

THE NEW GLADSTONE REVIEW

an occasional e-journal

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Issue No. 21

*Informal commentary, opinions, reviews, news, illustrations and poetry
for bookish people of philanthropic inclination*

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Editorial

This issue is the first since the election of Donald Trump as president in the USA, an event with so many significant consequences on a global scale in the offing that it seems necessary for all those concerned about the future prospects for mankind to consider in what ways reason calls us to respond. It occurred to me that, as a sizeable proportion of readers of the Review probably live in the East Midlands, and that as Robert Jenrick, MP for Newark and Sherwood, supported Trump's presidential candidacy, and occupies a prominent position in our parliament, it would be helpful to ask him about the justification he advanced for supporting Mr Trump's political programme. So, on the following page I reproduce the letter I sent to Mr Jenrick on 23rd January, in the belief that his reply would reveal some of the issues he considers likely to impact on us in the UK and on wider global concerns. So far, I have received an acknowledgement of receipt but (two weeks later), no reply.

This issue of the Review has a record number of guest contributors, to whom I offer my sincere and grateful thanks for making this a more communal effort than usual. Book reviews are contributed by Penny Young and Frances Thimann, a provocative philosophical article by Jim Mepham, an opinion piece by Stephen Wade and a scholarly article on Victorian cartoons by Richard Gaunt - all of whom have also contributed in the past. My three articles are on: the open email discussed above, the depressing national report on young people's standards of literacy, and the latest innovation in the Review - on the literary and philosophical reflections of an octogenarian - by yours truly.

BM

Email to Mr R E Jenrick MP, House of Commons

23 January 2025

Dear Mr Jenrick

As a resident in the constituency of which you are the MP, I am interested in your opinions on the programme set out by Mr Trump in his presidential inaugural speech. My interest in these is especially relevant both because I understand you supported Mr Trump's presidential candidacy and because of your current positions as Shadow Secretary of State for Justice and Shadow Lord Chancellor, as well as being a leading contender for the role of Conservative Party leader in 2024.

The crucial influence of future US political decisions on far-reaching global concerns means that for everyone now alive, as well as for future generations, national governments need to adapt to the doubtless monumental impending changes that will inevitably ensue. Consequently, among others, I would welcome knowing your views on:

- the decision to leave the World Health Organisation
- the pardon granted to 1,500 US citizens who attacked the US Capitol on 06.01.2021
- the decision to resign from the Paris Climate Agreement.

I doubt that you will recall that, about ten years ago, we met briefly when you called into my second-hand bookshop in Bull Yard, Southwell, where you were kind enough to make a purchase. But soon after that, to cut costs, I decided to only operate from a private address.

However, in association with this, quite small, book business, I produce an occasional e- journal- The *Gladstone Review*- which is accessible via the website www.gladstonebooks.co.uk. While its overall theme is with cultural and philanthropic concerns, it also occasionally carries, in a nonpartisan way, some articles at the political interface. Its circulation is probably quite low, but I would be happy to post your reply to my above queries. To meet the deadline for the next issue, I should appreciate a reply at your earliest convenience. With thanks in anticipation of your reply,

Yours sincerely

Prof Ben Mephram

Email address for correspondence info@gladstonebooks.co.uk

Life on the Grand Scale

A review of *Miranda Seymour's biography of Ottoline Morrell*:

Pity the poor biographer! That thought occurred to me during a recent talk at The Bookcase in Lowdham where Miranda Seymour was speaking about a new edition of her book *Ottoline Morrell: Life on the Grand Scale*. In letters, biographies and fiction, Ottoline Morrell has been much maligned and misunderstood, her way of life, her appearance and good intentions twisted to provide satisfaction for the writer or entertainment for the reader. For those of us who were aware of Ottoline Morrell (pronounced, apparently, Murrel), it was as a society hostess during the Bloomsbury era, a small star glittering around the constellation of larger planets, manipulating them to feed her own ego. Her posthumous reputation was, then, not a happy one, based as it was on the snide, even vicious remarks of those she befriended or tried to help – which influenced later biographers, e.g. Michael Holroyd in his monumental biography of Lytton Strachey (one of the worst offenders – Strachey not Holroyd, who revised his views of Ottoline in a later edition of his work, published three years after Miranda Seymour's biography). Her most famous portrayal in fiction is, of course, that of D. H. Lawrence in *Women in Love*, a cruel caricature which cut Ottoline to the heart, and put an end to their close friendship. But perhaps this is a case of pity the writer of fiction! Lawrence vowed that Hermione Roddice was not a portrait of Ottoline, but a work of imagination; however, the similarities were too close for that claim to be convincing or reassuring, and it added fuel to the skewed way in which she was perceived, as some sort of outlandish monster.

Following her death, her journals were published in a highly edited form by her husband Philip Morrell, and by Robert Gathorne-Hardy, Ottoline's literary executor and editor. They apparently didn't do much to reverse her reputation. So matters stood for years until Miranda Seymour's publishers suggested that she should write a biography of Ottoline, a suggestion that was not received with much enthusiasm. But, as it turned out, Miranda's mother had family connections, and was able to put her in touch with Ottoline's daughter, Julian. Visiting Julian, Miranda was assured that her mother's public image was 'a cruel distortion of the truth', and she was handed the entire collection of Ottoline's private journals – unedited, unbowdlerised and otherwise unmangled – as well as all the supposedly lost correspondence with Lytton Strachey, and the 2,500 letters written to her by Bertrand Russell, with whom she had a long-standing, and influential, affair: all of which shone a different light on her character, on her marriage to Philip Morrell (a solicitor and later a Liberal MP), on her passionate relationship with Russell, and on the Bloomsberries – 'their snobbery, their malice and their deceit'.

