



News from the Faculty of English

Volume 16 | Winter 2016

Now we are in control

As I write this, in the vivid azure of the South of France, daunted by the prospect of taking over as Chair of the Faculty Board from my predecessor Steve Connor, I find it difficult to ignore the fear and – alas – expectation that the UK tertiary sector is about to be hit by a tsunami. Everyone I have encountered on my vacation, most especially the French locals in our holiday village, has wondered what on earth the UK population was thinking when it voted to leave the European Union. I suppose that many readers of our Faculty Newsletter might imagine that, given the nature of our subject and its requirement that, *grosso modo*, one be native level competent in the English language, Brexit will have little impact on the Faculty's work. So one might think that things will carry on as normal, as if there ever is a normal. It is true that we do not teach many undergraduates from other European countries – at the time of writing about 10% of the full cohort – but at postgraduate level this rises to just under 25%.

However, once one stands back and surveys the larger context in which our work, teaching and research take place, the storm clouds begin to gather rather more perplexingly. The Faculty, in common with all the other Faculties and Departments in the University, receives resources – most significantly in terms of monetary value in the form of salaries paid to our establishment, including of course administrative staff – that are complexly accounted for and distributed by the central administration. We still rather quaintly refer to this financial resource as 'the chest'. Whenever I say this I want to retract it in case I have given the impression that there is indeed some wonderful, jewel-bedecked medieval vessel into which gold coins are

continuously deposited, and that I have inadvertently revealed its existence and whereabouts – 'Oh, haven't you seen it under the floor of the Council Room in the Old Schools?' Chest there is not, but the distribution of funds that find their way into the School we are a member of – the School of Arts and Humanities – is determined by the resources of the University as a whole. We do not get our hands on the many millions our colleagues might raise in grants for Engineering projects – anyone interested in setting up an interdisciplinary English-Engineering project should write to me immediately, perhaps 'the language of surface tension'? – but the Resource Allocation Model (the formula the University uses for distributing funds across all sectors of our activity) does mean that the Faculty's resources are deeply dependent on the University's.

So it sharpens the mind to think that between 2007 and 2014 the University of Cambridge received €424M, approximately 24% of its entire research funding, under the EU's Framework Programme 7. Indeed its annual inflow of funds in the form of grants from EU sources is at least €45M. The University is incredibly successful in winning European Research Council grants – in fact it is more successful than any other HEI in Europe. Not only in the UK, but in *Europe*. By November of last year, this totalled one hundred and fifty five European Research Council grants, or 22% of all grants awarded. Under another European Union initiative, called Horizon 2020, the University of Cambridge received the highest amount of EU funding of any HEI; as of February 2016 this amounted to £98,543, 527.

Although the arts and humanities are less practised in, and have far less experience with, grant applications of the type overseen by the European Research Council, this is rapidly

changing. The Faculty at present hosts one such project, Crossroads of Knowledge, whose Principal Investigator is Dr Subha Mukerjee and whose team of researchers occupy a well-situated corner office on the second floor of our Faculty building. Such grants are not suited to every project and much of the extraordinary research that takes place in our Faculty and indeed in the School of Arts and Humanities is carried out by imaginative, energetic and very talented solo researchers. This is very unlikely to change, but as the university sector in the UK tries to adapt to a changing political and economic environment it will have little choice but to seek funding from outside agencies. If we are cut off from European Union resources it will leave a very large hole in our balance sheet.

It is not simply a matter of funding, of cash. Once again, although the academic and intellectual profile of disciplines is very far from identical, it is nevertheless the case that my colleagues, like others across the University, have colleagues outside 9 West Road or indeed Cambridge. We might not be technically engaged in a collaborative research project, funded by the grand agencies which foster such types of research, but we certainly have connections to other researchers and research groups. The University has calculated that somewhere in the region of 100,000 collaborative links have been established between researchers in the UK and those in other European Union countries. Twenty-three per cent of academic staff come from other European Union countries and 27% of our post-doctoral researchers also come from outside the UK. It is not, of course, simply a matter of research staff. The University of Cambridge is a very large corporation that employs very many people as administrators and support staff. And the University is a major employer in the region and

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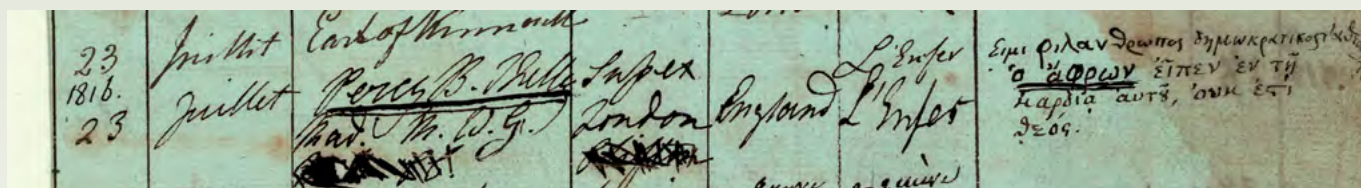
contributor to its immediate locale. Universities UK, for example, calculate that EU students generate £247.5M for our regional economy.

