her ruminations, for example on the ideal literary style she hopes to one day perfect, are indeed mini-masterpieces. However, she increasingly doubts that writing can bear adequate witness to her reality. “I shall have to invent an entirely new language,” she remarks after beginning work at the Jewish Council, “to express everything that has moved my heart these last days.” The reader is left in little doubt that Etty, had she lived, could have invented an entirely new language, written novels to rival her beloved Russian epics, and become an important spiritual guru. The body of work she did produce in her brief life is of immeasurable importance, both as feminist social history and as Holocaust testimony. That Etty Hillesum isn’t a well-known name, certainly not compared with Anne Frank, may be because of her ambiguous philosophical legacy. She is claimed by some as a Christian saint, owing to her diverse theological inspirations, such as the New Testament. This

complicates Hillesum's status as a Jewish heroine, as does her principled refusal to go down fighting. *Emma Garman* in *The Paris Review*

‘Writing at the speed of events, Lion Feuchtwanger, a star Weimar novelist who had been stripped of citizenship and was already a lucky exile in Provence, produced this symphonic and even leisurely paced twist on the classic German “decline of a family” novel in a few remarkable weeks in 1933. *The Oppermanns* was something of a “bestseller”, translated into 10 languages and selling around 250,000 copies (an unthinkable large number by the standards of contemporary literary publishing). But after its initial success, it did not become part of the canon of Jewish postwar reading about the Holocaust or the lead-up to the Second World War; nor did this very German novel with its dinner parties, its refined ironies, and lively philosophical debates between characters about “idealism” versus “pragmatism” enter the postwar West German literary canon. At a moment when the impotence of the world's commitment to “Never Again” has never been clearer, why do we need another story of European Jewry on the eve of their destruction? Once we get past the fog of our own knowingness, Feuchtwanger's novel reads as a powerful case

study of how particular cultures and life-worlds die, the way that F. Scott Fitzgerald says we go broke “gradually, then suddenly.” All the Oppermanns' thoughts, their short-term decisions, their ideas, make perfect sense – and indeed sound quite rational given the environment they'd known and the identities they'd chosen for themselves. The novel is anthropology or sociology, not satire. Although Feuchtwanger was a friend of Brecht's and collaborated with him on several early plays, his chosen method in *The Oppermanns* is exactly the opposite of the godfather of twentieth-century interventionist, activist avant-gardes. Instead of creating distance and estrangement and shock, Feuchtwanger draws us into the comfortable interiors where life-damning decisions are really made. *The Oppermanns* presents how extinction feels from the inside. The habits that once kept you alive, passed on from generation to generation, no longer work. Everything you thought would prepare you for future success instead narrows your chances of survival. The news from 1933 is still news, if we know how to listen to it.’ *Marco Roth* in *Tablet Magazine*

‘*Daddy's Gone A-Hunting* is a brilliant, superbly crafted book about marriage, abortion, the difference in attitudes between generations and a portrayal of a community

bound by strict moral codes where outward appearances matter but there is always tension simmering under the surface. Ruth is a fascinating, complex character. We first get the impression that she's a passive housewife, a pushover burdened by Rex's domineering personality, and yet she fights back in her own way. Mortimer's prose is honest and incisive. While there's not much by way of action, Ruth's internal drama is rendered beautifully, making this a very immersive read.’ *Radhika's Reading Retreat*

‘What an incredible mental health boost reading *High Wages* has been these past weeks. I have absolutely LOVED IT. I love Jane Carter, love her passion, her realness. Yes, the story was set in 1913/14 etc. but her life is an inspiration to be sure. I love the detail of the story, the characters – oh they are wonderful – Wilfred, Noel Yarde, Sylvia Yarde, Mr Greenwood and that awful Mrs Greenwood, not to mention the very beautiful, honest, real and delightful Mrs Briggs. I have been captivated by the story and don't want it to end. Jane Carter feels like a modern woman to me, someone we all know, trying to do her very best. She's real, she's not in awe of bullshit money/titles/éliteness. She just wants to earn her own living, I identify with that very much.’ *JC, Dunfermline, Fife*

# THE PERSEPHONE 145

1. **William – an Englishman by Cicely Hamilton** Prize-winning 1919 novel about the effect of WW1 on a socialist clerk and a suffragette. Preface: Nicola Beauman

2. **Mariana by Monica Dickens** This funny, romantic first novel, which came out in 1940, describes a young girl's life in the 1930s. Preface: Harriet Lane **Also a Persephone Classic**

3. **Someone at a Distance by Dorothy Whipple** 'A very good novel indeed' (*Spectator*) about the destruction of a formerly happy 1950s marriage. Preface: Nina Bawden, R4 'Book at Bedtime' **Also a Persephone Classic**

4. **Fidelity by Susan Glaspell** 1915 novel by a Pulitzer-winning writer brilliantly describing the effect of a girl in Iowa running off with a married man. Preface: Laura Godwin

5. **An Interrupted Life by Etty Hillesum** From 1941–43 a woman in Amsterdam, 'the Anne Frank for grown-ups', wrote diaries and letters: they are among the great documents of our time. Preface: Eva Hoffman

6. **The Victorian Chaise-longue by Marghanita Laski** A 'little jewel of horror': 'Melly' lies on a chaise-longue in the 1950s and wakes as 'Milly' ninety years before. Preface: PD James

7. **The Home-Maker by Dorothy Canfield Fisher** An ahead-of-its-time 'remarkable and brave 1924 novel about being a house-husband' (Carol Shields). Preface: Karen Knox, Afterword: Elaine Showalter **Also a Persephone Classic**

8. **Good Evening, Mrs Craven: the Wartime Stories of Mollie Panter-**

**Downes** Short stories first published in *The New Yorker* from 1938–44. Five were read on R4. Preface: Gregory LeStage **An unabridged Persephone audiobook read by Lucy Scott. Also a Persephone Classic**

9. **Few Eggs and No Oranges by Vere Hodgson** A 600-page diary, written from 1940–45 in Notting Hill Gate, full of acute observation, wit and humanity. Preface: Jenny Hartley

10. **Good Things in England by Florence White** 'One of the great English cookbooks, full of delightful, delicious recipes that actually work.' Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall

11. **Julian Grenfell by Nicholas Mosley** A biography of the First World War poet, and of his mother Ettie Desborough. Preface: author

12. **It's Hard to be Hip over Thirty and Other Tragedies of Married Life by Judith Viorst** Funny and wise 1960s poems about marriage, children and reality. Preface: author

13. **Consequences by E M Delafield** By the author of *Diary of a Provincial Lady*, PB No. 105, in this 1919 novel a girl who fails to marry goes in to a convent. Preface: Nicola Beauman

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

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

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

**Also a Persephone Classic**

17. **Marjory Fleming by 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'. Preface: Neville Braybrooke

19. **They Knew Mr Knight by Dorothy Whipple** A 1934 novel about a man driven to committing fraud and what happens to him and his family; a 1946 film. Afterwords: Terence Handley MacMath and Christopher Beauman

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

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

**A Persephone audiobook read by Frances McDormand. Also a Persephone Classic**

22. **Consider the Years by Virginia Graham Sharp**, funny, evocative WW2 poems by Joyce Grenfell's closest friend and collaborator. Preface: Anne Harvey