Ottoline Morrell was the daughter of Lt. Gen. Arthur Bentinck, a cousin of the 5th Duke of Portland (the reclusive duke known as the 'Underground Man') and who had every expectation of inheriting the title. But he pre-deceased the duke by two years, and the title passed to his son, William Arthur Bentinck. Ottoline, therefore, became the half-sister of the 6th Duke (her father having married twice) and found herself as a young child transported from her home on the Hampshire/Berkshire borders to the vast empty spaces of Welbeck Abbey in Nottinghamshire, its previous inhabitant having shut off most of the rooms and living in just four or five, leaving the rest bare, stripped of all furniture and fittings, and the whole house in a ruinous state. Seeing Welbeck for the first time one could imagine the new occupants' dismay. But Ottoline's mother was made of stern stuff, and with her step-son's

help set about transforming Welbeck into a family home and herself into a society hostess, making use of all her artistic flair she'd had little outlet for before. However, as plain Mrs Bentinck, surrounded by dukes and other nobility, she felt placed at a disadvantage. Here again the new duke rode to the rescue, using his political influence to have her created Baroness Bolsover (Bolsover being part of the ducal estate) – to some extent a consolation prize for not being Duchess of Portland. Anyhow, she now came into her own, living the life she felt she was cut out for.

Ottoline's mother being fully occupied with her own life, Ottoline grew up in the company of various governesses. Under-educated and essentially lonely, she grew up with the desire to set about educating herself and also, inheriting her mother's strong religious faith, wanting to help people, to do good in the world wherever she could. The story of how she set about achieving both these ambitions is highly readable. Her interest in and study of art brought her within the purlieu of the Bloomsberries, into contact with artists such as Roger Fry, Augustus John, Henry Lamb, with writers such as Henry James, T. S. Eliot, W. B. Yeats, Aldous Huxley, Lytton Strachey, D.H. Lawrence and wife Frieda (who Ottoline believed was the malign influence behind her character-assassination in *Women in Love*).



Ottoline Morrell
a studio portrait by George Charles Berresford (1903)

When she happened to express her wish to help people, it was suggested the best thing she could do would be to help poverty-stricken young artists who were struggling to get known and make a living. In London and at Garsington, she used her dinner-parties and other gatherings to introduce artists to each other and to wealthy patrons, and cultivate friendships.

Her home became a hub for writers and artists, and others from the world of the arts and learning. At Garsington Manor in particular, friends and acquaintances were invited to stay, sometimes for months at a time, staying in converted outbuildings where they could find the

peace and quiet they needed to paint or write their next book – often outstaying their welcome and even, some of them, treating Ottoline’s home like a hotel (complaining vociferously if the food wasn’t right or other needs weren’t met). The question is, if she was so generously hospitable, why was it that her guests could be so bitchy about her?

Miranda Seymour explains this by pointing out that ‘Bloomsbury thrived on correspondence. The vicious things that were written about Ottoline by people she assumed to be her friends were inspired by a delight in witty language and a love of gossip’ (as if that were an excuse). She cites the case of Dora Carrington, who, writing to Lytton Strachey while staying at Garsington, sent ‘agreeable accounts’ of her time there. In Lytton’s view, this did not make for very interesting reading. So Carrington began to embroider the facts, even to make things up, in order that Lytton might be better entertained. In Virginia Woolf’s case, too, there was a huge credibility gap between what she wrote in her letters and diaries, and the reality. At various times she described Ottoline as a liar, a spiteful bitch, a mouldy rat-eaten ship, nefarious, and ‘garish as a strumpet’ – in contradiction to other times when Ottoline was ‘heroic, fascinating, sweet, pure and wonderful. On the occasion when Ottoline was enlightened (by Mark Gertler) about the malicious things her friends were saying about her, she was, understandably, shattered. But after some soul-searching she summoned the courage to bite on her feelings of betrayal: she had set her course and she would stick to it.

Following her death in 1938, tributes ‘rained down’ on Philip and Julian. One in particular went some way to summing up Ottoline’s legacy. It was from the novelist Henry Green, who described all that Ottoline meant to him when, as a young undergraduate, he was introduced to her at Garsington. ‘Ottoline made such a difference to me, as she did to everyone she met. For an undergraduate to come over to Garsington or to be entertained as each one was in company with the older people staying there was his first glimpse of the world outside and his first contact with literature and intellects not built up around dons or university life.’

He goes on to say how Ottoline taught him for the first time to see things the way ‘great open characters’ see them, and ‘when one got to know her better still, she began to open to one her love for all things true and beautiful which she had more than anyone.’ He ends his letter with, ‘If it is any comfort to you and Julian at a time like this, do try and remember the good she did to literally hundreds of young men like myself . . she took trouble over them and they went out into the world very different from what they would have been if they had not known her . . no one can ever know the immeasurable good she did.’

Penny Young is the former editor of 'Folio', the quarterly arts magazine produced in Southwell, and a regular contributor to the Gladstone Review.



