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Margaret Forster

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Georgy is young, gregarious and fun - she is also large, self-confessedly ugly and desperate for love. Georgy bears her fate bravely as she alternates between playing the fool and humbling herself before Meredith, her pretty, callous flatmate, although when James, middle-aged socialite and self-imposed 'Uncle', asks Georgy to become his mistress, she is tempted to accept. Then Meredith announces that she is pregnant and Jos, the expectant father, decides he is in love with Georgy...

Georgy Girl Details

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From Reader Review Georgy Girl for online ebook

Bettie? says

BBC BLURB: *By Margaret Forster Dramatised by Rhiannon Tise Jos has Georgy all to himself once again but having to care for a baby has changed everything and a frustrated Jos takes drastic action.*

Directed by Tracey Neale

The Story:

As part of our British New Wave season the Fifteen Minute Drama brings to the Radio 4 airwaves the compelling story of Georgina Parkin. Georgy is twenty-seven. Brought up in Kensington by her parents, Ted and Doris who are live-in servants of rich socialite James. She lives in her own flat in Battersea with the cool and disdainful Meredith who has the male population at her feet. Georgy thinks her flat-mate is beautiful, witty and clever. Georgy, on the other hand, is a physically awkward, large young woman, who lacks self-esteem, never been taken out on a date, let alone kissed. She is desperate to meet someone and fall in love. This is the Swinging Sixties after all.

And then she falls in love with Jos, a charming and directionless young man. But there's a problem -he's Meredith's fella and there are complications when Meredith announces she is pregnant. A tangled living situation emerges. Then James makes Georgy an unconventional and surprising offer which she agrees to think about. Is his offer the key to Georgy's happiness? Or, will she hold out for true love with Jos?

The Writer:

*Margaret Forster is the author of many successful novels, including *Lady's Maid*, *Have the Men Had Enough?* and *The Memory Box* and several acclaimed biographies, including *Good Wives*. Her most recent books have been *Diary of an Ordinary Woman* and *The Unknown Bridesmaid*.*

The Dramatist:

*Rhiannon won the Richard Imison Award for her first radio play *The Waltzer*. Her most recent radio play, broadcast earlier this year, was *Outside In*. Rhiannon has written for the BBC series *Doctors* and her stage plays have been performed at The Royal Court, The Royal National Theatre, The Traverse Theatre, The Tron Theatre Glasgow, Soho Theatre and The Arcola Theatre.*

Sing Along!

That scene from the film

This was a perfect production of the story, oozing contemporary 45s in the background.

Kiwiflora says

'Hey there Georgy Girl, There's another Georgy deep inside, Bring out all the love you hide, and oh what a

change there'd be, the world would see a new Georgy Girl'. Anyone growing up in the 1960s and 1970s would instantly recognise that song by the Seekers, from the film by the same name. Being a little girl myself at the time, I always wondered about this Georgy Girl person, and then I found this book! This is Margaret Forster's third book, published way back in 1965 when she was only in her mid-twenties herself. Is any of it autobiographical? I sincerely hope not! I wonder if she knew people who had the characteristics of the people she writes about - maybe. They are certainly very diverse, and actually none of them particularly likeable.

First up there is Georgy's parents who are in the employ of the wealthy but childless James Leamington. They are bitter and disappointed about their lives. The only joy in their lives, if you could call it that, is their daughter Georgy, now in her early twenties, trying to make her own life, but with really no idea on how to go about doing it. Mr Leamington has always treated Georgy as his own child, paying for her education and helping set her up as a dance teacher. A sad and lonely man in his late 40s, he makes Georgy an offer that she refuses, wanting to make her own life for herself.

Georgy is actually quite a nice person and not stupid, but is a complete doormat for other people to walk all over. She flats with the truly awful Meredith, a narcissistic spoilt brat of a person who rather bizarrely is a classical musician. She is pregnant to her boyfriend of the moment, Jos, with whom Georgy is madly in love. In a peculiar turn of events, Jos and Georgy end up together, looking after the baby that Meredith refuses to have anything to do with. In such circumstances the relationship is doomed from the start, with Georgy giving all her love to the baby, and none left over for Jos.

It sort of all works out in the end and Georgy would appear to be happy in the final decisions she makes. But I can't help wondering, in the new wave of feminism sweeping through the 1960s, if her decision really was the right one. It is almost as if she is caught between the very traditional and clearly defined values of post-war England and the new hedonism and opportunities available to young women of the post-war young generation. Maybe a sequel would reveal how the next few years of Georgy's life may have turned out.

Rather than enjoyable I did find the book interesting, but I didn't really find any of the characters very enjoyable! They were all really quite awful and unlikeable. Georgy could have been likeable, but I was annoyed at her because she didn't really like herself and spent most of her time trying to please others. It was really only towards the end that she did begin to find that other Georgy inside and begin to make decisions for herself instead of for others. Much more 1960s.

