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## Introduction

*Ruth Clayton Windscheffel*

### I

On 29 December 1909, the dark and somewhat sombre memorial to William Ewart Gladstone in London's Strand was garlanded with an extravagant mass of flowers, ribbons and inscriptions in celebration of the centenary of his birth.<sup>1</sup> Londoners re-visited Gladstone's grave in Westminster Abbey, where a special commemorative service was held, and a host of official deputations, from across Britain and throughout Europe, converged on the Strand carrying wreaths to lay at the feet of Hamo Thornycroft's commanding statue. The most extraordinary of these, borne by a special delegation from Bulgaria, was fashioned from solid silver and was intended, by its givers, to celebrate the life and promote the memory of 'a man whose large heart and humanitarian feeling deserved the admiration of all the world'.<sup>2</sup>

In the month leading up to this first Gladstone centenary, man-of-letters Frederic Harrison questioned the sense of marking the anniversary 'within but 11 short years since he was buried in the Abbey by the nation, whilst the fires that he lighted up are still blazing round us, and hot words are still bandied about over his half-closed grave. Were it not better', Harrison entreated *Times*' readers, 'that the centenary should wait until 1998, when all that England, Scotland, and Ireland owes to him can be recorded in the dry light of historic time?'<sup>3</sup> The same day's editorial suggested a compromise: why not 'begin by celebrating only the centenary of the death of a great man', and only 'afterwards, if his fame endured,

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<sup>1</sup> *W.E. Gladstone* (1900-1905; Strand, London) by Sir William 'Hamo' Thornycroft (1850-1925). See Mark Stocker, 'Thornycroft, Sir (William) Hamo (1850-1925)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford, 2004; online edn, Jan 2008 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/36513>].

<sup>2</sup> 'The Gladstone Centenary', *Times*, Thursday, Dec 30, 1909; p. 9; Issue 39156; col C. The Bulgarian wreath remains in the possession of Gladstone's Library, Hawarden and features in the online collection of Welsh heritage and culture, *Gathering the Jewels*, <http://www.gtj.org.uk/en/large/item/GTJ77437/>.

<sup>3</sup> Frederic Harrison, 'Centenaries', *Times*, Tuesday, Nov 23, 1909; p. 14; Issue 39124; col A.

celebrating the bicentenary of his birth’?<sup>4</sup> In Gladstone’s case, the cautious optimism of the editorial proved itself amply justified: in 1998, academics and others commemorated the centenary of Gladstone’s death with a series of high profile events. And in 2009, the bicentenary of Gladstone’s birth, an international conference convened at the University of Chester, with speakers including Lord Briggs and Lord Bew, to re-assess Gladstone’s life and legacy in the light of recent scholarship.

## II

Gladstone has rarely, if ever, been ‘out of print’ historically speaking. In 1903, John Morley’s authorized biography was, in all other respects, only one amongst many estimations of the Grand Old Man to be published.<sup>5</sup> Essays on the lives of notable individual liberals were amongst the earliest publications in British liberal historiography and Gladstone attracted the earliest and most widespread attention, in both Britain and Europe. Many of these works dramatized Gladstone’s personal struggle to find his true vocation, narrating his progression from high Toryism to radical Liberalism, his long dominance of the Liberal party, his gladiatorial contests with Disraeli; they paid tribute to his fervent religious faith, trumpeted his commitment to his family and finally revealed (in a melodramatic dénouement) his destined nemesis: the Irish question.<sup>6</sup> Whilst many of the early publications were

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<sup>4</sup> ‘Centenaries’, *Times*, Tuesday, Nov 23, 1909; p. 11; Issue 39124; col F.

<sup>5</sup> John Morley, *The Life of William Ewart Gladstone*, 3 vols (London, 1903). Notable biographies, pre-Morley, included Sir T.W. Reid, ed., *The Life of William Ewart Gladstone* (London, 1899) and D. Williamson, *Gladstone the Man: a Non-Political Biography* (London, 1898).