The Porcupine's Dilemma:

Schopenhauer's Wistful Parable on Human Connection

German philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer's dilemma of the prickly porcupine is a parable on the fraughtness of human connection: in seeking intimacy, we inevitably push each other away. In his 1851 collection of short philosophical essays, *Parerga and Paralipomena*, he reflects on a whole range of subjects, one of which is the oft-fraught nature of human connection.

To illuminate his thoughts, Schopenhauer¹ offers a parable involving a group of prickly porcupines. He writes: One cold winter's day, a number of porcupines huddled together quite closely in order through their mutual warmth to prevent themselves from being frozen. But they soon felt the effect of their quills on one another, which made them again move apart.

The porcupines seek each other out for warmth, Schopenhauer tells us; but in becoming close, they scratch and prickle one another with their sharp spines, and draw apart in annoyance and pain. What, then, can the porcupines do? Schopenhauer continues: Now when the need for warmth once more brought them together, the drawback of the quills was repeated so that they were tossed between two evils, until they had discovered the proper distance from which they could best tolerate one another. The porcupines settle on a compromise: close enough for warmth, with enough distance for minimal scratching.

Schopenhauer then rather unceremoniously applies this parable to human society: Thus the need for society which springs from the emptiness and monotony of people's lives, drives them together; but their many unpleasant and repulsive qualities and insufferable drawbacks once more drive them apart.

While we might seek human connection, trying to be intimate or vulnerable with others often leads to frustration and disappointment. We scratch and annoy each other with our varying needs and opinions, before — like the porcupines — settling on a compromise, Schopenhauer writes: The mean distance which [people] finally discover, and which enables them to endure being together, is politeness and good manners. Whoever does not keep to this, is told in England to 'keep his distance.' By virtue thereof, it is true that the need for mutual warmth will be only imperfectly satisfied, but on the other hand, the prick of the quills will not be felt. Manners and etiquette emerge to smooth the roughness of our individual wants and demands; such polite society, however, simultaneously blocks any true intimacy or connection from occurring.

Thus the dilemma: we seek out genuine connection, but can often only tolerate a sort of mitigated closeness. We both need and put up with one another. What, then, can we do? How can we overcome the porcupine's dilemma? If here we think Schopenhauer will provide us

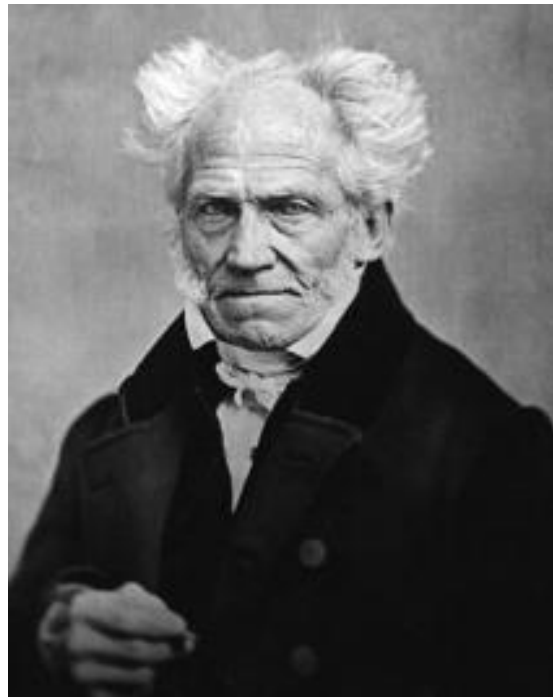
¹ Arthur Schopenhauer (1788–1860) was a German philosopher, probably best known for *The World as Will and Representation* (1818). Building on the transcendental idealism of Immanuel Kant, Schopenhauer developed an atheistic metaphysical and ethical system that rejected the ideas of German idealism at that time.

with some interesting strategies for how we might overcome the needles of closeness and go on to forge true intimacy, then unfortunately we will be left bitterly disappointed.

For instead, Schopenhauer — great pessimist that he is — actually goes in the other direction. Rather than put up with people's infuriating ways, he thinks we should cut our losses and withdraw altogether into solitude, and focus on generating some warmth for ourselves. He writes: Yet whoever has a great deal of internal warmth of his own will prefer to keep away from society in order to avoid giving or receiving trouble or annoyance. Indeed, who needs the company of others when one can enjoy one's own company? Everything we are seeking connection-wise can be provided by a kind of refined solitude, Schopenhauer thinks.

For, he goes on to write, solitude can be made ever more blissful the more we develop our intellects and deepen our appreciation of art. We can spend our time reading, listening to music — appreciating the best cultural achievements of humanity — without ever having to actually contend with or be annoyed by any other humans themselves.

In another essay on self-sufficiency, Schopenhauer doubles down on this position, writing: As a general rule, it may be said that a man's sociability stands very nearly in inverse ratio to his intellectual value: to say that 'so and so' is very unsociable, is almost tantamount to saying that he is a man of great capacity. Solitude is doubly advantageous to such a man. Firstly, it allows him to be with himself, and, secondly, it prevents him being with others — an advantage of great moment; for how much constraint, annoyance, and even danger there is in all intercourse with the world.



Of course, it is rather convenient that Schopenhauer attacks sociability and praises the intellect of those who embrace solitude — for he himself lived a life primarily of isolation (the philosopher never married, had a famously hostile relationship with his mother, and was notoriously bad tempered). But however we may feel about Schopenhauer's own prickliness, his parable lit the imagination of Sigmund Freud, who popularized it as the 'porcupine dilemma' (or 'hedgehog dilemma', as it's now sometimes known).

