

EDITORIAL

Helen Sutherland

Once more the *Journal* opens with the Mary Jacobs Memorial Essay Competition which this year was won by Emma Robson with ‘Spellbound? The Secret Message of *Lolly Willowes*’. This is a biographical reading of Sylvia Townsend Warner’s first novel which argues that the witchcraft which is seen as the secret for which Lolly must search is only a motif, with the real secret being buried much deeper in her (and Warner’s) grief for her father.

Lolly Willowes is also the subject of Jennifer P. Nesbitt’s article ‘A Critical Edition for *Lolly*: On the Benefits of being Unregarded’ which first saw the light of day as a paper delivered at the ‘Revisiting Sylvia Townsend Warner’ Conference held in Dorchester in 2012. In setting her students the task of creating a critical edition of *Lolly Willowes* to include both text and significant published criticism, Nesbitt explores how critical editions concretise the literary canon based on the notion of the writer’s ‘individual achievement’ and the greatness of the text in a move which excludes other writers and texts, confirming their peripheral or outsider status. However, Nesbitt argues that this teaching project reveals that not only is there a substantial body of writing on Warner, but also that this writing has a critical mass –

and I would add that this will itself be increased by Nesbitt's own contribution to Warner studies, be this in the classroom or in print.

One of the real pleasures of studying the life and work of Sylvia Townsend Warner is the range of her interests and skills, and we move from a novel involving witchcraft to her contribution to music in Richard Searle's article, 'One Person's Weight: Sylvia Townsend Warner and Herbert Howells'. Searle demonstrates that the brief correspondence between Warner and Howells, who was to become one of the leading English composers of the twentieth century, throws light on one of the least explored periods of Warner's life before she began keeping the diary which is such a rich source of biographical information.

Gillian Beer's article, 'Music and the Condition of Being Alive: The example of Sylvia Townsend Warner', was delivered as the Hesse Lecture at the 2014 Aldeburgh Festival and continues the musical theme but explores its continuing importance in Warner's writing and in her life.

'History and Myth: *After the Death of Don Juan*' by Mercedes Aguirre, the final article in this year's Journal, explores Warner's novel as a critique of what she regarded as an international class war, rather than a civil war within Spain and is a useful contribution to the study of that novel.

I have included only two very short pieces by Warner, one an uncollected poem and the other a diary entry, part of which was included by Claire Harman in *The Diaries of Sylvia Townsend Warner*. The full entry, however, shows one of those fascinating slippages from public to private, political to domestic, which make the diary such a joy to read.

Finally, I have reviewed *Literature Compass* Vol. 11, Issue 12, December 2014 which is a Special Issue on Sylvia Townsend Warner, edited by Vike Plock and Alex Murray, and adds significantly to what Jennifer Nesbitt has called the 'critical mass' of scholarship on Warner.