23. **Reuben Sachs by Amy Levy** A fierce 1880s satire on the London Jewish community by 'the Jewish Jane Austen', praised by Oscar Wilde. Preface: Julia Neuberger

- 24. Family Roundabout by Richmal Crompton** By the author of *William*, a 1948 family saga contrasting two matriarchs and their very different children. Preface: Juliet Aykroyd
- 25. The Montana Stories by Katherine Mansfield** All the short stories written during the author's last year; with a detailed editorial note and the contemporary illustrations. Five were read on R4.
- 26. Brook Evans by Susan Glaspell** An unusual novel written in 1928, the same year as *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, about the enduring effect of a love affair on three generations.
- 27. The Children who Lived in a Barn by Eleanor Graham** A 1938 classic about five children fending for themselves; starring the unforgettable hay box. Preface: Jacqueline Wilson
- 28. Little Boy Lost by Marghanita Laski** Novel about a father's search for his son in France in late 1945, the *Guardian's* Nicholas Lezard's Paperback Choice, R4 'Book at Bedtime' read by Jamie Glover. Afterword: Anne Sebba. **Also a Persephone Classic**
- 29. The Making of a Marchioness by Frances Hodgson Burnett** A very entertaining 1901 novel about the melodrama when a governess marries a Marquis; a R4 Classic Serial. Preface: Isabel Raphael, Afterword: Gretchen Gerzina. **A Persephone audiobook read by Lucy Scott. Also a Persephone Classic**
- 30. Kitchen Essays by Agnes Jekyll** Witty and useful essays about cooking, with recipes, published in *The Times* and reprinted as a book in 1922. 'One of the best reads outside Elizabeth David' wrote gastropoda.com. **Also a Persephone Classic**
- 31. A House in the Country by Jocelyn Playfair** An unusual and very interesting 1944 novel about a group of people living in the country during WW2. Preface: Ruth Gorb
- 32. The Carlyles at Home by Thea Holme** A 1965 mixture of biography and social history describing Thomas and Jane Carlyle's life in Chelsea.
- 33. The Far Cry by Emma Smith** A beautifully written 1949 novel about a young girl's passage to India: a great Persephone favourite. R4 'Book at Bedtime'. Preface: author
- 34. Minnie's Room: The Peacetime Stories of Mollie Panter-Downes 1947–1965: Second volume of short stories first published in *The New Yorker* and not known in the UK.**
- 35. Greenery Street by Denis Mackail** A delightful, very funny 1925 novel about a young couple's first year of married life in a (real) street in Chelsea. Preface: Rebecca Cohen
- 36. Lettice Delmer by Susan Miles** A unique 1920s novel in verse describing a girl's stormy adolescence and path to redemption; much admired by T S Eliot.
- 37. The Runaway by Elizabeth Anna Hart** A Victorian novel for children and grown-ups, republished in 1936 with Gwen Raverat wood engravings. Afterwords: Anne Harvey, Frances Spalding
- 38. Cheerful Weather for the Wedding by Julia Strachey** A funny, sardonic 1932 novella by a niece of Lytton Strachey, praised by Virginia Woolf. Preface: Frances Partridge. **An unabridged Persephone audiobook read by Miriam Margolyes. A film with Felicity Jones. Also a Persephone Classic**
- 39. Manja by Anna Gmeyner** A 1938 German novel, newly translated, about five children conceived on the same night in 1920, and their lives until the Nazi takeover. Preface: Eva Ibbotson (the author's daughter)
- 40. The Prioory 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 Memmery** by Ruby Ferguson A 1937 novel about Lady Rose, who inherits a great house, marries well – and then meets the love of her life on a park bench. A great favourite of the Queen Mother. Preface: Candia McWilliam
54. **They Can’t Ration These** by Vicomte de Mauduit 1940 cookery book about ‘food for free’, full of excellent (and fashionable) recipes.
55. **Flush** by Virginia Woolf A light-hearted but surprisingly feminist 1933 ‘life’ of Elizabeth Barrett Browning’s spaniel, ‘a little masterpiece of comedy’ (*TLS*). A ‘Book at Bedtime’ on BBC R4. Preface: Sally Beauman
56. **They Were Sisters** by Dorothy Whipple A 1943 novel by this superb writer, contrasting three different marriages. Preface: Celia Brayfield
57. **The Hopkins Manuscript** by R C Sherriff A 1939 novel ‘by Mr Hopkins’ about what happens when, in 1946, the moon crashes into the earth. Preface: Michael Moorcock, Afterword: George Gamow
58. **Hetty Dorval** by Ethel Wilson First novel (1947) set in the beautiful landscape of British Columbia; a young girl is befriended by the lovely and selfish ‘menace’ – but is she one? Afterword: Northrop Frye
59. **There Were No Windows** by Norah Hoult A touching and funny 1944 novel about an elderly woman with memory loss living in Kensington 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 Hardyment
63. **Princes in the Land** by Joanna Cannan A 1938 novel about a daughter of the aristocracy married to an Oxford don; her three children fail to turn out as she hoped.
64. **The Woman Novelist and Other Stories** by Diana Gardner Late 1930s and early 1940s short stories that are witty, sharp and with an unusual undertone. Preface: Claire Gardner
65. **Alas, Poor Lady** by Rachel Ferguson Polemical but intensely readable 1937 novel about the unthinking cruelty with which Victorian parents gave birth to daughters without anticipating any future for them apart from marriage.
66. **Gardener’s Nightcap** by Muriel Stuart A 1938 pot pourri: miniature essays on gardening – such as Dark Ladies (fritillary), Better Gooseberries, Phlox Failure – which will be enjoyed by all gardeners.
67. **The Fortnight in September** by RC Sherriff Another novel by the author of *Journey’s End*, and *The Hopkins Manuscript*, PB No. 57, about a family on holiday in Bognor in 1931; a quiet masterpiece. Read on Radio 4. **Also a Persephone Classic**
68. **The Expendable Man** by Dorothy B Hughes A 1963 thriller about a young doctor in Arizona which encapsulates the social, racial and moral tensions of the time. By the author of *In a Lonely Place*. Afterword: Dominic Power
69. **Journal of Katherine Mansfield** The husband of the great short story writer (cf. *The Montana Stories*, PB No. 25) assembled this Journal from unposted letters, scraps of writing etc: a unique portrait.
70. **Plats du Jour** by Patience Gray and Primrose Boyd A 1957 cookery book which was a bestseller at the time and a pioneering work for British cooks. The line drawings and the endpapers are by David Gentleman.
71. **The Shuttle** by Frances Hodgson Burnett A 1907 page-turner about an American heiress married to an English aristocrat, whose beautiful and enterprising sister sets out to rescue her. Preface: Anne Sebba
72. **House-Bound** by Winifred Peck This 1942 novel describes an Edinburgh woman 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-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* (PB No. 81): Miss Buncle moves to a new village. Afterword: Fiona Bevan

**92. *Midsummer Night in the Workhouse* by Diana Athill** 'Funny, engaging and unexpected' (*Paris Review*): 1950s stories by the editor and memoir writer. Preface: author, who also read six of the stories as a Persephone Audiobook.