Freud thought it represented an important insight into human psychology: in seeking intimacy, we often push others away. Remove the guardrails of etiquette and polite society, and we often just end up annoying each other.

Jim Mephram, a retired head teacher who lives in Bristol, runs a number of philosophy groups, including those in the University of the Third Age, Bristol Pub Philosophy and adult education workshops on Philosophy for Everyday Life. Several of his articles have been published in earlier issues of the Gladstone Review.

Note to Self: Core Values in Literature

Stephen Wade reminds himself about why we study literature.

This morning, sitting in my study, where I have been writing every day since I retired from lecturing and teaching, a photo reminded me of something I regard as both important and urgent: the question of why literature's core values have to be revisited and maintained. The reminder was about a question that once took over a two-hour class. I mentioned that in writing, one should consider the reader. A student asked, 'Say that again – consider the reader? I never do that. I just write what I feel like writing.'

It was an 'Access' course many years back, for mature students aiming at university study. The question led to a prolonged discussion on the part of the reader in the process of engaging with a narrative. At the time, I was learning all the new theory myself, as my generation of English graduates had rarely been confronted by the ideas of the new literary philosophers. We could have wandered into the vocabulary of that theory, but in our discussion, we faced the issue of what literature – and of course, the act of reading – actually is all about.

What we finally all agreed on was that literature is about sharing, appealing to others to read, listen, attend; it is the Ancient Mariner, but the telling of the story is an urgent appeal for the teller to be validated and the listener to be respected. I was a very 'late developer' having failed my 11+ and then gone to a secondary modern school which primarily trained students to work in engineering. I was also a slow reader, and could not read fluently until I was around fourteen. Then, after leaving to become an office boy, I discovered books and stories. My teacher had read the class *No Highway* by Nevil Shute, in which dear Mr Honey, aerodynamics expert, tells the air hostess that the plane is doomed, and that she will survive if she goes to the toilet and stays there. I, a non-reader was hooked on stories, and this made me find the will to read as well as my teacher. Why had this been so powerful? Because literature at its most basic had 'happened.' I had shared the narrative, at the most fundamental human level – listening to a story told well, and being totally a dweller in that place called imagination.

So, note to self: theory has its place. The hooks between a literary work and all the other concepts from Weltanschauung to Gender Studies and from psychogeography to Post-Post-Modernism are important, but they exist way outside the mind of the reader or listener when the imagination exists in that doomed plane, and the young hostess might be saved.

As a teacher with many decades of work in literature classes behind me, I want to see the simplicity of the story back in its proper place. That place is in the bond between teller and reader; it lies in some locations which are hard to fathom, but we know

them when we see them. Yes, some of that magical relationship may be explained, and with deep interest, such as the Russian Formalists' love of 'making the stone stony' and 'making strange,' but in the end, these concepts are simply descriptors of things that have always been there, inherent in the very essence of a tale being told.

I feel bound to explain some core values then. First, there is the *sharing*. A common critique of Modernism is that such texts as *The Waste Land* in 1922 would have been an impossible challenge for the Man on the Clapham Omnibus, as if Eliot had set a de-coding exercise as a test of the reader's cultural acquisitions and educational experience. But of course, that is where higher education has its real *raison d'être*: it may educate and so enrich reading and all the skills full reading and understanding require. Imagine my situation, someone who left school at fifteen with no qualifications, sitting in a hut in a Leeds evening class, with the opening of *The Waste Land* on the desk before me. It was impossible to perceive as any kind of story. But after a year or so, I saw its genius, and after two years I was writing poems in imitation of it.

Second, literature has the potential to present for examination and reflection the full gamut of human experience: every nuanced sensation of emotional literary or its failure; it may share the nature of universal humanity. There are no borders on the land of creative writing, though there may be thought police on the prowl.

Then there is the tendency of literature to change the mind, to alter consciousness and to cause a revision of accepted opinion. It stirs things up. On my ever-expanding personal library's shelves, I have a little section, inhabited by books that changed me. These include *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*, Heaney's poetry, *Christ Stopped at Eboli* and Chekhov's short stories. What they have in common is that they each helped me to look again, think better and compare lives.

Finally, there is the notion of pleasure – the pleasure of the text. This is indefinable, but we have all seen it in action. It is evident in the sight of a reader who can't put her book down, and is there in the excitement of a book conversation over a pint or a coffee, and for me, as a teacher, it is in that bubbly, excited report from a student containing words such as 'couldn't put it down' or 'Never read anything like it.'

That's what we may call literature, though the candidates may not always be found in the Man-Booker lists.

Stephen Wade has a background in literary studies, and formerly lectured in English. He is now a freelance writer, specialising in the history of crime and law, and his *A Dictionary of True Crime* was out in January this year from Pen & Sword Books.

Mummy ! This fing (book) in't working. praps it needs a new batry

The National Literacy Trust, which published its *Annual Literacy Survey* in November 2024, revealed some very disturbing trends. Based on over 76,000 responses from children and young people aged 5 to 18 in early 2024, it includes findings on reading enjoyment, frequency and motivation and explores responses by age, gender, socio-economic background and geographical region. Overall, the results show that the number of children and young people who say they enjoy reading, and read daily in their free time, continues to decline - and is at its lowest since 2005.