<sup>6</sup> For a useful summary of Gladstone’s early ‘commemoration’, see Michael Bentley, ‘Victorian Prime Ministers: Changing Patterns of Commemoration’, in Miles Taylor and Michael Wolff, *The Victorians Since 1901: Histories, Representations and Revisions* (Manchester, 2004), pp. 44-58.

reminiscences by those who had known Gladstone,<sup>7</sup> an impressive body of Gladstonian scholarship rapidly accumulated.<sup>8</sup> After more than a century of close scrutiny, with well over six hundred items published since 1898,<sup>9</sup> scholarly interest in Gladstone remains as intense as the public fascination – both popular and academic – devoted to him during his life. That interest was particularly stimulated in the second half of the twentieth century by the publication of Gladstone’s private diaries, which he had kept from his schooldays until shortly before his death; an Herculean editorial task undertaken by Michael Foot and Colin Matthew between 1968 and 1996.<sup>10</sup>

Up to this point, most studies of Gladstone had focused on his political career.<sup>11</sup> All Gladstone’s major biographers have recognized that there was a great deal more to him than that: all have acknowledged and made good use of non–political evidence and, as a result, extensive information about and analysis of Gladstone’s personal, religious and intellectual life has been made available. Nonetheless, specialist studies, especially of Gladstone’s intellectual and spiritual life, lagged significantly behind those of his political career both in

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<sup>7</sup> L.A. Tollemache, *Talks with Mr. Gladstone* (London, 1898); G. Smith, *My Memory of Gladstone* (London, 1904); H. Gladstone, *After Thirty Years* (London, 1928); Ishbel Maria Gordon, Marchioness of Aberdeen and Temair, ‘Memories of Gladstone’, *Contemporary Review*, 148 (1935), pp. 405–15.

<sup>8</sup> Spearheaded by figures such as A. Tilney Bassett, whose publications included *Gladstone’s Speeches* (London, 1916); Paul Knaplund, *Gladstone’s Foreign Policy* (New York, 1935); J.L. Hammond, *Gladstone and the Irish Nation* (London, 1938); Philip Guedalla, *The Queen and Mr Gladstone: 1845–1879* (London, 1933) and Erich Eyck, *Gladstone* (London, 1938).

<sup>9</sup> Key biographies published up to 1998 include those by Philip Magnus, *Gladstone: a biography* (London, 1954), H.C.G. Matthew, *Gladstone 1809–1898* (Oxford, 1997), Roy Jenkins, *Gladstone* (London, 1995) and Richard Shannon, *Gladstone: Peel’s Inheritor 1809–1865* (London, 1982).

<sup>10</sup> M. R. D. Foot and H. C. G. Matthew, (eds), *The Gladstone Diaries: with Prime Ministerial Correspondence*, 14 vols, (Oxford, 1968–96).

<sup>11</sup> An exception needs to be made here for Travis Crosby’s *The Two Mr Gladstones: A Study in Psychology and History* (New Haven, CT, 1997), which was innovative in its methodological approach and, in many ways, prefigured a wider move within biographical writing more generally.

number and scope, and approaches from the field of cultural and gender history made little impact on the way full-scale portraits of Gladstone were painted. By contrast, the historiography of Gladstone's great political 'rival', Benjamin Disraeli, reflected an entirely different conceptualization of him as an historical individual, with coverage of his orientalism, Jewishness, romanticism and health featuring prominently in the literature.<sup>12</sup>

When David Bebbington and Roger Swift reviewed the state of Gladstone studies in *Gladstone Centenary Essays* in 2000,<sup>13</sup> they demonstrated that the historical focus was still very much on Gladstone's political career. Bebbington pointed to an ongoing debate between historians concerned with Gladstone's relationship with the sphere of popular politics and radicalism, and those whose main interest was in the high politics of the Victorian elite. Another debate focused on the influence of particular individuals on his career. Looking ahead to the future direction of Gladstonian studies, Bebbington noted that a number of full biographies published around the centenary of Gladstone's death were to be praised for 'trying to see Gladstone whole',<sup>14</sup> and expressed the hope that future work on Gladstone would seek to be more integrated than had historically been the case. Indeed the outputs from the 1998 Centenary Conference had been themselves divided into two separately published

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<sup>12</sup> For example, Charles Richmond and Paul Smith, (eds), *The Self-Fashioning of Disraeli, 1818-1851* (Cambridge, 1998); A.S. Wohl, "'Dizzi-Ben-Dizzi': Disraeli as alien", *Journal of British Studies*, 34 (1995): pp. 375-411; Boyd Hilton, 'Disraeli, English Culture, and the Decline of the Industrial Spirit' in Laurence Brockliss and David Eastwood (eds), *A Union of Multiple Identities: the British Isles, 1750-1850* (Manchester; New York, 1997), pp. 44-59; A. S. Wohl, "'Ben JuJu": Representations of Disraeli's Jewishness in the Victorian Political Cartoon', *Jewish History* 10/2 (1996): pp. 89-134.