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

**94. *No Surrender* by Constance Maud** A fascinating and path-breaking 1911 suffragette novel about a mill girl and her aristocratic friend. Preface: Lydia Fellgett

**95. *Greenbanks* by Dorothy Whipple** 1932 novel by our most popular author about a family and, in particular, the happy relationship between a grandmother and granddaughter. Afterword: Charles Lock

**96. *Dinners for Beginners* by Rachel and Margaret Ryan** A 1934 cookery book for the novice cook explaining everything in 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** This '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 but Thea Hunter begins to question their integrity. Preface: Harriet Evans

**111. *London War Notes* by Mollie Panter-Downes** These extraordinary 'Letters from London', describing everyday life in WW2, were written for *The New Yorker* and then collected in one volume in 1971. Preface: David Kynaston

**112. *Vain Shadow* by Jane Hervey** A Waugh-ish black comedy written in the 1950s but not published until 1963 about the days after the death of a patriarch in a large country house and the effect on his family. Preface: Celia Robertson

**113. *Greengates* by RC Sherriff** A 1936 novel about retirement: Mr Baldwin realises the truth of 'for

better for worse but not for lunch' but finds a new life by moving to 'metroland'. Preface: Juliet Gardiner

**114. *Gardeners' Choice* by Evelyn Dunbar and Charles Mahoney** Two artist friends collaborated over the text and drawings of this rare and delightful 1937 gardening book. Preface: Edward Bawden, Afterword: Christopher Campbell-Howes

**115. *Maman, What Are We Called Now?* by Jacqueline Mesnil-Amar** The author kept a diary in July and August 1944: an unparalleled insight into the last days of the Occupation in Paris. 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 about a girl's rather fraught childhood by this major New Zealand writer. Preface: Ann Thwaite

**118. *Every Good Deed and Other Stories* by Dorothy Whipple** A 1944 novella and nine short stories written between 1931 and 1961 which display the author's 'wonderful power of taking quite ordinary people in quite unromantic surroundings and making them live.'

**119. *Long Live Great Bardfield: The Autobiography of Tirzah Garwood*** A touching, funny and perceptive memoir 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' i.e. 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** Previously omitted from the von Arnim *oeuvre*, a 1929 novel by the author of *Vera* about marriage and deception – we think it's her best book. Preface: Valerie Grove

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

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

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

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

**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.

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

**141. *The Deepening Stream* by Dorothy Canfield Fisher** A classic of American literature (though neglected in the US) about the entrancing Mately in France in WWI. Preface: Sadie Stein

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

**143. *A Well Full of Leaves* by Elizabeth Myers** A 1943 novel, poetic and beautiful, about four children damaged by their abusive parents and how they confront their destinies. Afterword: a 1957 memoir by Eleanor Farjeon

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

**145. *The Waters under the Earth* by John Moore** A 1965 'condition of England' novel set in the 1950s about the 'end of the age of deference'. Preface: Amanda Craig

# THE LITERARY MAP OF BATH

This October we publish *The Persephone Literary Map of Bath*. This is a fold-out map, price £5 (it can also be bought unfolded as a poster) which has, on one side, an 1852 map by J H Cotterell. Here we have placed little red flags with numbers. When you turn to the back you will find information about the writers who lived in the buildings that are flagged up. The idea is that Persephone readers go off to explore Bath in the footsteps of its literary inhabitants; and then come back to 8 Edgar Buildings for a Bath bun and a cup of tea.

Bath has a centuries-old literary heritage, which began with Chaucer's Wife of Bath and Pepys's visit to take the waters, and continues into the twenty-first century. It is one of the reasons we decided on a move from equally literary Bloomsbury. Also, by highlighting the addresses, the houses, the writers' homes, the map emphasises that enduring Persephone theme: the domestic in the context of the literary, feminism in the context of literature.

Jan Morris wrote in 2006: 'As one of the most formally beautiful cities in Europe, regular, composed, elegant, modest in size, delightful of setting – as an architectural paragon the place might have fallen prey to permanently unrelieved sycophancy. Fortunately its social history, despite the diktats of fashion, has been marvellously unkempt. Snobs, rogues, poseurs,

charlatans, grotesque popinjays and preposterous valetudinarians have mingled always with the virtuous, and have relieved the lovely city of perfection.'

It was partly its unkempt social history that attracted writers, always mavericks, to Bath. There are forty-five who appear on our map, ranging from Jane Austen, John Betjeman, Fanny Burney, Angela Carter and Sarah Fielding to L P Hartley, Catharine Macaulay, 'Rita', Mary Shelley and Smollett. All of them lived in Bath at some point in their lives. (We did not give a separate entry to writers who only visited eg Dickens, though they are mentioned in other people's entries.)

We are amazed and delighted by how many of the writers are women (well over half). And of

course Bath has always been kind to the unmarried woman (cf. page 7): among them are the sisters Sarah and Harriet Lee, Hannah More, Edith Thompson and Emily Spender. In 'The Bath Suffragettes' on page 7 we highlight the statistic that in the 1870s one in three Bath householders were women. Why so few nineteenth-century writers (eg. George Eliot and Mrs Gaskell) came to Bath either to write or rest is a mystery.

And what about the Bath bun? There are two rival kinds. One is large but light, rather like a round, pale brioche, or indeed a very large soft roll, enough for four people to share at teatime. The smaller Bath bun is also soft and brioche-like but is sweeter. We shall be offering both.



# ‘NO ROBBERY’(1939)

Mrs Green and Mrs Bromley lived side by side in two small houses under the shade of the great ash tree.

‘What a lovely tree!’ Mrs Green exclaimed when she first came.

‘Oh, you’ll find it a nuisance,’ said Mrs Bromley darkly. ‘What with leaves dropping in autumn and bird-droppings all the year round. I’m for ever cleaning up after that tree. It’s a great nuisance, I warn you.’

But nothing seemed to be a nuisance to Mrs Green. Mrs Bromley didn’t think that was normal.

‘Thoughtless, that’s what she is,’ said Mrs Bromley. ‘Not a thought in her head.’

It was a very charming head. Mrs Green was young, slender, pretty – like a little girl. It astonished everybody in the lane to find that she had a boy of two and a half. Mrs Green had shining fair hair which she was always doing in different ways, sometimes letting it swing loose, sometimes tying it up with a ribbon, sometimes doing it up on top like an Edwardian lady.

‘The time she must spend on that hair,’ said Mrs Bromley.

All the summer Mrs Green went about in slacks and shorts, her little boy straddled on her hip. Nothing seemed to worry her. She was always gay. Giddy, Mrs Bromley called it.

Mrs Bromley was ashamed when Mrs Green came out in shorts to speak to the butcher, the baker, and the other vanmen who

brought their supplies to the lane.

From which it will be gathered that Mrs Bromley belonged to an older generation. She did. She was a widow with a son rapidly nearing Militia age, and perhaps that pressed on Mrs Bromley and made her rather sour.

At any rate, the summer was an anxious time for any thinking person, or so Mrs Bromley said. The times might not affect Mrs Green, but they affected her. She read the newspapers closely and did all she was told to do. Housewives were advised to lay in stocks of food, and Mrs Bromley began.