Let us also consider what a 'hard Brexit' might mean for our students. When I took my degree here in Cambridge no one dreamt of spending time away from the comfort and support of the Whim on Trinity Street – does anyone remember their extensive menu of wicked 'Irish' coffees? How disturbing would that be? But to my great delight our current generation of students has access to schemes that enable them to explore teaching and learning, not to mention culture and life-enhancing experiences, in our neighbouring European countries. In the UK as whole over 200,000 UK students have taken advantage of the exchange programme called Erasmus. And we here, in windy East Anglia, have been privileged to be challenged and amazed by students whose degrees are most likely to be conferred by Universities in other European Union countries. Once again to place our Faculty's work in the broader context of the University, although our own students do not number many from outside the UK, the University as whole admits 16% of undergraduates from other European Union countries. In the postgraduate sector that figure is 17%. As all reading this newsletter know, our

university is collegiate. Many of the deep connections that are made while studying at Cambridge, at whatever level, are created through the collegiate system. These connections are far from merely social, as hardly needs pointing out: they are often significant with respect to the developing intellectual journeys of the kind we do our best as teachers to feed, encourage, disturb and learn from. They are often significant in respect to the knowledge base we, as citizens of the world, construct and curate. They open our eyes to that world. Our compulsory paper in Part II of the Tripos, the Tragedy paper, does many things – stimulates, frustrates, annoys – but it would be impossible to make much sense of its intellectual content from the perspective of a mono-cultural and inwardly facing society or polis. You will not get a better grade in Tripos by befriending someone from, say, Italy, but you may well understand better and continue to think about what it means to be a citizen of the world for the rest of your life. Let us hope that these musings are the product of too much time in the sun.

Peter de Bolla
Chair of the Faculty
Professor of Cultural History and Aesthetics
Fellow of King's College

Shelley in the Alps



A detail of the hotel visitors' book recently acquired by the Wren Library

In an attempt to feign respectability, illicit couples might sign themselves 'Mr & Mrs Smith'. Those with nothing to hide just put their name, nationality, and destination. But when poet and political agitator Percy Shelley made his inscription in the visitors' book of a hotel in the vale of Chamonix during the summer of 1816, he declared himself 'great lover of mankind', 'democrat', and – most outrageous of all – 'atheist'. He was on his way, moreover, to 'L'Enfer' – Hell. Long kept in the Crewe family collection, the Wren library has now acquired, with the rest of the Crewe bequest, this important document of Romantic self-representation and scandal.

Shelley, who five years earlier had been expelled from University College, Oxford, for co-authoring 'The Necessity of Atheism', was on an excursion in the Swiss alps with his wife Mary and Claire Claremont, the lover of Lord Byron, whose child she was carrying. Shelley and his companions had, in fact, been staying with Byron and his doctor, John Polidori, on Lake Geneva. There the party had engaged in ghost-story competitions – one product of these was Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* – sailing expeditions, and heated arguments, matching the increasingly tempestuous weather. Polidori had in fact challenged Shelley to a duel having lost a sailing race to him. (The duel never happened,

Shelley being reluctant, and Polidori spraining his ankle.) The Shelley party's trip to Chamonix, in the shadow of Mont Blanc, much visited by English tourists in general and Romantic poets in particular, was to be the genesis of his great poem of man and his place in the universe, 'Mont Blanc'.

While touring in Chamonix and its environs, Shelley repeatedly signed himself 'atheist', an inscription seen by and shocking to a number of other important Romantic-era figures. Lord Byron himself, no stranger to scandal, claimed to have struck out one of Shelley's inscriptions. There are grounds to think that this is Byronic hyperbole and that it was Byron who in fact underlined, rather than struck out, Shelley's name on the leaf now acquired by the Wren (it's likely, though, that it was Byron who furiously obliterated Claire Claremont's entry, just beneath Shelley's). In any case, the document in the Wren is certainly the most interesting of the atheistical inscriptions Shelley made on his Alpine tour and the only one now extant. Shelley's declaration is written in Greek and in the same form as the lines of Homer's epic poems. The leaf on which it is written also includes a pious homily on the majesty of God, to which Shelley was in all likelihood scornfully responding.