<sup>13</sup> David Bebbington, 'Introduction' and Roger Swift, 'William Ewart Gladstone: A Select Bibliography' in D. Bebbington and R. Swift, *Gladstone Centenary Essays* (Liverpool, 2000), pp. 1-9; 260-75.

<sup>14</sup> Bebbington, 'Introduction', *Centenary Essays*, p. 5. He cites in particular the biographies by Matthew (1997), Jenkins (1995) and Crosby (1997).

volumes with distinctive content profiles.<sup>15</sup> These, if not divided along as strict political/personal lines as Gladstone's own papers had been in the early years of the twentieth century,<sup>16</sup> still privileged church and state in their presentation of his historical significance.<sup>17</sup> In 2000 it was also foreseen that Gladstone's posthumous legacy would attract increasing scholarly attention, and that the continued development of cultural history and the impact of postmodernism would influence future approaches to Gladstone.<sup>18</sup>

If we survey the field now, the impact of the publication of Gladstone's diaries – with their evidences of the interconnectedness of Gladstone's 'public' and 'private' worlds – is evident. Indeed, it is plain to see in the present volume. In a letter of 1869, part of a carefully guarded correspondence preserved for decades together with the manuscript diaries in Lambeth Palace, Gladstone admitted that: 'Friendships with women have constituted no

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<sup>15</sup> Bebbington and Swift, *Centenary Essays* (2000) and Peter Francis (ed.), *The Gladstone Umbrella: Papers Delivered at the Gladstone Centenary Conference 1998* (Hawarden, 2001). (A third volume, of sermons and speeches delivered at the Centenary, was also published: Peter Francis (ed.), *The Grand Old Man: Sermons and Speeches in Honour of W. E. Gladstone (1809-1898)*, (Hawarden, 2000)).

<sup>16</sup> For an engaging narrative of this complex and fraught process, see R. J. Olney, 'The Gladstone Papers 1822-1977' in John Brooke and Mary Sorensen (eds), *W.E. Gladstone IV: Autobiographical Memoranda 1868-1894* (The Prime Ministers' Papers Series) (London, 1981), appendix 3, pp. 118-130. For further details of the exceptional treatment of the manuscript diaries, see M.R.D. Foot, 'Introduction' in M.R.D. Foot (ed.) *The Gladstone Diaries I 1825-1832* (Oxford, 1968), pp. xix-xlix.

<sup>17</sup> Thus the *Centenary Essays* contained chapters on politics and state religion, with only David Bebbington's chapter on 'Gladstone and Homer' (pp. 57-74) representative of Gladstone's intellectual concerns. *The Gladstone Umbrella* (2001) was also dominated by issues of church and state, empire and Ireland but was also the place where the few papers on domestic issues and Gladstone in a broader cultural context were placed. For instance, Christine d'Haussy, 'Gladstone, France and His French Contemporaries' (pp. 115-136), Joseph S. Meisel, 'The Word in Man: Gladstone and the Great Preachers' (pp. 137-155) and Linda Morris, 'Catherine Gladstone and Victorian Philanthropy' (pp. 35-49).

<sup>18</sup> Bebbington, 'Introduction', *Centenary Essays*, p. 7.

small part of my existence'.<sup>19</sup> Evidence from the unexpurgated diaries and this associated private correspondence showed how varied and how historically important his relationships with women had been, ranging as they had done from influential aristocrats, such as the Duchess of Sutherland, to the prostitutes that he encountered during his 'rescue work'. Over the last ten years, Gladstone's relations with women have received serious scholarly attention.<sup>20</sup>

Recent studies of Gladstone have also been facilitated and enriched by the interrogation of other previously ignored or underused sources. These include his personal book collection, part of which he used to establish a residential library in his home village, at Hawarden, in Flintshire, North Wales, just before his death.<sup>21</sup> Many of the works in that collection were annotated by Gladstone and thus provide offer a myriad of entry points into his complex mental world and intellectual outlook. As such, it has provided much material for new perspectives on Gladstone. Ruth Windscheffel, for example, in *Reading Gladstone* (2008), has investigated Gladstone's life, activity and reputation as a reader, book collector and humanitarian scholar.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> W.E. Gladstone to Laura Thistlethwayte, 25 October 1869, reproduced in *Gladstone Diaries*, vol. 8, p. 570. The surviving Gladstone-Thistlethwayte correspondence was deemed sensitive enough to be lodged with the manuscript diaries under the care of successive Archbishops of Canterbury.

