

EDITORIAL

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This year saw the first Mary Jacobs Memorial Essay Competition, and I am delighted to open the *Journal* with the winning entry, ‘Sylvia Townsend Warner and the Rhapsodic Pastoral’ by Jane Feaver. It is a particular pleasure to publish this essay, for not only is it extremely well written and well-crafted but it also ties in with Mary Jacobs’ own interest in Warner’s use of the pastoral as a critique of society.

Pastoral as a mode is an important feature of music as well as writing, and in her article ‘That Odd Thing, a Musicologist’ Lynn Mutti explores Warner’s involvement in the revivals of folk music and Tudor church music, arguing that pastoral here is an expression of Britishness, even if that terminology would not have come naturally to Warner’s generation.

This is followed by a new departure for the *Journal*, for I have included *Feeding Squirrels*, a short story by Paul Brownsey. Although fictional it does throw some light on the woman that Sylvia Townsend Warner was in 1949.

This year I have included only one piece by Warner herself but it is a lengthy and splendidly nuanced appraisal of the novelist Elizabeth Gaskell. As one might expect from Warner, it cuts through the criticisms of Gaskell's allegedly deficient understanding of economic theory to focus on her compassion for people living in poverty and her awareness of the dangers of a society fractured not so much by poverty itself but by a widening gap between rich and poor.

The final article is an invited piece by Glen Cavaliero, 'A Rational Romantic: The Importance of Being Sylvia'. Turning to the novels, Cavaliero asks 'What is it that makes her so good as a writer; why is her prose so readable?' and in the process of answering these questions he draws upon a lifetime's reading of Warner to emphasise her sheer skill with, and pleasure in, words.

Finally, we have two book reviews. The first is of *The Akeing Heart. Passionate Attachments and their Aftermath* which focusses on the love triangle between Sylvia Townsend Warner, her partner, Valentine Ackland and Ackland's lover, Elizabeth Wade White. The second review, which is by Gemma Moss, is of *The History of British Women's Writing 1920 – 1945*, edited by Maroula Joannou.