- Only 1 in 5 (20.5%) 8-to 18-year-olds said that they read something daily in their free time in 2024; again, the lowest level recorded since 2005
- Only 1 in 3 (34.6%) children and young people aged 8-18 years said that they enjoyed reading in their free time in 2024
- In 2024, the Survey was able to match survey and reading-skill (Star Reading) data for 3,861 children and young people aged 8-14 years.. This showed that in terms of *reading frequency*, children and young people who read daily had higher average (mean) standardised reading scores daily (n = 789; average = 109.49) than children and young people who didn't read daily (n = 3,026; M = 103.35). This difference is statistically significant
- Similar relationships also apply to *enjoyment*. Thus children and young people who enjoyed reading (n = 1,211; average = 109.13) had higher average (mean) standardised reading scores than children and young people who didn't enjoy reading (n = 2,593; average = 102.65) This difference was also statistically significant

Given the broad educational and socioeconomic factors known to influence children and young people's enjoyment of reading, the Trust is calling on the government to urgently form a reading taskforce and action plan with multi-sector partners to address declining rates of reading enjoyment and, in its curriculum and assessment review, prioritise reading for pleasure alongside the skills that are vital in the development of confident, motivated readers.

According to Steven Tucker, writing in the *Mercator* magazine (2025), another alarming finding has become apparent – namely that babies and toddlers are turning up at nurseries and schools not knowing what books are, or how to use them. Used to being well-versed in the skills needed to navigate web-connected tablets, *tiny tots are attempting to turn real books' pages simply by swiping them with their fingers, or holding them upside-down, thinking their pages will automatically flip the right way up, like the clever screen-displays on e-devices.!*

Moreover, while as few as one in four children entered British education in this sad state, only 16 percent of parents surveyed think it's their job to help teach their own children at least some of the basics of how to read (e.g., being able to recognise what a book is!) prior to enrolment.

Seaglass: essays, moments and reflections (Calon, 2024): a review

This is a delightful and unusual book, beautifully written, a collection of essays and reflections on the author's own life, its different phases and interests from childhood to adulthood. But it is focused above all on place and landscape, and her own relationship to these things.

Places are not separate from people – not on an island like ours. Places are a collection of stories, they hold each chapter in their hedgerows, their forest floors... not hard to find when you take a moment, a proper look, she writes.

She points out that the landscapes she loves are not static, but have always changed, even from the earliest times. But she is angry at the harm we as humans have done and still do to our landscapes, sometimes irrecoverably.

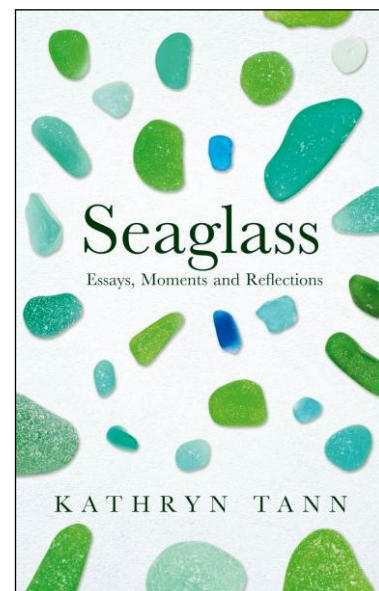
But water, in all its forms, sea, lake and river, and her love of swimming, especially wild swimming, is her particular passion, and there are many lovely descriptions of water throughout. In the first essay, 'On Collecting Seaglass', she describes the joy of finding and collecting these beautiful coloured shapes, rounded and wave-worn on the shore, 'little fragments of light': fragments from bygone people and lives, each one holding so much of the past.

The following chapters describe a number of different scenes and landscapes – especially the South Wales coastline, where she grew up; the Thousand Islands in the St Lawrence River, and other places in Canada, home to her partner; and the North-East of England, where she now lives and works. There are also short and poignant descriptions of individual places and moments of particular importance to her. These sections are combined with passages of autobiography and memoir from her childhood onwards, on family and relationships; on food; and there is a delightful chapter describing how she found an ancient family dictionary, tiny and fragile, with its old-fashioned definitions and phrases – its words still important to her work now as a writer.

And above all, it is the beauty and originality of her writing, especially about water, that is so memorable. Describing her swim in one remote mountain pool, she writes: *If I was asked to define the word 'bliss' I think this secret pool – the way it holds my body in its clarity would be my answer.*

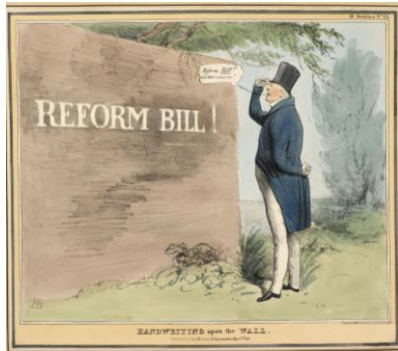
Francis Thimann has published four collections of short stories, and won the Society of Authors' Tom-Gallon short story award in 2017. She has also published individual pieces in magazines and online, and in 2006 completed the MA in Creative Writing at Nottingham Trent University

www.francesthimann.co.uk



Pictorial Words and Funny Pictures

The Victorians are not generally remembered for their sense of humour. The reputation for unsullied seriousness which they have acquired probably owes much to the Queen herself,