<sup>20</sup> See, especially, Anne Isba, *Gladstone and Women* (London, 2006) 'and her 'Trouble with Helen: the Gladstone Family Crisis, 1846-1848', *History*, 88/290 (2003), pp. 249-61; Ros Aitken, 'A Tender Tyranny: William and Catherine Gladstone as Victorian Parents', *Flintshire Historical Society Journal* 38 (2010), pp. 155-81; Jenny West, 'Gladstone and Laura Thistlethwayte, 1865-75', *Historical Research* 80/209 (2007), pp. 368-92; Leonore Davidoff, 'Kinship as a Categorical Concept: A Case Study of Nineteenth Century English Siblings', *Journal of Social History*, 39/2 (2005), pp. 411-28.

<sup>21</sup> St Deiniol's Library was renamed Gladstone's Library in 2010.

<sup>22</sup> R.C. Windscheffel, *Reading Gladstone* (Basingstoke, 2008). For other work which has particularly benefited from the evidences of Gladstone's book collection and his literary writings, see R.C. Windscheffel, 'Gladstone and Scott: Family, Identity, and Nation', *Scottish Historical Review*, 86/1/221 (2007), pp. 69-95; William R. McKelvy, *The English Cult of*

The ‘linguistic turn’, with its attendant privileging of discourse–constructed identity, has also laid its mark on Gladstonian studies and has fundamentally challenged many of the previously accepted frames of references common to studies of Gladstonian liberalism, principally the undergirding operations of class as a personal and tribal identifier and electoral motivator.<sup>23</sup> Notable amongst this body of scholarship has been the work of Joseph Meisel, whose monograph, *Public Speech and the Culture of Public Life in the Age of Gladstone*,<sup>24</sup> examines in great depth the intermingling linguistic and rhetorical worlds of the key constituencies of Victorian public life: politics, the law and the church, underlining – as literary scholar David Wayne Thomas has emphasized – the all–round interests and shared languages of elite Victorians.<sup>25</sup>

Gladstone studies have also been influenced by a growing interest in the visual and material culture of the Victorian period.<sup>26</sup> With the exception of Queen Victoria and other

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*Literature: Devoted Readers, 1774-1880* (Charlottesville, VA; London, 2007); Anne Isba, *Gladstone and Dante: Victorian Statesman, Medieval Poet* (Woodbridge, 2006).

<sup>23</sup> Spearheaded by historians such as James Vernon, Patrick Joyce and Jon Lawrence, whose influential book *Speaking for the People: Party, Language and Popular Politics in England, 1867-1914* (Cambridge, 1998) was published in Gladstone’s centenary year.

<sup>24</sup> Joseph S. Meisel, *Public Speech and the Culture of Public Life in the Age of Gladstone* (New York, 2001). Other recent studies featuring analysis of Gladstone from a linguistic or rhetorical perspective include: Kate Campbell, ‘W.E. Gladstone W.T. Stead, Matthew Arnold and a New Journalism: Cultural Politics in the 1880s’, *Victorian Periodicals Review*, 36/1 (2003), pp. 20-40; Hanneke Hoekstra, ‘De kracht van het gesproken woord: politieke mobilisatie en natievorming bij Kuyper en Gladstone’, *Tijdschrift voor Geschiedenis*, 116 (2003), pp. 494-511 [‘The Power of the Spoken Word: Political Mobilization and Nation Building by Kuyper and Gladstone’]; Iain McLean, *Rational Choice and British Politics: An Analysis of Rhetoric and Manipulation from Peel to Blair* (Oxford, 2001).

<sup>25</sup> David Wayne Thomas, *Cultivating Victorians: Liberal Culture and the Aesthetic* (Philadelphia, PA, 2004).

<sup>26</sup> For a rapid summary of historians’ and others’ engagements with visual culture, see Peter Burke, *Eyewitnessing: The Uses of Images as Historical Evidence* (London, 2001) and for a deployment of the ‘material turn’ in history and cognate disciplines, see Tony Bennett and Patrick Joyce (eds) *Material Powers: Cultural Studies, History and the Material Turn* (Routledge, 2010).

members of the Royal Family, Gladstone was the most represented public figure in Victorian Britain and yet, until recently, little had been done by historians to interrogate these images to uncover evidence of Victorian codes of masculinity both hegemonic and apostate. There is now a growing literature, also bolstered by important advances in gender history and, especially, studies of masculinity, to which the present volume contributes further, offering important insights into the role and political significance of representation in Victorian culture.<sup>27</sup>

