Ms. Palfrey at the Claremont
Elizabeth Taylor, 1983

An elderly widow moves into a hotel in London, where a number of elderly eccentric residents live, and forms a friendship with a young writer.
F/TAYLOR, Elizabeth

44 Scotland Street
Alexander McCall Smith, 2005

This is the first book in a series about the residents of an Edinburgh boarding house and the various ups and downs of their daily lives.
F/MCCALL SMITH, Alexander

Love Stories in France

Hunting and Gathering
Anna Gavalda, 2007

An ailing artist is rescued by a young man from a wealthy family who is waiting on his inheritance.
F/GAVALDA, Anna

Foreign Tongue: A Novel of Life and Love in Paris
Vanina Marsot, 2009

A woman moves to Paris after breaking up with her boyfriend and finds work as a translator of an erotic French novel.
F/MARSOT, Vanina

Japanese Culture, Ancient and Modern

The Tale of Mursaki: A Novel
Liza Dalby, 2000

The author uses the diary and poetry of the 11th century Japanese writer Mursaki Shikubu (The Tale of Genji) to create an imagined account of her life.
F/DALBY, Liza

Train Man: The Novel
Hitotari Nakano, 2007

A shy “geek” defends a woman when a drunken man harasses her on a train, and is surprised when she thanks him by sending him a gift. This love story is told as a series of Internet chat room threads.
F/NAKANO, Hitotari

Zen Aesthetics and Philosophy

Each Moment Is the Universe: Zen and the Way of Being Time
Dainin Katagiri, 2007

A Zen master explains Buddhist teachings on the concepts of being and time.
294.3927/KAT

Wabi Sabi: Japanese Art of Impermanence
Andrew Juniper, 2003

This book explores the concept of wabi sabi, discussing its origin, and its development in Japanese culture.
701.7/JUN

About the author

Muriel Barbery was born in Morocco in 1969, and studied philosophy at the École Normale Supérieure de Fontenay-Saint-Cloud in France. After graduating in 1993, she taught philosophy at the Université de Bourgogne, in a lycée, and at a university institute for training teachers in Saint-Lô. She now lives in Kyoto, Japan with her husband, Stéphane. Her blog (http://muriel.barbery.net/) features photos that her husband has taken which also reflect themes found in her writing. (To obtain a rough English translation of the blog entries, copy the website into Google, and select the “Translate this page” link that appears on the search results page.)

Ms. Barbery’s first book, Gourmet Rhapsody, introduces the residents of 7, rue de Grenelle, and focuses on the experiences and reflections of food critic, M. Pierre Arthens, a character who also appears in The Elegance of the Hedgehog:

Gourmet Rhapsody
Muriel Barbery, 2009
(Also translated by Alison Anderson.)
F/BARBERY, Muriel

The Elegance of the Hedgehog
Muriel Barbery, 2006
F/BARBERY, Muriel
The Essential Haiku: Versions of Basho, Buson and Issa
Robert Hoss, 1994

“I have set as my goal to have the greatest number possible of profound thoughts, and to write them down in this notebook...since I have this big thing about Japan, I’ve added one requirement: these profound thoughts have to be formulated like a little Japanese poem: either a haiku (three lines) or a tanka (five lines). My favorite haiku is by Basho...” p. 26. 895.6 / ESS

Go
Charles Matthews, 2003

“One of the most extraordinary aspects of the game of go is that it has been proven that in order to win, you must live, but you must also allow the other player to live.” p. 114. 794.4 / MAT

Music of Dire Straits
“For example, to relax, I put on something that takes me into a sort of far-away mood, where things can’t really reach me, where I can look at them as if I were watching a film: a ‘detached’ stratum of consciousness. In general, for that particular stratum, I resort to jazz, or, more effective overall but if I were watching a film: a ‘detached’ stratum of consciousness. In general, for that particular stratum, I resort to jazz, or, more effective overall but I look at each other with the complicity of indestructible friendship...” Renée, p. 299.