especially during her self-imposed exile as ‘Window of Windsor’ after 1861. However, the frequently-recounted statement that Victoria was ‘not amused’, may be contrasted with the knowledge that William Frederick Wallett (1806-92), who ended his days living in Beeston, Nottinghamshire, made his career as ‘the Queen’s Jester’, after performing before her at Windsor Castle in 1844. Nor was the eponymous hero of Gladstone Books – who was said to address the Queen ‘as though she were a public meeting’ – incapable of exhibiting a sense of the ridiculous. His biographer, G.W.E. Russell, reported that Gladstone and his wife Catherine could be found, on occasion, dancing arm-in-arm on the hearth rug, singing the comic refrain: *A ragamuffin husband and a rantipoling wife We’ll fiddle it and scrape it through the ups and downs of life* - in a way which one can hardly imagine amongst recent occupants of No. 10 Downing Street.

Victorians could find humorous diversions from their daily lives in a wide range of satirical and comedic novels, songs, plays, music-halls, theatres, pantomimes and revues, fuelled by advances in printing technology and dedicated places of entertainment. Equally compelling, but more variegated in style and format, were the wide range of printed satirical images – encompassing comic scraps, broadsheets, illustrated weekly magazines, as well as individual prints and caricatures – which were widely marketed for mass consumption.

Historians have sometimes under-rated the pictorial satire of this period, by comparison with its more boisterous and bawdy Georgian predecessors. Looking back with fondness on the ‘Golden Age of Caricature’ from 1750-1830, a period embracing the apogee of William Hogarth to the aftermath of James Gillray, the consequence has been to discount Victorian output as a pale and diminished shadow of its former self. So keen a satirical writer as William Makepeace Thackeray – the writer of ‘The Book of Snobs’ as well as ‘Vanity Fair’ – commented with polite regret at the fading tradition of gathering at the London print sellers’ windows to view the latest ‘exhibition’ of single-sheet caricatures produced by the likes of William Heath and George Cruikshank. In contrast, popular political satirists of the 1830s, such as John Doyle (who worked under the pseudonym ‘H.B.’) offered more wholesome fare:

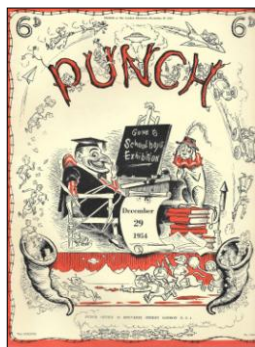


There used to be a crowd round the window in those days, of grinning, good-natured mechanics, who spelt the songs, and spoke them out for the benefit of the company, and who received the points of humour with a general sympathizing roar. Where are these people now? You never hear any laughing at H.B.; his pictures are a great deal too genteel for that – polite points of wit, which strike one as exceedingly clever and pretty, and cause one to smile in a quiet, gentleman-like kind of way (Fig.1).

It was not that Victorian England lacked graphic satirists of the calibre of Hogarth and Gillray, but the routes by which their products reached the general public were changing, as print sellers closed their doors in the face of competition from penny illustrated newspapers and mass-consumption periodicals. The change may be marked most clearly by the sale of Hannah

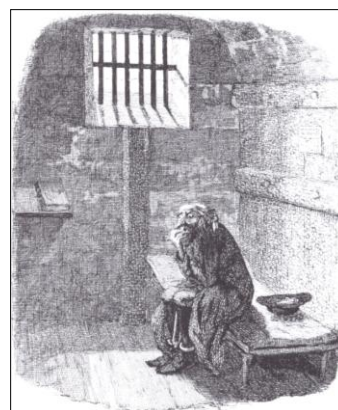
Humphrey's print shop and its contents, including original copper plates etched by Gillray himself, on the eve of Queen Victoria's accession in 1837 (Fig.2).

Buoyed by developments across the Channel – not least the founding of the illustrated caricature magazine, *Le Charivari*, in Paris in 1832 – British satirists began to yearn for a regular published output for their wares. Such was the success of this enfant terrible that the French government



banned political caricature in 1835. This was a fate which, for all its rich satirical allusions and scatological references, had never befallen Gillray and Cruikshank. Proscription tended to feed, rather than sate, the appetite. The appearance of *Punch* magazine in 1841 may, therefore, be taken as both the culmination of a long tradition of native British experimentation in the field of visual satire and the signifier of a new direction. Continuities with past traditions were provided by the famous cover image, created by Richard (Dicky) Doyle, the son of 'H.B.', which lasted from the late-1840s to the mid-1960s, and featured Toby - who looked very much like Hogarth's dog Trump - as part of the magazine's 'brand' (Fig.3). A risky publishing initiative at the outset, *Punch* grew

through experimentation and entrepreneurial acumen to establish itself as the trailblazer of its type. Almanacs, half-yearly and annual collected volumes, Christmas editions, spin-off series and one-offs, all helped to establish *Punch* as a staple part of the diet of middle class readers who lapped up its combination of literary satire, artistic and theatrical punning and visual mockery of the great and good. It was *Punch*, in 1843, which also re-worked the term 'Cartoon' to describe the central, full-page, image for which the magazine became famous. This spoke to the cartoon's emergence as an independent work of art in its own right.