Joe says

I loved this book. The story of a vindictive, unwed mother, a swinging London musician, and their depressed roommate who fears sex and adulthood, Georgy Girl is like a time capsule of the mid-60's. George's spinelessness can be frustrating at times (as others have pointed out), but the author's skillful depiction always helped me know why she was being so obsequious, which put it all in perspective. Furthermore, as the story get heavier (good 60's term there), George gets more decisive, even if it's more and more tinged with tragedy. I loved that many important plot points were seen through the eyes of the trio's neighbor Peg, the more extreme version of George and a really sympathetic tertiary character. I loved the very difficult relationship George had with her parents and how it evolved. I loved that the comic moments were really comic (i.e. NURSE: Your wife refuses to have anything to do with her baby. Do you know why? JOS: She's

a bitch.). I loved that it made me think about the more limited options women had at the time it takes place. Though apparently the author is embarrassed by it now (it being only her second book, I believe, of a long career), Georgy Girl is funny and moving, and most definitely worth a read.

Karen says

The book I am reading about the Beatles mentions this book's plot. It was interesting enough to look up the movie on IMDb and wow--what glowing reviews it gets, from people who say it has stood the test of time. I always thought it was like Gidget, probably because the "Georgy Girl" song became the Barbie theme song. So I asked Mother today if she remembers it and she said it was really quite scandalous. Combined with the wikipedia article about the book (or some other review) that said it captured the mod culture, I am stoked.

UPDATE May 21

This book is not the Austin Powers Romp that I expected. It has been described in a couple places as the perfect encapsulation of the Mods in London; the back of the book says it's wildly hilarious and off-beat. It's really just terribly sad. Definitely scandalous. I wonder what the sensibility of the 1960s was. Is it funny that there's a vivacious girl who thinks she is ugly and washed up? Why is she such a doormat? I'm just not sure what I am supposed to make of the character. The roommate is clearly a bitch and portrayed as such--there's no doubt what the author wants you to think about her. But the other characters are just repulsive. I am getting the feeling that the movie might be better than the book and I don't know anyone who has seen the movie and I haven't even gotten halfway through the book. A good actress (and it looks like they got one) could make Georgy seem spontaneous rather than dopey, and the right actor could make James seem less disgusting and pedophilic. AT LEAST the author has acknowledged that James is disgusting and pedophilic.

The most interesting part of the book right now is the love contract. Seriously. There's a love contract, complete with thirty-day notice provisos. If that's supposed to be a comic device it's working because it's the best thing I have seen in a book in a year.

UPDATE MAY 22

The characters have become even less attractive. Good thing it's a quick read or I'd drop it.

UPDATE MAY 24

Everyone is unpleasant. Georgy should never have been left with that baby. In fact, the nurses should have let the mother give it up for adoption on the very first day that she said she wanted to. Georgy's overinvolvement with the infant is creepy, and Jos the father is a scumbag. James is repulsive and Georgy's parents are unbelievably self-absorbed. Pat the neighbor (or whatever her name is) was dumbed down and infantilized beyond belief. It is nonetheless obvious why they made a movie of it and I find it entirely possible that the actors and directors redeem this story, but now I am very unsure that I want to see it. On the other hand, I got time to watch it! And Lynn Redgrave as Georgy intrigues me. Plus the other actors are way famous.

The only true emotion in this book was James's uneasiness and ashamed apathy about his wife's death. I totally bought that. It was a fantastic characterization of two people and a relationship, in very few words and without judgment or sentimentality. So Forster can definitely write.

Ultimately, this seems to be a readable first novel that got picked up for salaciousness. In the end I'm curious about two things: is Margaret Forster related to E.M. Forster and are her other books better?

Harry Burnside says

A nice wee book which highlights the social changes that were going on in the 60's without being too heavy handed about it.

Paul Servini says

I didn't like this story. The characters and their attitudes infuriated me. That said it was an interesting book because the author Forster captured so well the prevailing mood of the time. It's precisely because the characters are so well drawn that they infuriate. So mixed feelings but on the whole I'm glad I read it.

Roberta says

With the exception of "Dances With Wolves", I've never seen a movie that goes by the book as much as "Georgy Girl". Meredith is despicable; Georgy is pathetic; James is arrogant; Ted is a syncophant; Doris is miserable; Peg is a prying slob, and Jos is irresponsible and unfeeling. The only character who has any redeeming qualities at all is baby Sara. Just give her time - being related to that bunch.

MaryJane says

Read the book shortly after seeing the movie in 1966. I loved the movie and the book. Even tho I was 2 yrs married to loving husband, I WAS Georgy with so many of her self-doubts. I can see why modern readers might not agree, but I think it is one of those "ya hadda be there" things. All the characters are flawed, to be sure, but where is the story if they are not? Believe me, it was a Very Confusing Time for everyone and unexplainable to most.

Carol Randall says

Very much of its time, it would be quite unbelievable if it was set in the twenty-first century. I didn't like the characters but I enjoy Margaret Forster's writing - she went on to write some better books (in my opinion).

E.H. Nolan says

I'd seen the film of Georgy Girl probably thirty times before I bought a copy of the novel, so when the character of James was introduced in the pages, I was very surprised. In the film, he's played by James Mason, and he's very attractive and charming. In the novel, he's supposed to be extremely unattractive and fat. It's very clear that Georgy wants nothing to do with him, and he's written to be just a lusty old man. To

me, that's a huge change, one that makes all the difference to the story.