Several recent studies have reassessed Gladstone's relationships with his political contemporaries and focused on him as part of a wider politico-cultural grouping. For instance, in *The Rule of Freedom*, Patrick Joyce considered how Gladstone played a facilitating role, 'linking Oxbridge to a new sort of governing class' in his civil service reforms,<sup>28</sup> whilst Roland Quinault has reassessed Gladstone's relationship with Disraeli.<sup>29</sup> Both, in their different ways, have successfully problematized any simplistic understanding of Gladstone's relations with his political contemporaries by revealing complex webs of shifting alliances and dense interplays between personal feelings and professional agendas.

Equally important insights have been gained by looking at Gladstone as an agent of ideological and doctrinal transmission within his wider social and cultural framework. In his seminal study of the Grand Old Man, *The Mind of Gladstone: Religion, Homer and*

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<sup>27</sup> See, in particular, Detlev Mares, 'Die visuelle Inszenierung des modernen Politikers. William Ewart Gladstone in der "Illustrated London News"' in Ute Schneider, Lutz Raphael, Sonja Hillerich (eds), *Dimensionen der Moderne. Festschrift fuer Christof Dipper* (Frankfurt; Berlin; Berne, 2008), pp. 309-330 ['The Visual Representation of the Modern Politician. William Ewart Gladstone in the "Illustrated London News"']; R. C. Windscheffel, 'Politics, Portraiture and Power: Reassessing the Public Image of William Ewart Gladstone' in Matthew McCormack, (ed.), *Public Men: Political Masculinities in Modern Britain* (Basingstoke, 2007), pp. 93-122.

<sup>28</sup> Patrick Joyce, *The Rule of Freedom: Liberalism and the Modern City* (London, 2003), pp. 30, 122ff.

<sup>29</sup> Roland Quinault, 'Gladstone and Disraeli: A Reappraisal of their Relationship', *History* 91/304 (2006), pp. 557-76.

*Politics*,<sup>30</sup> David Bebbington traces the ways in which myriad intellectual influences worked on creating - and changing - the mind of Gladstone and how he, in turn, transmitted these ideas and conclusions to those around him. Bebbington constructs a persuasive chronology which charts Gladstone's (often apparently bizarre) developments whilst making us believe that there was a serious and organic rationale behind them. His interpretation elucidates how Gladstone prioritized and integrated his diverse interests and managed to negotiate the private and public aspects of his life. The book undermines the stubborn view that Gladstone's mature liberalism was shaped principally by one obdurate old man's desire to hold onto power, whilst possessing no discernable motivating philosophy.<sup>31</sup> That view has also been undermined by a number of recent studies of Gladstone's dealings with Ireland and the long gestation of his 'conversion' to Irish Home Rule, most notably in Eugenio Biagini's *British Democracy and Irish Nationalism 1876-1906* (2007),<sup>32</sup> and in key essays presented in D. George Boyce and Alan O'Day's edited collection, *Gladstone and Ireland* (2010).<sup>33</sup> Equally questionable, as the late Michael Partridge observed in his 2003 biography of Gladstone, is

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<sup>30</sup> D. W. Bebbington, *The Mind of Gladstone: Religion, Homer and Politics* (Oxford, 2004).

<sup>31</sup> See, for example, Alistair Cooke and John Vincent, *The Governing Passion: Cabinet Government and Party Politics in Britain, 1885-6* (Brighton, 1974); David A. Hamer, 'Gladstone: the Making of a Political Myth', *Victorian Studies*, 22 (1978): pp. 29-50; Richard Shannon, *Gladstone: Peel's inheritor 1809-1865* (London, 1982), *Gladstone: Heroic Minister, 1865-1898* (London, 1999) and, most recently, *Gladstone: God and Politics* (London; New York, 2007); David J. Dutton, *A History of the Liberal Party in the Twentieth Century* (Basingstoke, 2004).

<sup>32</sup> Eugenio F. Biagini, *British Democracy and Irish Nationalism 1876-1906* (Cambridge, 2007).