Satirists had always prided themselves on their 'insider-outsider' status with the artistic establishment. Earlier trailblazers, such as Hogarth, Gillray and Doyle, had been trained to professional standards as portraitists or engravers, but bridled against the prejudice which denied them appropriate recognition. By contrast, their successors – including John Leech, Phil May and Francis Carruthers Gould – were prized as cartoonists in their own right. However, political differences could sometimes prove an obstacle to harmoniously working within a magazine's editorial policy. The reintroduction of the Catholic hierarchy in England opened the floodgates of Protestant hysteria, during 1850-1, and 'Dicky' Doyle, a loyal Catholic, condemned *Punch's* willingness to join the general Catholic baiting to which this gave vent. He resigned from the magazine and later achieved immortality as the artist of 'Fairyland'. Other former caricaturists, such as Robert Seymour and George Cruikshank, retained their independence by embracing the field of book illustration. This raises interesting questions about the relationship between artists and illustrators and the degree to which 'funny pictures' rather than 'pictorial words' create memorable impressions within us. When we think of Charles Dickens's representation of Fagin in *Oliver Twist*, for example, is it his word-picture of Fagin or the visual illustrations of Cruikshank which first, or enduringly, come to mind? (Fig. 4).

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Octogenarial Reflections

Now being well into my eighties, I have a sense of freedom from the constraints that often inhibit the expression of ideas which protocol demands should be kept under wraps. Perhaps I should say 'increasing sense of freedom' because in many ways I have been a nonconformist throughout my adult life - which is not a boast, but for better or worse, a fact.

Many older people, perhaps as a defence against what are perceived as the latest unwelcome developments, are often given to reminiscing, reflecting with some pleasure on those youthful halcyon days when, despite the frequent hardships and difficulties experienced, life seemed more comfortable and, not in any monetary sense, rewarding. But, after just one breath, as it were, I know that even to make that simple assertion, would sound hollow to many whose lives have been so brief and/or troubled as victims of wars, under regimes of slavery and in environmental disasters.

However, I believe that revisiting the past can be important for all who aim to encourage the emergence of a kinder, more harmonious world than that in which we currently find ourselves. American philosopher, George Santayana claimed that *those who forget history are condemned to repeat it*, but another American, historian Carl Becker, had some additional advice: *The value of history is, indeed, not scientific but moral: by liberalizing the mind, by deepening the sympathies, by fortifying the will, it enables us to control, not society, but ourselves -- a much more important thing; it prepares us to live more humanely in the present and to meet rather than to foretell the future.*

Throughout my adult life, and sometimes earlier, quite apart from my career as an academic, I have been writing down ideas and reflections prompted quite randomly by the changing circumstances experienced in my personal metaphorical journey. And so, in response to the first two lines above, in this and future issues of the Review, I plan to reproduce a few of those reflections, in the hope that at least some of them merit sharing with readers (perhaps even as a hint of social history) rather than just sitting on my shelves in their bound volumes, largely unread.

Beginnings

But first, perhaps some chronological background is needed. I spent my first 13 years in Newport, South Wales, the youngest of three children of my parents - Ben, who worked as a roller man at a large flour mill, and Cis, a former nurse and midwife, who were 50 and 40, respectively, when I was born in 1940. *Lower middle class* was probably the best categorisation of our social status. At primary school, I had little interest in books, but was keen on sport and showed a rare turn of speed in sprint events on sports days.

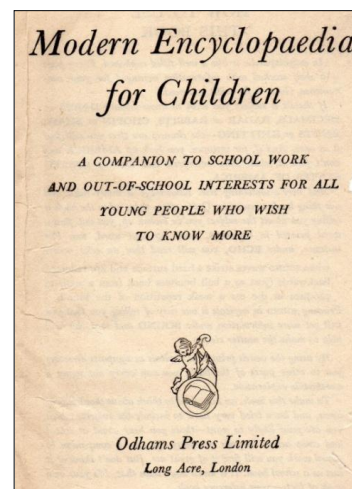
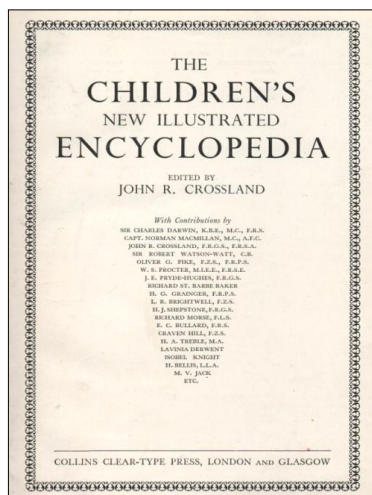
My father, who had been in the Royal Artillery in the 1914-18 world war (in France and Belgium, including the battle of Ypres), in 1940 had a civilian role in aiming to ensure national food supplies, but he also led the local Home Guard, which, although I used to joke about it, I am sure was more effective than TV's 'Dad's Army.' He was a devout fundamentalist Christian, a lay preacher, who attended church regularly, read his Bible daily, said grace before every meal, and supervised my nightly prayers. It's amusing to recall that after prayers, urged on by my requests, he used to sing ditties he had learnt in the trenches, with renderings fit for Victorian musical hall performances!