She warned Mrs Green. She cut pieces from the papers and gave them to Mrs Green to read. But she had a strong suspicion that Mrs Green did not read them, so she took to reading them to Mrs Green herself, over the hedge in the afternoons. She could see, however, that she was making no impression.

Mrs Green went on rolling on the grass with her child. Even on Monday mornings, when Mrs Bromley was rubbing and wringing in her wash-house, Mrs Green would be rolling on the grass with her little boy and laughing so hard that Mrs Bromley had to look out to see what she was laughing at. Nothing, as far as Mrs Bromley could make out, except that the child was sitting on his mother’s stomach. Mrs Bromley couldn’t see anything particularly funny in that. She wouldn’t have liked

anybody to sit on hers.

During that summer, Mrs Green continued to sing about the garden and play with her child, while Mrs Bromley, most afternoons, made tiresome journeys into the town, which was two miles away, to buy things from the shops. When she came toiling up the lane with her baskets and carriers, Mrs Green would run out in her shorts.

‘Hello,’ she would cry. ‘Laden again! Let me help you in.’

Through the summer days, Mrs Bromley made jams, jellies, chutneys. She bottled vegetables; she clarified fat and stored it in jars, She laid in tins of this and tins of that, she laid in everything. And when her store cupboards were full, she brought in Mrs Green to look at them and take a lesson.

‘Ah,’ said Mrs Green mischievously, ‘I shall know where to come.’

And she would too, thought Mrs Bromley. The cheek!

Mrs Bromley knew the old fable of the ant and the grasshopper. The ant who toiled all summer long, as she had done, and the grasshopper who did nothing but fiddle and enjoy itself like Mrs Green. And when winter came and there was no food, the grasshopper came to beg of the ant, just as Mrs Green would come to beg of her. Well, she would get the same answer, determined Mrs Bromley, looking forward to that time.

Even now, Mrs Green borrowed.

‘Could you lend me one egg?’ she would ask, putting her bright

head over the fence. 'Just for John's lunch? I'll pay you back when the grocer's been.'

'Could you lend me one slice of stale bread to toast for Jim's baked beans? Ours is too new.'

She asked in such a way that Mrs Bromley found it hard to refuse her. But what a housekeeper, she thought.

When Mrs Green did her housework, Mrs Bromley couldn't think. She was out not only practically all the day, she was out before breakfast. Every fine morning, about half-past seven, the Green family would emerge from their gate on bicycles – Mrs Green on hers, her hair swinging, far too much leg, according to Mrs Bromley, showing in shorts; Mr Green with John on his handlebars, and like that they would go for a ride.

'I suppose the poor husband doesn't get any breakfast,' thought Mrs Bromley, seeing him rush off to work in his car a few moments after their return.

She had to admit, all the same, that the Greens looked remarkably well, in spite of Mrs Green's sketchy housekeeping. The child was sturdy and well kept. They all looked very happy. Mrs Bromley could only conclude that they had all been very hardy *to begin with*. Time would tell on them, she said darkly.

War was declared on a bright Sunday morning, and a few moments after the declaration of war, the lane had its first air-raid warning. As if by magic, wardens in tin hats appeared in the lane,

sending children from their play into the houses. Mrs Green went into the garden and swung her son up into her arms, kissing him. She was carrying him into the house, her face serious for once, when Mrs Bromley, gas-mask in hand, approached the hedge.

'Are you all right, Mrs Bromley?' called Mrs Green. 'Or will you and Charlie come in to us?'

'We are all right, thank you,' said Mrs Bromley rather stiffly. She had prepared a refuge as she had prepared everything else, and she thought it was rather hard lines that she should have to ask the Greens in to use up the oxygen, just because they had not prepared a refuge of their own. 'I was going to ask you to come in to us,' she said.

'Thank you very much,' said Mrs Green, 'but we'd rather stay in our own house, you know, in case a bomb starts a fire or anything. See you later,' said Mrs Green, with one of her smiles, and going into her house she closed the door.

The lane waited, silent, empty under the radiant sky, in which, so the lane had been warned, enemy planes might appear at any minute. They did not appear, and by and by the all-clear signal was given. Five minutes later, the Greens emerged from their gate on bicycles and went for a ride as if nothing had happened. Mrs Bromley was astounded. It seemed such an extraordinary thing to do.

The black-out orders were given and Mrs Bromley, fussing

and clucking like an anxious hen, made incessant journeys into the town to buy, with great difficulty, her material. She measured and cut out and machined and got all her windows successfully blacked-out. There is no doubt that Mrs Bromley was a model citizen. But Mrs Green and her husband pinned up brown paper every night and when this got torn, as it did, the police came round. Mrs Bromley would have been very ashamed, she knew, to receive a visit from the police, but Mrs Green only laughed as she recounted how the police had come into the house and helped her to pin up more paper.

It was autumn and the leaves fell thick from the ash tree and strewed both gardens. Mrs Bromley swept hers up, complaining, but Mrs Green laughed at hers and said, 'Oh, they'll blow away in time.'

Then Mrs Bromley's son Charlie was called up and she was left alone in her well-provisioned, carefully darkened house. The days were very long, the nights were longer. She began to look wistfully over the hedge for sights of Mrs Green, still gay, still singing, still doing her housework, not according to routine but when she felt like it, still bicycling before breakfast, though in a woollen jumper and a tweed skirt now.

The vans no longer came with supplies to the lane, because of the shortage of petrol. In consequence Mrs Green often ran out of things and came to

borrow. But, strangely enough, Mrs Bromley no longer minded. She was glad to see Mrs Green under any pretext. She was delighted, too, when she could get Mrs Green and her little boy into her house for tea. They were such a dear young pair, she thought, and so comforting to be with. Mrs Green's gaiety was undiminished. When Mrs Bromley saw the posters on the walls, 'Your courage, your cheerfulness, your resolution will bring us victory,' she thought of Mrs Green. It was Mrs Green's courage and cheerfulness, not hers. Left to herself, she felt she had not much of either. She had to draw on Mrs Green's.

And so it came about that the following dialogue – astonishing when one remembers Mrs Bromley's attitude in the summer – the following dialogue took place over the hedge one bright cold morning in late autumn.

'Mrs Bromley! Mrs Bromley!' called Mrs Green in her clear voice, standing on the stone she had placed permanently beside the hedge to facilitate borrowing. 'Mrs Bromley, darling,' she said, lowering her voice when Mrs Bromley ran out to her. 'Could you lend me just one egg? For John's lunch. Have you had a letter from Charlie this morning? Is he all right? Will you read bits to me later? One egg just for John's lunch is what I wanted. And if you could lend me one teeny-weeny bit of butter for Jim's supper tonight I'd be so grateful. We've eaten all ours

already and we've no petrol to go for more even if they'd give us any at the shop.'

'I tell you what,' said Mrs Bromley. 'You three come in and have supper with me. I'll make a nice one. I've plenty of stuff.'

