

The Handheld Newsletter

October 2020

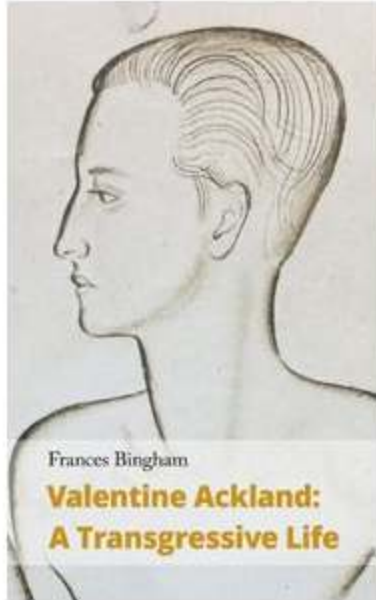
Feeling the slog

It's been a tough year since March, and somehow October is feeling tougher. Sales are picking up (yay!), we're commissioning new titles for 2022 (really, we are), and we are still as busy as we've been all year. But that's the problem: there's no let-up, no real chance for a break. We took a week of holiday in July, yet we were still working every day, by acknowledging book orders, talking about the business, thinking about things we'd like to do, answering the emails that couldn't wait till the following week. Shutting off completely is not possible. There's no-one to hand the office to while we go and climb some remote hills in north-west Scotland (which we'd both like very much to do: we haven't done Suilven yet.) And now, we're both feeling it. Kate is going to start taking a day off in the week now and again, to do Other Things rather than work. Best laid plans ...

Editing Valentine

In the meantime, Kate has been working hard in her happy place: editing. We don't have to edit our Classics, because they were edited when they were first published. (But we always have to proof-read them, once the texts have been scanned or retyped.) But in our Research series, we are publishing brand new texts. Frances Bingham delivered her final Word file for *Valentine Ackland: A Transgressive Life* three weeks ago, and Kate has been ruthlessly clearing the decks to carve out the solid, uninterrupted time to read it and focus on house style and copy-editing (continuity patrol, where commas should be placed, whether poem titles are style in italics or in Roman, chasing references, etc), and the delicate tweaking of structure. Trouble is, due to the aforementioned torrent of work, finding uninterrupted time was impossible, so Kate worked on the book all day on Saturday last weekend, to make it possible for her to not be interruptible.

It's a heady experience, reading a book for the first time that you've long wanted to read, and now it's there, and it is magnificent. *Valentine* is utterly absorbing, a superb biography we are already planning to take round the literary festivals next year, if they'll have us (if you run a literary festival: talk to us, please).

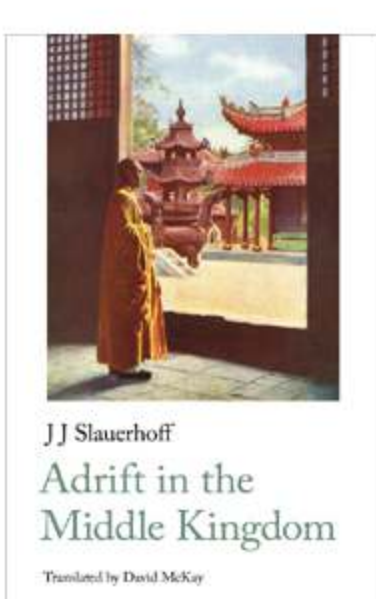


The Handheld Book Club

We had a thoroughly enjoyable time at the first Handheld Book Club on 6th October, with Nicola Griffith and Una McCormack talking about Vonda N McIntyre's *The Exile Waiting*, and writing for Star Trek. Handheld author Sarah LeFanu also made a surprise appearance, which made Una fangirl a little bit (Sarah wrote an influential book about feminism and science fiction in the 1980s).

Our next Book Club on 10th November will be all about translation, in this case from Dutch to English and Portuguese, with award-winning translator David McKay and Dutch-Portuguese translator Arie Pos, talking about J Slauerhoff's remarkable novel *Adrift In The Middle Kingdom*. [Tickets are available here](#).

On 8th December Kate will be talking to Gayle Lazda of the London Review Bookshop about *Business as Usual*, and on 12th January James Machin will be talking to Tim Jarvis of the University of Bedfordshire about *British Weird*.



Calling all booksellers

If you're a bookseller with a particular fondness for a Handheld title, and you'd like to be part of the Book Club panel on that title, talk to us! We respect your expertise, and we want you in our Club.