<sup>33</sup> See, especially, John-Paul McCarthy, 'History and Pluralism: Gladstone and the Maynooth Grant Controversy' and Ian Sheehy "'A Deplorable Narrative": Gladstone, R. Barry O'Brien and the "Historical Argument" for Home Rule, 1880-90' in D. George Boyce and Alan O'Day, *Gladstone and Ireland: Politics, Religion and Nationality in the Victorian Age* (Basingstoke, 2010), pp. 13-40; 110-139. See also, Alan O'Day, 'Gladstone and Irish Nationalism: Achievement and Reputation' and D. George Boyce, 'In the Front Rank of the Nation: Gladstone and the Unionists of Ireland, 1868-1893', in Bebbington and Swift, *Centenary Essays*, pp. 163-83, 184-201.

the thesis that Gladstone bore significant responsibility for the subsequent problems faced by the Liberal Party after his death.<sup>34</sup>

Gladstone's standing as an international statesman has remained a touchstone for modern politicians and his reputation in this field continues to receive significant attention from historians. This key aspect of his legacy was initially acknowledged by J.L. Hammond in an essay entitled 'Gladstone and the League of Nations Mind' in a *festschrift* for Gilbert Murray in 1936.<sup>35</sup> Far from being simply a British prime minister, Gladstone had achieved a global reputation during his lifetime, and interest in Gladstone the international statesman has regularly been revived by a succession of international crises ranging from the First World War to the recent western interventions in the Middle East. At the 2001 Labour Party Conference, for example, Prime Minister Tony Blair invoked the words and the memory of his predecessor when he called for a new world-order based on interdependent community, social justice and the moral duty to act in the interests of those 'living in want and squalor' in 'the mountain ranges of Afghanistan'.<sup>36</sup> Historians, journalists and cartoonists were quick to identify the overt Gladstonian parallels and Blair was swiftly re-branded 'Tony Gladstone'.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Michael Partridge, *Gladstone* (London, 2003), pp. 250–1. The 'crisis' of Edwardian Liberalism was famously delineated in George Dangerfield, *The Strange Death of Liberal England* (London, 1936).

<sup>35</sup> J.L. Hammond, 'Gladstone and the League of Nations Mind' in J.A.K. Thomson and A.J. Toynbee (eds) *Essays in Honour of Gilbert Murray* (London, 1936), pp. 95-118.

<sup>36</sup> 'Tony Blair's Speech to the Labour Party Conference, Brighton 2001 (Part Two)', *The Guardian*, Tuesday 2 October 2001, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/politics/2001/oct/02/labourconference.labour7>. Accessed 20 May 2011. On 26 November 1879, at the Foresters' Hall, Dalkeith, Gladstone had implored his audience to: 'remember that the sanctity of life in the hill villages of Afghanistan among the winter snows, is as inviolable in the eye of Almighty God as can be your own'. W. E. Gladstone, *Political Speeches in Scotland, November and December 1879* (Edinburgh, 1879), pp. 92-4.

<sup>37</sup> See 'Tony Blair's speech at the Labour party conference in Blackpool 2002', *The Guardian*, Tuesday 1 October 2002; Richard Shannon, 'History lessons', *The Guardian*, Thursday 4 October 2001, p. A2; and Timothy Garton Ash, 'Gambling on America', *The Guardian*, Thursday 3 Oct 2002, p. 19 (illustrated with a caricature of Blair as Gladstone by Nicola

The continued relevance of Gladstone as a political influence and international icon accurately reflects Gladstone's political, cultural and historiographical status, which has endured over the more than hundred years since his death. In recent years the prominence given to Gladstone in this field has also been stimulated by the veritable explosion of historical interest in international and global history.<sup>38</sup> The present volume reflects these preoccupations by investigating the contemporary resonances of Gladstone's contributions towards ethical internationalism and humanitarianism in the complex, transnational world of war, peace, empire and global trade in which he operated, and by emphasizing the longstanding character of Gladstone's concern with international issues, which was apparent earlier in his career than has previously been appreciated.

### III

The following volume is composed of five thematic sections, which, whilst free-standing, are nevertheless undergirded and informed by the book's overarching theme: Gladstone's historical and ongoing reputation and legacy. This abiding preoccupation is signalled by the opening and closing chapters, penned by the late Frank Turner and Eugenio Biagini. The entire volume is supported by Roger Swift's extensive, thematic bibliography, which further

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Jennings). For further discussion of Blair's representation of himself as Gladstonian, see the chapters by Quinault, Schreuder and Wrigley in this volume.

