

# Philobiblon



History (particularly women's history),

book and theatre reviews,  
politics, science and art.

Always feminist.

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 20, 2005

## Childless, happy AND altruistic

I'm a fan of [Lionel Shriver](#) as an author, but as a social commentator she's way off-beam.

Writing in

[this weekend's Guardian](#), she says:

"After talking myself blue about "maternal ambivalence", I have come full circle, rounding on the advice to do as I say, not as I did. I may not, for my own evil purposes, regret giving motherhood a miss, but I've had it with being the Anti-Mom, and would like to hand the part to someone else."

While I can sympathise with her being fed-up with a one-line media stereotype, she then goes on at great length to talk about her desire for her own life as her own "evil purposes", saying of her (relatively) child-free generation: "We measure the value of our lives within the brackets of our own births and deaths, and don't especially care what happens once we're dead."

What tosh. I'm childless myself, entirely and absolutely by choice, and know lots of other people who've also chosen not to have children, but this means we have more time and energy to devote to the present and future of our societies and our world. While parents have chosen, as is their right, to put vast amounts of time and energy into helping usually at most a couple of human beings face the future, we're doing the voluntary community work, conducting the environmental campaigns and generally facing the issues that take entire societies into the future.

To say that this is more "selfish" than putting the same effort into passing on a few of your genes is ridiculous. Indeed there's a case to be made that if anyone is being selfish it is the parents - certainly those who have more than their replacement allocation of two children.

European societies, as Shriver discusses, are getting very exercised by their ageing social structures, but the world's population is still growing at a great rate - probably far beyond its sustainable carrying capacity. All that needs to happen is for it to be more evenly distributed.

And if a reminder of the enormous pressures to which we are subjecting this fragile planet were needed, two stories in the *Guardian* today certainly provide it.

I was struck by a line in a story about [China building a railway to Tibet](#): "The roof of the

world is melting." Then there was the piece about how [budget airlines are taking off in India](#).

The railway is taken as just one symbol of that "those billions are travelling, earning and consuming more than ever before". But the very foundations of the track, and of the future, are put at risk by that very growth, even though the trouble the engineers are having with the permafrost melting is entirely down to Western over-consumption over the past two centuries.

The human race can't afford to have them consuming at Western levels, yet if there is to be any hope of convincing them not to do so, we need to dramatically cut back ourselves. The childless are helping with that problem, through that choice, and many others.

So if you're looking for a new "anti-Mom", here I am.

POSTED BY NATALIE BENNETT AT 9/20/2005 11:52:00 PM 

**1 COMMENTS:**

 Anonymous said...

I completely agree. The moder human must avoid being simply a gene container and transmitter, and not having children and concentrating efforts in a better world is without any doubt an excellent and totally humanistic ption

6/11/2006 11:46:00 PM

[POST A COMMENT](#)

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**QUOTE OF THE WEEK**

"There appears no condition in human life more afflictive and destructive to happiness & morals than... an ill-advised marriage."

[Rebecca Gratz](#)

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**ABOUT ME**



[Natalie Bennett](#)

I'm a freelance writer and commentator based in London  
You'll also find me on

[My London Your London,](#)



a cultural guide featuring reviews of theatre, exhibitions and attractions.

[My personal website](#)

And don't miss the 19th-century "blog", [Diaries of a Lady of Quality](#).

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#### ABOUT THIS BLOG

[Why Philobiblon?](#)

[This blog's 'patron saint' \(Anne Clifford\)](#)

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[Check on the latest on the Carnival of Feminists](#)

Other Carnivals you'll find here:

[Carnival of Feminists No 1](#)

[History Carnival No 14](#)

[Carnavalesque No 4](#)

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#### BLOGS ON WHICH I POST

[Feminist Blogs](#)



[» books](#)

[» culture](#)

» [politics](#)

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**My favourite charity is**  
[Ethiopiaid](#), particularly for its work in supporting the Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital. They say £100 pays for an operation that usually restores the health of a woman whose body has been almost destroyed by childbirth. I doubt many charities do more with your cash.

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Search

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**FAVOURITE POSTS**

[Women Latin Poets](#)

[Menstruation: Why is it so hard to say the word?](#)

[Reading Medieval Families](#)

[The Gender Politics of ICT](#)

[Frida Kahlo](#)

[Women and learned helplessness](#)

[Monstrous births](#)

[Memory meme \(ten books, one author, one reader\)](#)

[Women in early Australia](#)

[Meet Sheela Na Gig](#)

[Pillow-blogging \(Sei Shonagon\)](#)  
[Also here and here](#)

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**PUZZLES OUTSTANDING**

[Mrs Sarah Wilson, poetess \(above\)](#)



[Aemilius Reginus: grave in Syria](#)

[Miss Stuart, British Library reader](#)

[A blogography \(Mary Lady Broughton, the jailer\)](#)

(If you know something about any of these characters, please write!)

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**BLOGROLL**

(Roughly categorised: If you really object to your category, complain and I'll probably change it.)

**HISTORY**

[Scribbling woman](#)

[Early modern notes](#)

[The Diary of Samuel Pepys](#)

[Classics in Contemporary Culture](#)

[The little professor](#)

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[Gillian Polack](#)  
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[Screed](#)  
[The Happy Feminist](#)  
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[BOOKS AND WRITING](#)

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[Miss Snark, the literary agent](#)

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MISCELLANEOUS

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EN FRANCAIS

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[Versac](#)

[Pecia](#)

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Blogs are listed more or less in the order that I found them.

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WEBSITES

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[Newseum](#)

[Thesis Canada](#)

[Directory of open access journals](#)

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[Women Watch](#)

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[I'm Not Sorry](#)

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I'm promoting objective, factual information on:

[Roe v. Wade](#)

[abortion](#)

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WEBRINGS

[British Blog](#)



< # Girls Blog UK ? >

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