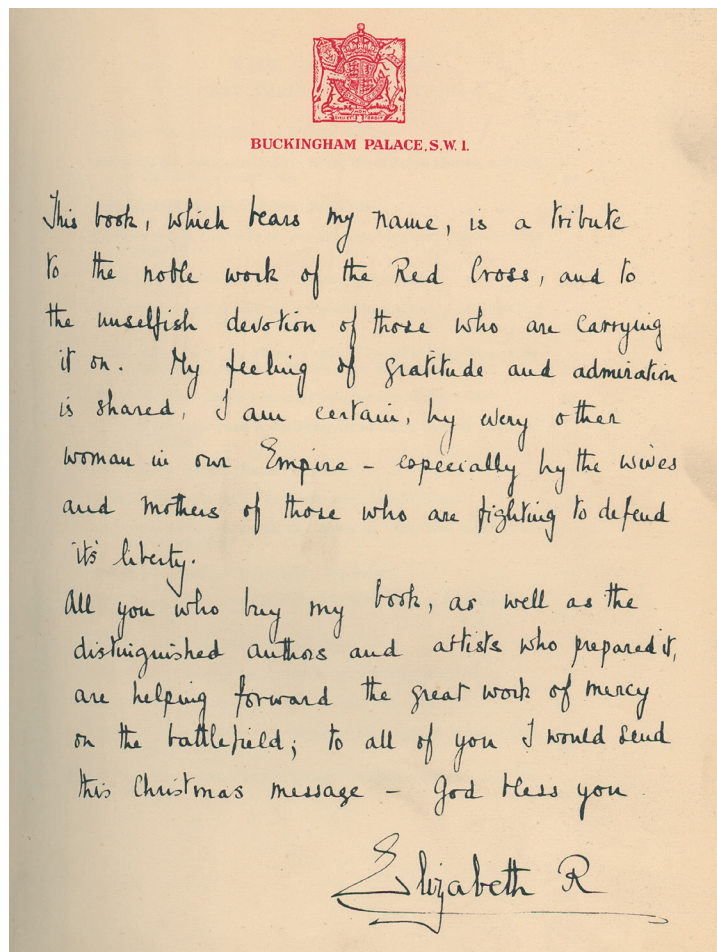
'Oh we couldn't do that,' said Mrs Green. 'With things as they are. It wouldn't be fair.'

'Oh yes it would,' contradicted Mrs Bromley. 'I laid everything in. I've got the food, but I haven't got the company. Good company like yours. I couldn't lay up a store of that, it seems. You can't

provide what I've got, it's true, but then I can't provide what you've got. So we're quits. You know what they say: 'Exchange is no robbery.'

'Right you are,' cried Mrs Green gaily. 'If you look at it like that, we'll come.'

*'No Robbery': A Fable for our Times by Dorothy Whipple was published in The Queen's Book of the Red Cross in late 1939. The frontispiece was this charming note from the then Queen (who allegedly considered Lady Rose and Mrs Memmery, PB No. 53, one of her favourite books).*



# THE RECTOR'S DAUGHTER

“I think the best women don't marry,” said Dora. “Men are so strange about the sort of women they like.” “To love and be loved,” said Mary musingly. “Did you feel it like a key, Dora, to let you out of prison and open a treasure house to you?”

Thus in her painfully honest and beautifully written *The Rector's Daughter* (1924), the author pinpoints the predicament of the solitary unmarried woman and underlines her belief in the eternal value and necessity for human love *writes Elizabeth Buchan.*

F M Mayor's output was not prolific (four novels and a volume of short stories). Yet few wrote as she did of the isolation and misery of unfulfillment but also as convincingly of the moments of heightened feeling – between lovers, sisters, a father and a daughter – which can validate a seemingly pointless existence. As Sybil Oldfield says in her biographical and literary study, of Flora and her contemporary Mary Sheepshanks, *Spinsters of This Parish*: ‘All these loves are shown to be fragmentary and imperfect; nevertheless it is they, taken together, which, in Flora Mayor's view, constitute “our bonds of primal sympathy” revealing the “universal heart” by which we live.’ Like George Eliot, she alerts us to ‘the keen vision and feeling of all ordinary life’ and *The Rector's Daughter*, viewed by many as her masterpiece, burns with a determination that no one should

be dismissed and, because the author was never less than honest, with the tragedy of insignificance.

Born in 1872, Flora Mayor was one of those most powerless of creatures: a Victorian spinster. The twin daughter of cultured parents, she grew up with high hopes and went up to Cambridge. However, in the Cambridge of the 1890s, women were only grudgingly tolerated, the system being that they could sit the Honours Tripos but were refused degrees. Afterwards, she tried, and failed, to make a career as an actress and when Ernest Shepherd, a radical idealist and a remarkable man in his own right, proposed marriage, Flora accepted, thankful that she would be rescued from the doldrums. Tragically, he died in India in 1903 before she could join him, devastating Flora, who struggled against a physical and mental breakdown. Later she wrote in her Grief Journal: ‘Tennyson says in “In Memoriam” that death brings out all the love that would have ripened with the process of years, and that's how it happened with me...’

Dogged by ill health and a hovering sense of futility – ‘what on earth am I going to do all day... I do all the ordinary things and yet inside one is so altered...’ she made herself accept that she would never marry. ‘The woman question’ therefore assumed a relevance that was especially bitter and her story of the ‘superfluous’ Henrietta in

*The Third Miss Symons* (1913) is a blistering portrait of emotional starvation, and an attack on the wastage and contempt often suffered by spinster middle-class women. ‘What is to be done with them?’ asked the *Daily News*. ‘Perhaps there is no remedy.’

Mayor's answer was to force her readers to *understand* what it was like to live half-stifled. It had a mixed reception. Feminists were not impressed by its difficult heroine and many single women could hardly bear to read it. Such is its ‘icy sadness’ that many failed to see that Mayor was combining social comment with a deeper, almost mystical, vision which came to fruition in *The Rector's Daughter*.

Mary Jocelyn is 35, plain and, although she is loved by servants and friends, solitary. She lives in the village of Dedmayne, an undistinguished part of Essex, in a book-filled house with her father Canon Jocelyn who is both fastidious and difficult. Mary measures out her days with the minutiae of parish business – ‘she knew she excelled in one branch of knowledge; old ladies.’

But underneath Mary's controlled exterior is a capacity for passion which finds expression in her love for poetry and wild weather, a quality which Mr Herbert, the shy and scholarly vicar of the adjacent Lanchester, recognises. They fall in love, and while these two awkward, reserved people are manoeuvring towards marriage, Mr Herbert visits



Buxton and, in a rush of blood to the head, proposes instead to Kathy Hollings, whose beauty and jolliness are the antithesis of Mary's. It is, of course, a mistake. Mary is condemned to the 'pent-up' life, Mr Herbert to an uneasy marriage.

The deeper for being repressed, Mary and Mr Herbert's love is the subterranean sea on which the rest of their lives float. Because of their upbringing and social convention, neither considers for a moment acting on their feelings except when, in a passionately felt and beautifully written love scene, Mr Herbert kisses Mary and confesses his unhappiness. Mary is ecstatic 'but as an excellent clergyman's daughter...her ecstasy took the form of good resolutions'. Nevertheless, having loved, and been loved, has opened Mary up to a 'mysterious, acquiescent joy' which nourishes her for the rest of her short life.