Remembrance of Things Past
Marcel Proust, 1981

“In Remembrance of Things Past, the work of a certain Marcel, another notorious concierge, Legrandin is a snob who is torn between two worlds, his own and the one he would like to enter...” p. 35. F / PROUST, Marcel

Critique of Pure Reason
Immanuel Kant, 2003

“...I have great admiration for Kant, for a number of reasons: his ideas are an admirable concentration of genius, rigor and madness, and however Spartan the prose might be, I have had no difficulty in penetrating the meaning.” p. 54. 121 / KAN

Book of Tea
Kakuzo Okakura, 1997

“Like Okakura, I know that tea is no minor beverage. When tea becomes ritual, it takes its place at the heart of our ability to see greatness in small things. Where is beauty to be found? In great things that, like everything else, are doomed to die, or in small things that aspire to nothing, yet know how to set a jewel of infinity in a single moment?” p. 91. http://www.gutenberg.org/etext/769 (Free e-book)

Films by Yasujiro Ozu
“This is my tenth Ozu film this month. Why? Because Ozu is a genius who can rescue me from my biological destiny...” p. 99. DVD / AKI / 4576 or DVD / SOS / 4564 or DVD / HIG / 4577 or DVD / TOK / 4579 or DVD / OHA / 6152

American Camellia Society website
“How is one reborn after a fall? What new pupils restore sight to scorched eyes? Where does war begin, where does combat end? Thus, a camellia...” p. 296. http://www.camellias-acs.com/

Paloma Josse

“I have become friends with a twelve-year-old and to whom I feel very grateful. When Solange Josse comes to the loge to fetch her daughter, Paloma and I look at each other with the complicity of indestructible friendship...” Renée, p. 289.

Renée Michel

“Madame Michel has the elegance of the hedgehog: on the outside, she’s covered in quills, a real fortress, but my gut feeling is that on the inside, she has the same simple refinement as the hedgehog: a deceptively indolent little creature, fiercely solitary—and terribly elegant.” Paloma, p. 143.

Go
Kakuro Ozu

“And you, Kakuro, dear Kakuro, who made me believe in the possibility of a camellia...I hardly know you beyond the person you were for me: a heavenly benefactor, a miraculous balm against all the certainties of fate.” Renée, p. 519.

Anna Karenina
Leo Tolstoy, 2002

“And then we got to talking about Madame Michel again. [Kakuro] thinks her cat is named Leo for Leo Tolstoy and we agreed that a concierge who reads Tolstoy and books published by Vrin may not be your ordinary concierge. He even has some very pertinent reasons for thinking that she must really like Anna Karenina and he has decided to send her a copy. ‘We’ll see how she reacts,’ he said.” p. 168. F / TOLSTOY, Leo

Requiem in D Minor, K. 626 (unfinished)
Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, 2004

“...I say to Monsieur Ozu, for there is no one else here, ‘I...well...You know, the Requiem?’... ‘Oh, I imagine you were frightened!’ he says. ‘I should have warned you. This is a Japanese thing...my daughter’s idea to import it. When you flush, it sets off the music, it’s more pleasant, you see?’” p. 221. CDCL / MOZ / 11416

The Dutch Painters: 100 Seventeenth Century Masters
Christopher Wright, 1986

Images of a Golden Past: Dutch Genre Painting of the 17th Century
Christopher Brown, 1984

“...And this picture, without a moment’s hesitation either, is unquestionably a Pieter Claesz. ‘It’s a copy,’ says Monsieur Ozu beside me. The words, ‘A copy of what?‘ which I abruptly decide are the most appropriate, remain stuck in my throat. And instead I say, ‘It’s so beautiful.’” pp. 199-200. 759.9492 / WRI 759.942 / BRO

**All quotes are taken from paperback 2006 edition of The Elegance of the Hedgehog.**