We lived in a rented terraced house with only an outside lavatory (necessitating use of candles when it was dark), we had no car or motorcycle - and as far as I recall, in all the thirteen years we lived there, apart from some visits to elderly relatives, we had only one family holiday, in a rented caravan at Penarth near Cardiff. During the 1939-45 war, obviously ignorant of the politics, I was acutely aware of bombings in the near vicinity and, most of all, of the whining siren broadcast to warn everyone to take refuge - which in our case was under a heavy steel Morrison shelter in the living room.. Despite all the fears and problems experienced, I lived in a secure and loving family, with a mother whose kindness and nursing skills meant that many distressed neighbours in our street knew that when they called she would give generous help and encouragement to ease their concerns.

My first decade, half of it during the war, was largely confined to the immediate surroundings, the street of about thirty houses, the corner shop, my primary school just up the road, attending church and Sunday school, Wolf Cubs and Scouts, some camping, visits to the nearby park and, with Dad, watching Newport County, the soccer team which languished in the Third Division (South)! (This photograph was taken by a professional photographer when I was three years old.)



With my brother and sister being eight and six years older, respectively, the age gap was large enough for me to feel left-out when my siblings' activities together weren't easily shared with me. So I became very independent, and often felt like an only child, although more recently I have come to the conclusion that my brother Michael may have served as a father figure, complementing my grandfatherly father. I suspect I am not alone in discovering that introspection sometimes becomes a form of psychoanalysis.



At the age of ten, I persuaded my parents to give me the two encyclopaedias, shown here, for Christmas. They were, I recall, 10/6 (52.5p) each - which was a substantial cost for a present in our family. They were of quite different styles - the Collins consisting of a number of chapters on geography, astronomy, chemistry etc, written by a range of experts, whereas the

Odham's book consisted of short entries arranged in alphabetical order. My enthusiasm for them suggests I was beginning to develop a 'thirst for knowledge.'

Following my success in the *eleven plus exam*, the couple of years spent at the Newport High School for Boys had a big effect on me. The school had a pronounced academic ethos, promoted by the headmaster, who I much later discovered was the son of a local shopkeeper, attended the same primary school as I did thirty years later - and was appointed to the High School staff after graduating from Oxford with flying colours: surely, manifest meritocracy.

But when I was thirteen, the family moved from industrial South Wales to rural Worcestershire, Dad having secured a job as manager of a grain silo (where wheat, barley etc were dried and stored), which, at 62 years, was his first office job. Consequently, I had to travel by a very tortuous route from our council house home in a small village to the Hartlebury Grammar school about fifteen miles away. This school, attended by only 160 boys, was reached by a combination of bus and train rides interspersed with long walks, one of which was through a muddy 'bean field.' It meant rising at seven o'clock and not getting home until six.

<p><u>Detentions</u>: 3</p> <p>Definitely not a Scientist & I feel that apart from English, Latin & French that he could do much better.</p> <p>J. S. Day Headmaster.</p>
<p>Next term begins..... 27th April 1954.</p> <p>Signature of Parent or Guardian..... Pymephams</p> <p>Date..... 26/4/54</p>

The headmaster's comment in my first report after moving to Hartlebury Grammar School is shown above. I was so taken-aback that I resolved to prove him wrong (his subject was chemistry), and subsequently ensured that I came top in almost all science tests and exams and especially in biology.

But, although studying, researching and teaching in the biological sciences since the 1960s, my later move to bioethics (also involving philosophy, history and sociology) suggests he may not have been altogether wrong! I can't remember what the detentions were for: nonconformity ?.

Trains of thought

After the preliminaries, I now turn to a reflection on a revelatory and memorable train journey. Often, going home, the twenty minute train journey gave me the opportunity to day-dream about my life and ambitions in virtual (mental) isolation - a somewhat hypnotic experience amplified by the steady thrumming of the wheels on the railway lines. On one occasion, when I was about fifteen, as I surveyed the flat Worcestershire countryside seemingly revolving

around me like a record on a gramophone turntable, and stressing the centrality of the individual's perspective in all our perceptions of the world around us, I hit on a thought experiment. I reasoned that the problem with our supposed 'knowledge' of the world is that we have been fed with others' ideas from the earliest moments of our existence. We have been, effectively, 'brainwashed' – though, of course, without any malicious intent.



About 15 years old



The train on which I travelled to school

If, I surmised, we imagine the case of someone falling from a moving train (indeed, me falling from that train) and landing on the grass verge, I might perhaps suffer severe concussion so that I forgot everything I had ever been taught. But, miraculously, when I came round I was in full command of my mental capacities.

Now, I thought, I would be able see the world as it is, free of all the ideas I have been subjected to, some doubtless sound but others, equally certainly, flawed. Now, I could start afresh and discover the true nature of human existence, without having to separate the metaphorical grain from the chaff. But then it struck me! How would I think without the *words* with which to express, even to myself, my thoughts?

From dreams to theories

There is clearly no escape from this dilemma. And even if, conceivably, I could invent my own language, I could never convey my meaning to anyone else (or at least, without brainwashing *them*). Of course, as I realised much later, these are just the insights of Kant's '*subject-object problem*' and Wittgenstein's statement that '*If a lion could talk we could not understand him*' – but discovering such ideas afresh is the essence of philosophical reflection. At that moment, I believe, I experienced my *philosophical epiphany*.



I rejected my father's theology when a teenager, but undoubtedly something of the spiritual ethos of my parental home has continued to influence my subconscious mind over the last seventy years. For much of that time, when duties permit, I have sought to reconcile the dilemmas presented by the interfaces of mind and matter, reason and emotion, free will and determinism, and art and science. Despite which, I think I remain sane.