<sup>38</sup> See, with reference to Gladstone: William Mulligan, 'Gladstone and the Primacy of Foreign Policy', in William Mulligan and Brendan Simms (eds), *The Primacy of Foreign Policy in British History, 1660-2000: How Strategic Concerns Shaped Modern Britain* (Basingstoke, 2010), pp. 181-96; Peter J. Cain, 'Radicalism, Gladstone and the Liberal Critique of Disraelian "Imperialism"' in Duncan Bell (ed.), *Victorian Visions of Global Order: Empire and International Relations in Nineteenth-Century Political Thought* (Ideas in Context, 86) (Cambridge, 2007), pp. 215-38; Martin Ceadel, 'Gladstone and a Liberal Theory of International Relations' in Peter Ghosh and Lawrence Goldman, (eds), *Politics and Culture in Victorian Britain: Essays in Memory of Colin Matthew* (Oxford, 2006), pp. 74-94; C. Brad Fought, 'An Imperial Prime Minister? W.E. Gladstone and India, 1880-1885', *Journal of the Historical Society*, 6/4 (2006), pp. 555-78.

testifies to the enduring attraction and continuing historical relevance of William Ewart Gladstone.

‘Reputation’ is the subject with which the first section is crucially concerned. This part offers a sophisticated and interlocking reading of Gladstone’s political ideologies, affiliations, and influences developed and established over a long and eventful life. Frank Turner’s broad, culturally informed reading of Gladstone’s relationship with liberalism tackles head on many unhelpful assumptions which persist about this relationship in both Gladstone Studies and Victorian Studies more broadly. Turner’s chapter is followed by a reassessment, by Richard Gaunt, of Gladstone’s long relationship with Conservatism through the lens of his relationship with Robert Peel. A broad-ranging consideration of Gladstone and Labour politics, from the days of Macdonald to Blair, follows from Chris Wrigley. These contributions place Gladstone (and his legacy) firmly in a full political and cultural context – something that his biographers have often failed to do.

Reputation and image are tightly intertwined concepts, and Part Two of this collection has a pair of matched chapters analysing his Gladstone’s image as perceived by his Victorian contemporaries. The first of these, by Joseph Meisel, focuses on representations and discussion of Gladstone’s face amongst artists, parliamentarians and the public. It draws on a range of rarely-before-used iconographical source material to produce a chapter which reveals fresh new insights into the phenomena of Gladstone’s personal charisma and political celebrity. Meisel’s chapter is balanced by Mark Nixon’s reading of an important and previously largely neglected corpus of source material – the material culture artefacts produced and paraded by political adherents during the Gladstonian era. His analysis of this material sheds new light on the character and motivation of Gladstone’s supporters and admirers, who ranged across the Victorian class divides.

Part Three - Personal Questions - is composed of three chapters each of which contributes to an intricate picture of the reflexive relationship between Gladstone's private life and preoccupations and his public profile and responsibilities. Gladstone's friendships are the topic first under discussion by Denis Paz. By focusing on a number of Gladstone's most important and longest enduring friendships, Paz demonstrates the tensions as well as the advantages of having 'friends in high places'. As Gladstone's popular reputation grew in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, many ordinary people sought to see him in his home environment at Hawarden. There his frequent engagement in tree-felling attracted much public interest. Peter Sewter's chapter shows that Gladstone's arboreal activities were not merely designed to produce press headlines but were also driven by his interest in conservation, his desire for opportunities to spend time with his sons, as well as his commitment to remaining fit and healthy. In recent years there has been an increasing interest in and study of the important relationship between politicians' public and private lives and their state of health.<sup>39</sup> In the final chapter in this section, Jenny West considers Gladstone's health at the height of his career, particularly in relation to his political activities. West demonstrates that the connection between Gladstone's health and his performance as a politician was far more complicated than historians have previously acknowledged.

Part Four explores Gladstone's life and career as an Official. From his earliest days in public life, Gladstone was closely involved with the workings of the British State both at home and in the empire. He contributed largely to that unseen but always felt 'official mind' detected by Ronald Robinson and John Gallagher in their seminal work on British

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<sup>39</sup> See, for example, William Arthur Speck, "'The end of all existence is debarred me": Disraeli's depression 1826-30', *The Historian* 102 (2009): pp. 6-10; Doreen Leach and Julie A. Beckwith, 'Dr. John Mitchell Bruce's notes relating to the last illness and death of Benjamin Disraeli', *Journal of Medical Biography*, 9/3 (2001): pp. 161-66.

imperialism.<sup>40</sup> Allen Warren's chapter looks at the economic and financial aspects of Gladstone's long-running relationship with the government of Ireland, particularly with reference to his role as Chancellor of the Exchequer in the 1850s. That experience greatly influenced his subsequent approach to Irish issues, notably home rule. Brad Faught's assessment of Gladstone's brief period as British Commissioner Extraordinary to the Ionian Islands in the late 1850s demonstrates how he acquired first-hand experience of nascent colonial nationalism on the margins of the European world, which subsequently proved useful when he became embroiled in the international crisis, which contemporaries termed the Eastern Question, in the late 1870s and early 1880s.