***The Rector's Daughter*** captures a way of English life and a particular sexual climate before Freud and *Lady Chatterley's Lover* changed it for ever. 'It is like a bitter *Cranford*,' observed one contemporary reviewer, 'Miss Mayor explores depths of feeling that Mrs Gaskell's generation perhaps did not know and certainly did not admit to knowing.' Yes, there is more than a hint of underlying anger in the story – against the dreary lack of options for unmarried women, the problem of sexual frustration, the

cruelty of patriarchy, the pain of having a beautiful rival and the struggle to behave well. Yet, such is the power and grace of her writing, the balance of her gaze and her capacity to convey exquisite emotion and depth of feeling that the novel soars above invective.

Flora Mayor died in 1932, aged fifty-nine. Letters written after her death testify to her gaiety, humour and her knack of making other people feel loved. No saint, being

sometimes arrogant and envious, she possessed nevertheless 'a wonderful sympathy' which spills into her writing. In its values, mastery of character, astonishing perceptiveness about marriage and relationships, its haunting sadness and humanity, its love affairs, ***The Rector's Daughter*** offers, as E M Forster wrote to Flora: 'an extraordinary experience'. *The novelist Elizabeth Buchan originally wrote this for the Sunday Times in 1993.*



*A newly discovered photo of Vere Hodgson, author of A Few Eggs and No Oranges*

# ‘A VIEW WITHOUT A ROOM’ (1958) BY E M FORSTER

**A** *Room with a View* was published in 1908. Here we are in 1958 and it occurs to me to wonder what the characters have been doing during the interval. They were created even earlier than 1908. The Italian half of the novel was almost the first piece of fiction I attempted. I laid it aside to write and publish two other novels, and then returned to it and added the English half. It is not my preferred novel – *The Longest Journey* is that – but it may fairly be called the nicest. It contains a hero and heroine who are supposed to be good, good-looking and in love, and who are promised happiness. Have they achieved it?

Let me think.

Lucy (Mrs George Emersens) must now be in her late sixties, George in his early seventies – a ripe age, though not as ripe as my own. They are still a personable couple, and fond of each other and of their children and grandchildren. But where do they live? Ah, that is the difficulty, and that is why I have entitled this article ‘A View without a Room’. I cannot think where George and Lucy live.

After their Florentine honeymoon they probably settled down in Hampstead. No: in Highgate. That is pretty clear, and the next six years were from the point of view of amenity the best they ever experienced.

George cleared out of the railway and got a better-paid clerkship in a Government office. Lucy brought a nice little dowry along with her, which they were too sensible not to enjoy, and Miss Bartlett left them what she termed her little all. (Who would have thought it of Cousin Charlotte? I should never have thought anything else.) They had a servant who slept in, and were becoming comfortable young capitalists when the First World War exploded – the war that was to end war – and spoil everything.

George instantly became a conscientious objector. He accepted alternative service, so did not go to prison, but he lost his Government job and was out of the running for Homes for Heroes when peace came. Mrs Honeychurch was terribly upset by her son-in-law’s conduct. Mr Beebe was not surprised by it. Freddy took his part. ‘I can’t see why a chap shouldn’t shirk if he wants to,’ said Freddy. This upset Mrs Honeychurch worse and did not conciliate Lucy. Lucy now got on her high horse and declared herself a conscientious objector too, and ran a more immediate risk by continuing to play Beethoven. Hun music! She was overheard and reported, and the police called. Old Mr Emerson, who lived with the young couple, addressed the police at length.

They told him he had better look out. Shortly afterwards he died, still looking out and confident that Love and Truth would see humanity through in the end.

They saw the family through, which is something. No Government authorised or ever will authorise either Love or Truth, but they worked privately in this case and helped the squalid move from Highgate to Carshalton. The George Emersens now had two girls and a boy and were beginning to want a real home – somewhere in the country where they could take root and unobtrusively found a dynasty. But civilisation was not moving that way. The characters in my other novels were experiencing similar troubles. *Howards End* is a hunt for a home. India is a Passage for Indians as well as English. No resting-place. For a time Windy Corner dangled illusively. After Mrs Honeychurch’s death there was a chance of moving into that much loved house. But Freddy, who had inherited it, was obliged to sell and realise the capital for the upbringing of his family. Freddy had married Minnie, Mr Beebe’s niece, and how many, oh how many children did Freddy and Minnie produce? An unsuccessful yet prolific doctor, Freddy could not do other than sell. Windy Corner disappeared, its garden was built over, and the name

of Honeychurch resounded in Surrey no more.

In due course the Second World War broke out – the one that was to end with a durable peace. George instantly enlisted. Being both intelligent and passionate, he could distinguish between a Germany that was not much worse than England and a Germany that was devilish. At the age of fifty he could recognise in Hitlerism an enemy of the heart as well as of the head and the arts. He discovered that he loved fighting and had been starved by its absence, and also discovered that away from his wife he did not remain chaste.

For Lucy the war was less varied. She gave some music lessons and broadcast some Beethoven, who was quite all right this time, but the little flat at Watford, where she was trying to keep things together against George's return, was bombed, the loss of her possessions and mementoes was complete, and the same thing happened to their married daughter, away at Nuneaton. A wide prospect of wreckage opened – a view to be sure, but where was the view point? No sense of direction, no indication which way the world was likely to drift, or when it would congeal.

At the front George rose to the rank of corporal, was wounded and taken prisoner in Africa, and imprisoned in Mussolini's Italy, where he found the Italians sometimes as sympathetic as they had been in his tourist days, and sometimes less sympathetic. When Italy

collapsed he moved northward through the chaos towards Florence. The beloved city had changed, but not unrecognisably. The Trinità Bridge had been destroyed, both ends of the Ponte Vecchio were in a mess, but the Piazza Signoria, where once a trifling murder had occurred, still survived. So did the district where the Pension Bertolini had once flourished – nothing damaged at all.

And George set out – as I did myself a few years later – to locate the particular building. He failed. For though nothing is damaged all is changed. The houses on that stretch of the Lungarno have been renumbered and remodelled and, as it were, remelted, some of the façades have been extended, others have shrunk, so that it is impossible to decide which room was romantic half a century ago. George had therefore to report to Lucy that the View was still there and that the Room must be there too, but could not be found. She was glad of the news, although at that moment she was homeless and possessionless. It was something to have retained a View, and, secure in it and in their love as

long as they have one another to love, George and Lucy await the Third World War – the one that would end war and everything else, too.

Cecil Vyse must not be omitted from this prophetic retrospect. He moved out of the Emersons' circle but was not altogether out of mine. With his integrity and intelligence he was destined for confidential work, and in 1914 he was seconded to Information or whatever the withholding of information was then entitled. I had an example of his propaganda, and a very welcome one, at Alexandria. A quiet little party was held on the outskirts of that city, and someone wanted a little Beethoven. The hostess demurred. Hun music might compromise us. But a young officer spoke up. 'No, it's all right,' he said. 'A chap who knows about those things from the inside told me Beethoven's definitely Belgian.'

The chap in question must have been Cecil. That mixture of mischief and culture is unmistakable. Our hostess was reassured, the ban was lifted, and the Moonlight Sonata shimmered into the desert.



