

SUSAN MANNING

I think my motto for Sue would be a version of Ezra Pound's injunction, 'Make it New' – not in Pound's sense of a trail-blazing novelty that broke with the past; rather, a quality of thought quiet in pitch but penetrating in ways that transform the familiar and open new directions. Sue made almost everything she touched or did 'new'.

Her very application to Newnham presented us with a problem then completely unfamiliar. At interview she explained, very cogently, that before beginning a Cambridge course she planned a year studying French at the University of Lyons: an ideal programme, but there was no provision in those days for such irregularity in the scheme of things. However, the Admissions Office was persuaded, and Sue became (to the best of my knowledge) the first student to take a Gap Year, proving quite how valuable that can be.

As a student she consistently took on 'new' subjects. She learned Greek, for example, as an extra. Following paths of her own she took on writers that few academics were then reading. For lack of formal guidance her work *had* to be independent. She was discovering the 18thC through *Scottish* eyes: Hume, Boswell (even Ossian) and Burns, with a long essay on Grassic Gibbon in Part I of the English Tripos. Then, in Part II, a dissertation on Walter Scott. This time treating an unfashionable subject carried a price tag. When it was returned to her later she found, left accidentally inside the coversheet, a note from the first examiner to the second, saying that since this was a topic he knew little about he was only prepared to award a II.i mark. The second examiner clearly didn't know enough either to challenge this. I've never forgiven them! If we're all now reading Scott again, it is in good part because Sue was making her own serious contribution to a revolution in historical perception.

Her research went on to initiate a new understanding of the complex 'provinciality' of Scottish and American literary culture, from the Scottish Enlightenment through the American puritanism of the 19thC. This took her from Cambridge to the National Library of Scotland to work on Scottish sources, and then, on a Harkness Fellowship to the University of Virginia, where she had the good fortune to work under the distinguished Americanist, David Levin.

This was when our exchanges of letters really began. One announced another 'new' element: the arrival of Laura! Sue came back to a Research Fellowship at Newnham, then a full teaching

Fellowship, and (in 1988) a Faculty Lectureship. Working and teaching collaboratively with Sue is the greatest pleasure of my working life, just as watching the Manning family expand and grow up is a built-in part of our family life. (Dizzy's acrobatic exploits were legendary, as were her novel ways of learning Italian; Sophie attended her first College seminar in a carrycot at barely month old.) All Sue's students (our son Ben included) know the imaginative authority and discipline of her teaching; all respond to her manner, so open, exacting and natural. Like so many others, I know her courage and professionalism, the intellectual integrity that made her so infinitely rewarding a colleague.

The Chair at Edinburgh, and then the Institute, gave full scope to her administrative genius and the range of her interdisciplinary skills, now international in reach. Once again, ideas and knowledge were being 'made new'. Sue is, in Onora O'Neill's words, totally outstanding: intellectually, in judgment and in human warmth. We've all shared the human warmth through Sue's gift for friendship. The marvelous achievement, on so many fronts; the more in that it came despite hazards of health – hazards which she was endlessly inventive at overcoming, learning new tricks at every twist of the road. Only Howard will know the real costs. Her last email to me (on 4 January) was full of family news: she'd despatched the book she wants to call *The Poetics of Character* to the publishers, and was brimming with ideas for the next project. She was making things new to the last: a truly rare spirit.

Jean Gooder

25 January 2013