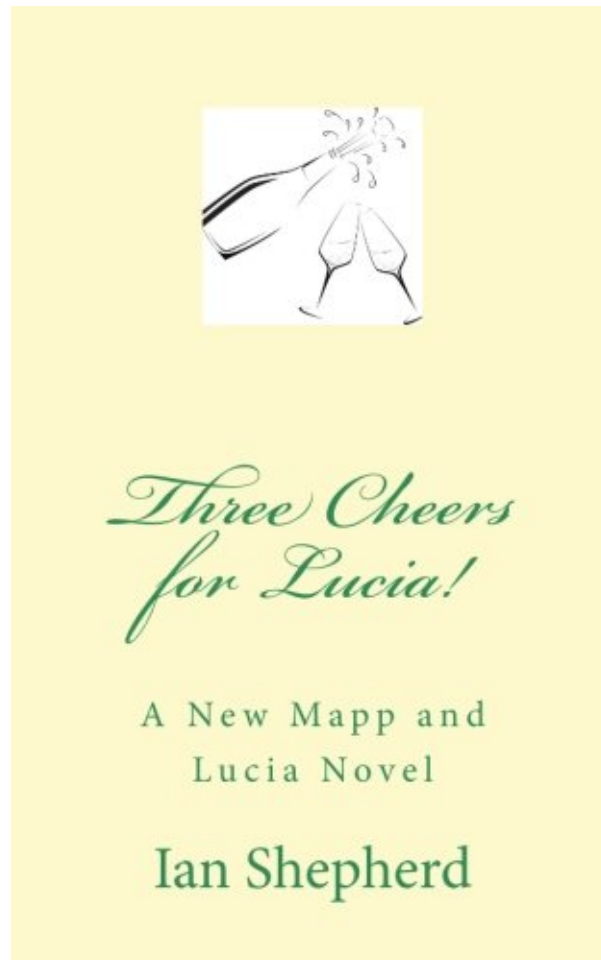


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*Three Cheers
for Lucia!*

A New Mapp and
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Following on directly from Guy Fraser-Sampson's 'Au Reservoir', Ian Shepherd continues the story featuring E. F. Benson's most enduring comic creations - Mapp and Lucia. In Tilling Hospital, Lucia lies in a coma, Georgie by her side, awaiting a stronger dose of penicillin. Will this be the answer to their prayers? Georgie also awaits the confirmation of his knighthood and the fortune of the Mapp-Flints is about to change for the better, following Mapp's discovery of a shocking secret. Readers of E. F. Benson's original books and those by Tom Holt and Guy Fraser-Sampson will hopefully enjoy this new novel.

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- Binding: Paperback
- 222 pages

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Like Lobster a la Riseholme Gone Bad

By JACK C. BROWN

For this Luciaphil, any pastiche that purports to carry on the minutiae of the beloved characters Mapp and Lucia of Tilling is an object of literary interest and desire. Most recently the drawing room skullduggery and social politicking waged by Lucia Pillson and Elizabeth Mapp, mistresses of one-upmanship were in the skillful literary hands of Guy Fraser Sampson. So it was with anticipatory joy that I saw that Ian Shepherd has attempted to revive (in every meaning of the word! -- those who have read Sampson's "Au Reservoir" will know what I mean) the Lucia comedies of manners.

How wrong I was! Where can I begin with the missteps that Ian Shepherd has perpetrated in his tepid and aimless collection of bound pages (for I refuse to call his work a novel)? While there is no inherent crime in a work of fiction being self-published or published on a small press, I will never understand how self-publication seems to translate into sloppy editing, misspellings, and poor word choices. For example, Shepherd wrote of "enlargen" rooms (does he mean "to enlarge"?). Shepherd and his publisher also seem to have only passing acquaintance with the conventions of paragraphs and spacing. There are passages of the novel that have inexplicably wide bands of white space -- usually signaling a change of scene or character. In the case of "Three Cheers" the wide spaces inconsistently mottle the text with no rhyme or reason. Shepherd also peppers the dialogue with unnecessary exclamation points. The only clear exclamatory catchphrase among the Tilling society is "No!"

The greatest offenses beyond the purely mechanical, however, are instances where Shepherd appears unfaithful to the characterizations of Mapp, Lucia, and the other residents of beloved Tilling. Lucia, for all her bluestocking ways, is well known to have a dread of any physical contact. Yet Shepherd has Mapp (of all

people!) "embracing Lucia with the gusto one might embrace a lost child..." In another instance, Georgie (of all people!) kisses Lucia on the lips! Mapp is also allowed to speak Italian - "Sono cosi felice rivederti!" -- la bella lingua that hitherto was the sole province of Lucia and Georgie to utter their five words or five phrases. One of the many half-baked plot lines involves Mallards House. In a glaring misstep Georgie declared about Mapp: "I don't know why she ever left the place." Any devoted follower of Mapp and Lucia will know the series of unfortunate events that led to Mapp having to sell Mallards. Siriemi shares, anyone? Georgie is described as doing crochet instead of his usual needlepoint.

I could go on for the literary and composition blunders in "Three Cheers for Lucia" are legion. To sum up, however, Shepherd's work is a bore. The elusive charm of the Lucia novels is that nothing monumental ever happens in the lives of members of Tilling society, yet the characters are fascinating. In Ian Shepherd's inept handling, the tedium and emptiness of Lucia and Co. is laid bare. At its worst the novel seems to be little more than an exercise in cramming in names of public figures of the post-World War II years: Nancy Mitford, Elizabeth David (I had to look her up), Noel Coward, Edward Maufe, and even Elizabeth II.

I will conclude my review paraphrasing the one accurate passage Shepherd wrote for Georgie: "... I don't wish to mention it ("Three Cheers for Lucia") ever again. The whole business has left a nasty taste in my (literary) mouth."

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful.

A Self-Published Mess

By L. Young

As a Mapp and Lucia addict I welcomed a new addition. While the story will suffice, this self-published novel is a mess. Typos, mis-spellings and grammatical mistakes abound. Self-publication is no excuse for sloppy editing. The author should be ashamed.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful.

She Lives!!!

By Kathryn A. Imhoff

Enjoyed this little tale that brought Lucia back to life again after a recent near death experience at the hands of another author. A couple of akward plot devices that should have been avoided but overall, most enjoyable to this fan of the Mapp and Lucia stories.

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