*Lytton Strachey by Carrington c. 1920*

# R C SHERRIFF: INTERVIEW BY TERRY COLEMAN MAY 1972

R C Sherriff, at home in Esher, had rather a lot of silver cups in his sitting room, mostly won for rowing and long-jumping.

‘I used to have an Oscar,’ he said.

Yes.

‘I lost it. Used to be upstairs. Might be in the loft. We used to use it sometimes to prop the door open.’

What did he win it for?

‘Mrs Miniver.’

R C Sherriff is one of those utterly familiar, and at the same time quite unknown, names which appear on title pages and, most of all, on film credits. Apart from Mrs Miniver he has written the screen plays of *Goodbye Mr Chips*, *The Four Feathers*, *Odd Man Out* and *The Dam Busters*. And he wrote *Journey’s End*, which is probably the best play to have come out of the First World War.

It is a play about the decent and hopeless gallantry of a few soldiers and is set in a dugout. The young captain in the first, 1929 production was played by the unknown Laurence Olivier, who wore on stage the author’s own Sam Browne.

Lieutenant Sherriff was 19 when he was sent out to the Somme in 1916. It is strange, but the war, and the very good chance of getting killed, do not seem to have marked his mind at all. He is not bitter, not even, he says, about the High Command,

though he does say everyone thought they were mad.

In fact the nearest his company usually got to the High Command was during the occasional visit from the Brigade major, who was known as Johnny Balls-up, because whenever he appeared that was what there was likely to be. Then there was a general covered with Matabele and Zulu campaign medals who once asked some officers to his chateau. ‘We had just come off Vimy Ridge,’ says Sherriff. ‘This is what the old man said. He said, “I’m sorry I can’t really get you boys any more fighting for the present.” I mean he said that.’

In 1917, at Passchendaele, which nobody ever dreamed of winning, they were given maps of places twenty miles away from the trenches, yet the most they ever advanced was 600 yards. Sherriff reckons that an infantry officer had one chance in two of getting killed, and if he wasn’t killed he had the chance of either a big wound or a small one. Sherriff was hit by 52 bits of flying concrete from a pillbox, and sent home. He left the army as a captain.

He did not write *Journey’s End* for another ten years. Captain Sherriff went back to be an office boy with the Sun insurance company in Trafalgar Square, and there he stayed, year in year out, clerking away in the same

corner of the same office. His father had served 45 years with the same company and had become chief clerk, but never earned more than £400 a year.

But how did Sherriff, back from the war, stand the boredom and mediocrity of it all, and for so long? He said he walked at the weekends, and perhaps because there was less of it, one’s freedom was more highly flavoured in those days. And in the week he would come up in the train every day from Kingston, where he lived, to Waterloo, and there were still open fields on the way. ‘And you still sort of saw the god Pan jumping about in them when you were on your way up in the morning with twenty people in the carriage.’

In his free time he rowed, became captain of the Kingston Rowing Club and to raise funds for the club wrote plays to be put on at amateur dramatic nights. He went round asking members what parts they wanted to play and then wrote the piece round them. The more tickets a man could sell the better part he got. This was the beginning, and Sherriff likes to say he has always remained an amateur.

I said it sounded rather professional to me – to write plays for an unknown company and a known audience and with the successful purpose of making money.

‘Well, Shakespeare did that,’ he said.

He had already written seven plays in this way, when he resigned the club captaincy thinking it was time someone else had a go. It was then that he started to write *Journey’s End*. At first it was a story of a younger boy hero-worshipping an older one. Then it struck him that he could make the younger boy into a new subaltern just arrived at the front, and the older boy into his very young company commander and set the whole situation in a dugout. ‘Which in fact,’ he says, ‘wasn’t a bad idea.’

Nor was it. After being rejected by every actor and every manager it was shown to, in 1929 the play was put on in the West End and then on Broadway, and Sherriff found himself earning £1,000 a week in royalties.

With this he bought the house he now lives in at Esher, and took himself to Oxford to read history at New College. He had always wanted to do this. From Oxford he took leave to go to Hollywood, at \$1500 a week, to adapt H G Wells’s *The Invisible Man*. He worked in the cinema for many years. Nowadays he lived in retirement on his six acres in Esher and does not look in the least like any other man I have ever seen who has made a fortune from films. He lacks that deadly push, sort of energy for energy’s sake, that so many film people never get rid of. He is diffident. He offers his guests tea and cakes and, later, sherry. He is a man with a good deal of Bognor about him, and Bognor,

as it happens, is where he set a novel of his, published in 1931, and called *The Fortnight in September*.

It is, I think, a masterpiece; and it does, as he agrees, reflect a lot of his own early life. It is the gentle story of a clerk and his wife and three children, two of them almost grown-up, who go to spend their annual fortnight’s holiday in Bognor, as they have done for many years before. They make the train journey from Crystal Palace, where they live, to Bognor, changing at Clapham Junction. It is the biggest journey they make in the year. They stay at a seedy boarding house called Seaview, and for two weeks, counting the days, they enjoy their small pleasures. If they are careful there is enough money to rent a beach hut. By tradition, the husband buys for his wife a bottle of port, and on each of the fourteen days she takes one small glass. They walk on the beach. Then they go home.

The mother in the story is

Mr Sherriff’s own mother, and the young boy, who has just left school and gone out to work, is himself. The holiday is very like those his family took when he was a boy. Then they would go to Selsey Bill. When they came back home they would bring with them a small bottle of seawater with which they would dab their faces, hoping to keep their tan. He remembers the zest of the air at the seaside, and its flatness when they first returned home. Of the family in the novel, he says probably none of them get any farther.

He is surprised he got any farther himself. He very nearly never finished *Journey’s End*. But there was a little thread of luck. Which could have broken anywhere.

And if it had broken?

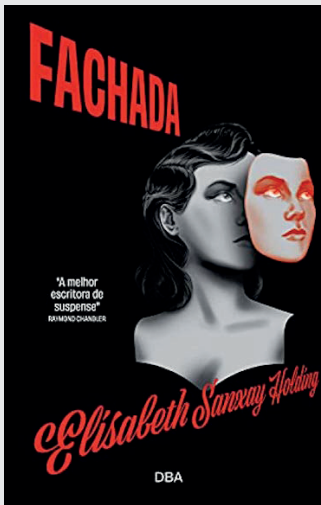
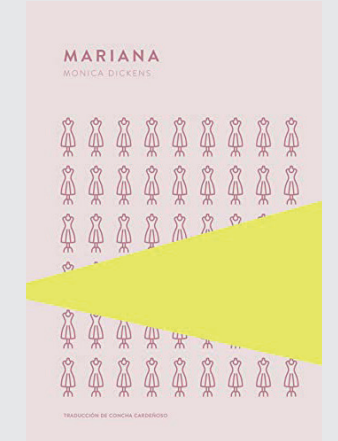
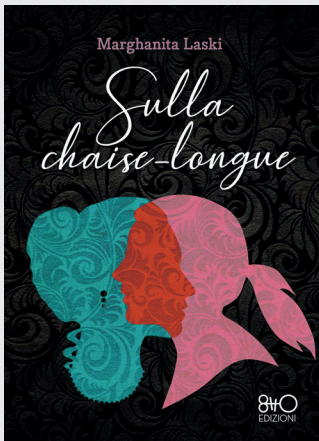
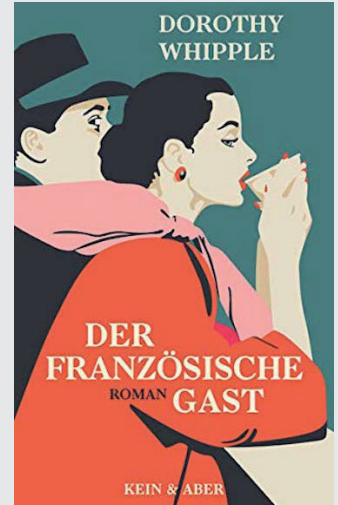
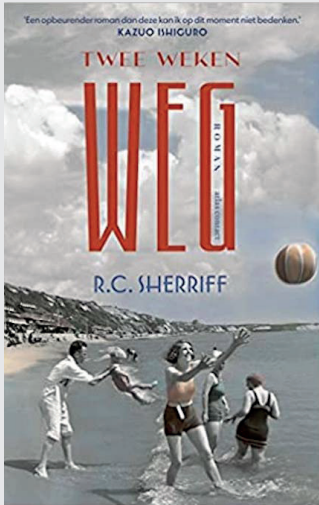
Mr Sherriff thinks he would have worked the rest of his life with the Sun insurance and would now be retired on a pension of £3 7s 6d a week.