Weird launches

We are holding a book launch on Zoom for both our two new Weird titles: *British Weird* and *Women's Weird 2*, on 27th October. Tickets are free and can be booked [via this page](#). Pointy hats, spiders and fangs are optional.

We also have videos! Do watch Kate talking about *British Weird* and *Women's Weird 2* on our YouTube page.



Big in Corsham

One of our local customers works at the [Corsham Bookshop](#), half an hour away across the border in Wiltshire. They created a magnificent window display last week, but not - in case you were worried - with ripped-out covers of our books. They made nice colour copies of the covers to put in the window, as they get so much sun all their books get bleached. We hope they have sold bucketloads.



Handheld postcards

Kate was doing an online talk recently, and one of the enthralled viewers said 'You should put your covers on postcards.' Well, we thought about this, and now we have. Our four postcards are designed to be a showcase for our glorious cover artwork, and to collect similar covers and similar books together. The reverse of each card has the regular postcard layout, so you can send them to friends. They will shortly be available in sets of 4 (any combination) from our website. We're just getting the coding right ...

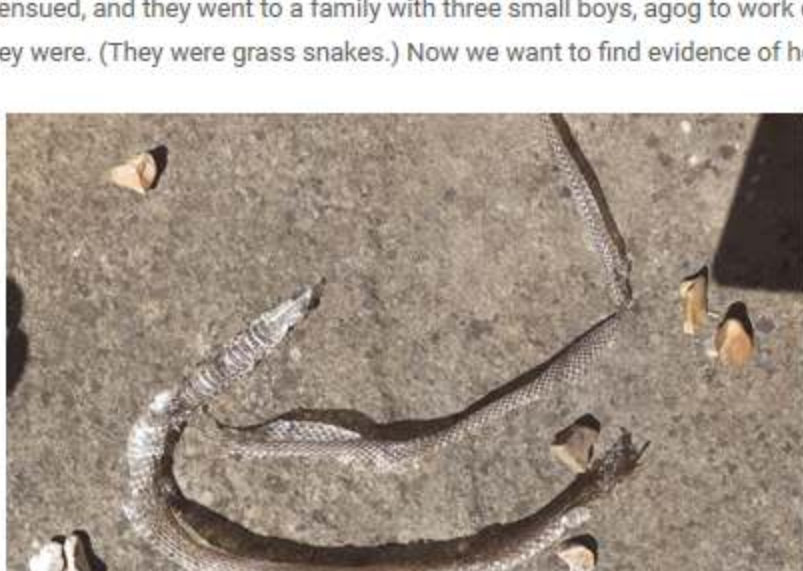


News from the garden

Well, it's been wet. The mini tomatoes were a complete failure because their skins are as tough as old boots, so they're now decorating the potting table on their vines. Even the birds don't want them. The pumpkins simply stopped growing and rotted on their stalks.

The apples have done well, even if their skins are all mottled with a weird pattern of scale. We have a large box to work our way through, as our neighbours' tree drops its windfalls on our side of the fence, and they don't eat very many themselves. While we are not yet tired of apple crumble, we were greatly cheered by a very good apple and quince frangipane tart made by daughter 2, which did not last long. The deer have not been seen in daylight for a long time, but their hoofmarks are all over the grass which Kate has been raking faithfully as the ash tree drops its leaves. The nuthatches are back, and we're hoping the long-tails will be here again soon.

We don't think we've mentioned the snake skins. Kate found two sloughed snake skins in late August, on a heap of hay that David had left piled up at the side of the upper meadow (it's a bit small for a meadow, but it has a lot of grass). They were under the upturned wheelbarrow, left dry and in perfect condition at the end of a tunnel in the hay, except for the heads. Perhaps snakes don't slough their head skins? We put the skins in a box with a plastic lid, that had formerly housed cupcakes, and advertised their availability on the village Facebook page. A bidding war ensued, and they went to a family with three small boys, agog to work out what kind of snakes they were. (They were grass snakes.) Now we want to find evidence of hedgehogs.



Don't forget to duck for apples,

Kate & David

Handheld Press

The Handheld newsletter is only sent to readers who have expressed an interest in receiving news from us. Our aim is to be informative and useful, and to keep you in the picture about what we're up to, offers and promotions.

Please rest assured that your details will never be passed on to any third parties nor used for any other purpose.

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