?

The novel follows a large, homely girl named Georgy as she discovers sex and learns to love herself instead of constantly comparing her looks to her prettier, meaner roommate. As you might expect, since films were often much tamer than their counterparts in the olden days, the novel has a much greater focus on sex than the film. Margaret Forster's language is also pretty cruel. Georgy is repeatedly described as fat and ugly, as is James and one of Georgy's other friends; the latter is described as pathetic, winy, depressing, and a little perverse.

All in all, I liked the film better. Georgy is written to be a more sympathetic character, one who has many dimensions of feelings. In the novel, she reads like a winy, jealous girl whose sole goal is to get a boyfriend. However, it's a very short book, so if you wanted to read it, it would probably only take you one day.

<http://hottoastyrag.weebly.com/georgy...>

Lee Anne says

How wonderful to find an enjoyable book that has zero likeable characters. Georgy is a self-loathing doormat, her roommate Meredith is an unfeeling bitch, Meredith's boyfriend-turned-husband Jos is a cheating, responsibility-avoiding slacker, and on and on. And I loved it!

Georgy doesn't have to be likeable, however, for the reader to feel for her plight. She's not ugly, just kind of galumphy, and insecure. James, the wealthy older man who has employed her father as a live-in valet/toady since before Georgy was born, seems to have grown to find her kind of a brick shithouse, and offers to make her his mistress.

Thus the book turns into a sharp look at early British feminism. What choices does Georgy have, after all? She can be a wife, or a mistress, a mother, a spinster. That she seems to thrive in that doormat role, easily subsuming her personality in service to Meredith, Jos, and eventually baby Sara, doesn't make her a character to be loathed as much as pitied. She still has emotions and feelings (and horniness). She isn't much different from her father Ted, who has given his entire life to a rich man he met in a bar, and could also be seen as a contrast to her mother Doris, a bitter, unhappy woman who belittles Georgy and nags Ted.

Racier than the movie is, mainly because the book affords you the opportunity to hear interior monologues, this book deals with issues of class, self esteem, appearance, choice, sex, love, and more. The only downside I can see is you'll have the Seekers' song stuck in your head for about a week.

PrettyFlamingo says

Though I have read and really love Forster's family history stories, I had never picked up this book. I'm not at all sure it is what I was expecting, however, and I am still not sure what to make of it. Was it meant as a social commentary? Or was it the earliest form of chick lit? It has all the ingredients for it – young woman in London, trying to make her way in the world, two men to choose from, bitchy female friend – what will she do with her life? On the face of it, it isn't that different from the books that began to flood onto the market in the late 1990s but being set over 35 years earlier, the shock factor of sex and promiscuity would have been

far more noticeable. Of course, it must be remembered that this was only Forster's second novel and she was just 26 when she wrote it.

What really is noticeable is that there are barely any likeable characters at all. Only the titular character is sympathetic and she becomes annoying after a while. Georgy is not easy to work out. Hiding her real self (presuming she knows who that is; I wasn't convinced) beneath a load of bluster and bombast, she simply wants to be loved but to coin a cliché, looks for it in all the wrong places. She's been made fun of at home and never taken seriously by her parents, who are obsequious housekeepers to a middle aged socialite. Georgy shares a flat in Battersea with her narcissistic, catty and thoroughly unpleasant friend Meredith and mirrors her father's sycophancy by running after her like a lapdog. The lengths they both go to in order to gain acceptance is embarrassing.

The book has been described as capturing the London of the Swinging Sixties, but I drew none of that from my reading. It felt out of time, rather sad and with very few cultural references to set it in context. It actually felt like it was set ten years earlier and whilst reading it, I saw the scenes in black and white rather than full colour. Georgy did very little other than hang around the flat and run after people; a very sad existence. She was a dance teacher, but seemed not to take it seriously. She had no expectations of herself, because her family had put her down.

I can see why she made the final choice she did, given the way the relationship between Jos and Meredith turned out, though I can't help thinking it was a mistake. I felt very empty after reading this, and found it very difficult to engage with the characters.

3.5

Stephanie says

Awful, just awful. This is the 2nd Margaret Foster book I've read, and I think it is my last. Why are all her female protagonists such dopey, clueless doormats? I give up.

Caroline Philippone says

Well my tablet died, and this happened to be in my bag at work.

I really loved a good chunk of this book, in part because I didn't love all the characters. Georgy is my age in the book, and perhaps that is why I liked her a bit more. I think the ending was very honest, in a way, but because of the way it turned out, I couldn't whole heartedly give it five stars. I did love the writing style, and the descriptive nature of Margaret Forster's writing though.

Becky says

Georgy Girl is a staple in feminist fiction. A lot of people say they don't like this book because they don't like the characters....but that's exactly the point. The short novel aims to spark debate on the condition of being woman and feminine in the 60s. If you loved the book for anything other than its comments on being a

woman in this period (with little choice over your life, your body, your sexual desires) then you have probably focussed on the wrong thing. Granted this book isn't for everybody, but those wishing to broaden their understanding of feminist fiction should definitely give this book a read.