The volume's final section – Ethics and Internationalism – builds on two important themes touched on in the preceding part. It begins by tackling two aspects of Gladstone's internationally engaged political life that, perhaps more than any others, have up to now been surrounded by misconception and lack of rigorous analysis: Gladstone's attitudes to war and to the abolition of slavery. Roland Quinault's chapter challenges the longstanding assumption that Gladstone's international politics were consistently wedded to the ideas of 'peace, retrenchment, and reform' and investigates Gladstone's involvements with war in both theory and practice. He concludes that Gladstone did not favour peace at any price and thought that war, in certain circumstances, was morally justified. Gladstone's example in that respect, moreover, provided support for Britain's involvement in the two world wars of the twentieth century.

Gladstone's support for internationalism still has contemporary resonance but his attitude to slavery was much less enlightened by modern standards. His initial reluctance to condemn slavery and his dependence on profits from it has recently been pointed out by

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<sup>40</sup> Ronald Robinson, John Gallagher and Alice Denny, *Africa and the Victorians: The Official Mind of Imperialism* (London, 1961).

Roland Quinault.<sup>41</sup> Richard Huzzey's chapter examines Gladstone's opposition to the British government's attempts to use the Royal Navy to suppress the slave trade, illustrating the complexity of his stance, which was influenced as much by pragmatic as by moral considerations. It also provided a clear precedent for his policy as prime minister when he resisted humanitarian demands for military intervention and colonial annexation both in Africa and the Pacific region. On this issue, Gladstone's outlook – commercial, political and moral – was that of a convinced internationalist, with respect not only to the British Empire but also to the nations of Europe and indeed the worldwide cause of humanity. The final chapter in this section, by Derek Schreuder, presents a survey of Gladstone's international involvement and legacy which recreates and explicates Gladstone's global 'world view' through an interrogation of three interlocking themes: his international ideas, his imperial and foreign policies in action and – finally – the long-term influence of those ideas and practices. It concludes with a consideration of why Gladstone remains such a redolent source for idealist international theory in current debates – not least over strategic but ethically responsible roles for major powers within the international order.

The final chapter comprises an epilogue from Eugenio Biagini in which Gladstone's legacy from his death to the present day is considered. Touching on many of the themes explored by other contributors to the volume, Biagini explores key aspects of twentieth- and early twenty first-century Gladstonianism, focusing on the enduring significance of Gladstone's attitudes to the relationship between state and society and his 'politics of humanitarianism'.

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<sup>41</sup> Roland Quinault, 'Gladstone and Slavery', *The Historical Journal*, 52/2 (2009): pp.363-383.

Contrary to the expectations of sceptics like Frederic Harrison, interest in Gladstone shows no sign of diminishing, despite his ‘stormburst of centenaries’.<sup>42</sup> The reluctance of such near contemporaries to believe that they could pass enduring historical judgements upon the lives and reputations of their fellow Victorians was understandable: ‘In such circumstances it is absolutely impossible for any man to acquire the detachment and the perspective which are indispensable if centenary essays are to be anything more than echoes of the partial and prejudiced appraisements current during the hero’s lifetime.’<sup>43</sup> As we have seen, many of these early estimations were partial or over privileged the importance of certain aspects of their subject’s life and experience. However, some of these insights have stood the test of time: Gladstone, for good or ill, remains the international icon his contemporaries deemed him to be and he also remains resistant to any type of neat categorization. These bicentenary essays offer their series of fresh perspectives in a spirit which appreciates these continuities as much as it celebrates the welcome breaking of new ground. As such it is hoped that this volume will act as a catalyst for further studies of a man who, in so many ways, epitomized the diverse aspects of the Victorian age.

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<sup>42</sup> Frederic Harrison, ‘Centenaries’, *Times* Tuesday, Nov 23, 1909; p. 14; Issue 39124; col. A.

<sup>43</sup> ‘The Gladstone Centenary’, *Times*, Wednesday, Dec 29, 1909; p. 7; Issue 39155; col D.