*Published in the Guardian.*



Charles Mozley 'Sightseers'

# PERSEPHONE TRANSLATIONS 6



# FINALLY:

Usually the point of the picture on the front of the *Biannually* is perfectly obvious, but sometimes people ask us why one is there. We have used 'The Tea Party' this time not because it relates to one of the two new books but because it is like a short story in visual form and could have been evoked/described by most of our authors. But, even though most people looking at 'The Tea Party' will think it very English, the artist (August Haerning 1874-1961) is Danish and although the setting could be English, isn't there something slightly Nordic about the women's faces? And could the country cottage setting be out of a painting by Carl Larsson? English or Scandinavian, what are they talking about? One worries that they are not being kind about one of their acquaintances, but of course they could simply be talking about recipes or their health. Finally: we have not been able to discover anything about Haerning. How often this has happened with a female writer or painter!

The drawing of Lytton Strachey (1880-1932) on page 27 was done by Dora Carrington (1893-1932) at Tidmarsh in c.1920. But it has not been seen since the autumn of 1970 when it was stolen from outside Heinemann's offices in Queen Street, Covent Garden, where it was being

photographed and briefly left unattended while being put in a van. The Carrington painting of 'Dahlias' which we use in the new *Catalogue* to illustrate *A Well Full of Leaves* is safely in a private collection.

The Shell Poster on page 29, called 'Sightseers', is there because the artist, Charles Mozley, did a second Shell Poster, the one we have reproduced (in part) on the cover of *Miss Pettigrew Lives for a Day*; although a very different subject, there are certain similarities between the two pictures.

Like everyone else we were so sad about the death of the Queen and could not get over the manner of her going: despatching one Prime Minister, greeting another and then dying without fuss. Our tribute in this *Biannually* is to her mother, the late Queen Mother, who wrote the touching note on page 23 in such beautiful handwriting.

On page 25 there is a newly-discovered photograph of Vere Hodgson, author of *Few Eggs*. Her Estate was inherited by her friend Veronica Bowater and then her son Rupert Bowater. Sadly, he died three years ago and his widow asked us if we would like Vere's remaining papers, consisting of photographs and a scrapbook. We shall be presenting these to Kensington

Public Library since they already have the manuscript of Vere's original diaries (actually letters to family abroad, which she turned into the form of a diary).

Some people may have noticed that Persephone Books is quite active on social media and now we have started posting videos on TikTok. On Instagram Francesca writes *Diary of a Provincial Bookseller* about life at Persephone Books. Then there is the Letter once a month, which you can read on our website or sign up to receive it via email. And of course there is the daily Post which is now being written by Jane Brocket. We are very proud that she is now part of the Persephone team in an official not just friendly-bystander capacity.

And lastly, some people will have been in our beautiful upstairs room either at a book group (there are two different ones each month) or a Persephone event or at an event put on by someone else (a bookbinding course, a mindfulness evening, a designer dress sale). But we would love the room to be used more. We charge very reasonable rates and it could be used for yoga or Italian or life-drawing classes or for somebody stressed just to sit calmly for the morning – anything really, just ask in the shop.

# EVENTS

On **Friday November 4th** **Philippa Lewis**, who compiled *The Persephone Literary Map of Bath*, will lead a literary walk, setting off from the shop at 3 o'clock. Tea and Bath buns will be served in the upstairs room afterwards.

On **Thursday November 10th**, the day **John Moore** was born in 1907, there will be a **Lunch** at 12.30pm to celebrate the publication of his novel, PB no.145 *The Waters under the Earth*. Coronation Chicken (and a vegetarian dish) will be served (the book focuses on the 1950s and especially the year of the late Queen's Coronation).

On **Wednesday November 23rd** we shall show the 1945 film of Dorothy Whipple's *They Were Sisters*. Tea with home-made scones will be served at 4.15pm, the film will be shown at 4.30pm and there will be a glass of madeira afterwards.

**Miranda Mills**, a former Persephone girl, is a youtuber, blogger and instagrammer who 'creates content' on her love of books and seasonal living. On **Thursday December 1st** at 4pm she will be in conversation over tea (and homemade cake) with **Clara Jones**, also an ex-Persephone girl, who now teaches English Literature at King's London.

On **Wednesday December 7th** at 6pm the singer **Susan Black** will give an hour-long performance of *Songs by Edith Piaf*. Champagne and cheese straws will be served during the performance.

On **Thursday December 15th** from 12-8 we shall have our annual **Christmas Open Day** when mulled wine and mince pies are served and gift-wrapping is also free. No booking is necessary.



On **Wednesday January 18th** there will be another **Dorothy Whipple Tea** at 4 o'clock when there will be a short talk about Persephone's bestselling writer to celebrate the publication of *The Other Day*, the twelfth and final book by her that we shall have published.

On **Thursday January 26th** **Jane Brocket** will tell us about some of the subjects she chooses for the **Persephone Post**, and how she chooses them. She will also talk about her own work, from writing her sadly now-defunct blog, yarnstorm, to her many books, and her focus on subjects such as quilting, bookbinding, weaving, stitching, baking, and women stained glass artists to name but a few. Tea (to include one of Jane's cakes) will be served at 4 o'clock, followed by an illustrated talk.

On **Thursday February 9th** at 12.30 at an informal salad Lunch the novelist **Lissa Evans** will talk about her focus on WW2 in her novels and about Persephone's books about that era eg. *Few Eggs*, *Saplings* and *Good Evening, Mrs Craven*.

It is fifteen years since the film of *Miss Pettigrew Lives for a Day* first came out. To celebrate this anniversary, on **Wednesday February 22nd** we shall show the film in the version which is preceded by an interview with **Winifred Watson's** son Keith Pickering (whom we hope will be present). Tea and homemade scones will be served at 4.15 and the film shown at 4.30.

All events are £10, except the lunches which are £20. Please ring the shop on 01225 425050 to book.