Shelley's visitors' book entry was meant to be offensive, and many

subsequent visitors, including his distant relatives Sir John and Lady Shelley, found it so. It was less offensive, no doubt, to the 'indecent' and 'hysteric' Victorian poet Algernon Charles Swinburne, who saw the document in the Crewe collection later in the nineteenth century (Swinburne did, though, wince at Shelley's bad Greek). No-one knows by whom, but the Shelley leaf had been removed from the visitors' book by late summer 1825, three years after Shelley had drowned in the Bay of Spezia, and had been pasted into Shelley's own copy of his poem *The Revolt of Islam*, which is now also in the keeping of the Wren, along with other first editions of Shelley's works, many of them extremely rare. Shelley's avowal of atheism, made in the shadow of Europe's highest mountain, represents a scandalous moment in the history of Romantic rebellion and the developing rejection of established morals and beliefs.

Ross Wilson
Lecturer in Criticism
Fellow of Trinity College

Shakespeare in Swahililand



When in the autumn of 1948 the English students at Makerere University in Uganda staged a production of Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*, the view from the (largely British) faculty was that it had been something of a failure. Caesar's death, after all, had been rather undignified, and had drawn laughter from the undergraduate audience. What the Faculty members did not at first realize was that the student playing Caesar was simultaneously organizing student protests against the colonial government and its puppet figures among the Ugandan elite. The murder of Caesar, then, ritually enacted the overthrow of an illegitimate tyrant by those with the true spirit of the nation at heart, in which light it is rather less surprising that the spectators responded as they did. The glorious intertwining of student culture and colonial politics did not, however, end there: members of the English Faculty were shortly after forced to defend themselves from the stones being hurled by the same student protesters using the costume armour created for the production's Roman soliders. And not too many years later, the student who had played Caesar - Milton Apollo Obote - became the first President of an independent Uganda.

The Shakespeare productions at Makerere in the 1940s and 50s were to serve as a breeding ground for future

anti-colonial insurrectionaries and post-independence political leaders. Yet while these student plays were pivotal in providing the young indigenous political class with opportunities for pan-tribal organization and public oratory, they were far from the beginning or end of Shakespeare's surprisingly central role in East African culture and politics. If we leave to the side for a moment the thrilling - if somewhat doubtful - claim that *Richard II* was staged on an East India merchantman off the East African coast in 1609, Shakespeare's arrival proper in the region came with the Victorian expeditionaries - Burton, Speke, Stanley, and their imitators - each of whom publicly protested that they took Immortal Shakespeare as their only reading and who left fascinating records of reading Shakespeare as they trekked into the interior.

Despite their attempts to keep Shakespeare apart from Africa, to treat him as an amulet that would protect them from the Dark Continent, the region was soon awash with Shakespearean stories, from plays performed in corrugated iron shacks to stories that seeped into the local folklore. A translation of Charles and Mary Lamb's *Tales from Shakespeare* was among the first things printed in Swahili, on the island of Zanzibar in the 1860s, and it was soon a core schoolbook for a language group that now has hundreds

of millions of speakers. Meanwhile, a thriving culture of Shakespeare performance had grown up in Mombasa, not among white settlers or the Africans of the region but rather among the Indians who had been brought over to build the Uganda railway. By the 1910s, Mombasa was seeing a dozen or more separate Shakespeare productions each year, which in many years made it a more concentrated centre of Shakespeare performance than London's West End. These gloriously irreverent productions, every bit as liberal with their sources as Shakespeare was with his, give us a Shakespeare richly transfigured in his new home: a *Twelfth Night* where the shipwreck on the Illyrian coast becomes a train accident, Hamlet meeting his father's ghost on Mughal battlements, interpolated songs to the glories of 'English Brandy'. My personal favourite is the change to one version of *Romeo and Juliet*, where the heroine's fatal dagger is replaced with an Asp, making her a twin in death with Cleopatra. I rather like to think that had Juliet lived to get over Romeo, she would have turned out somewhat like that 'Rare Egyptian'.

Shakespeare's proliferation in East Africa of course had everything to do with a belief in his universality and timelessness, and part of what prompted me to return to my childhood home in the region to find out more

Apollo Milton Obote as Julius Caesar at Makerere University in 1948. Courtesy of The University of Makerere Archives.

was the chance it offered to examine contending claims about this appeal and its foundation. If the explorers and settlers brought Shakespeare with them as a totem of British culture and a proof of its superiority, local readings were soon turning this against them, leading to productions and readings of the plays which showed the colonizing nation its own reflection in an unflattering Shakespearean mirror. Perhaps the crescendo of this was the translation into Swahili of two plays - *Julius Caesar* and *The Merchant of Venice* - by Julius Nyerere (another Makerere graduate) during the very years that he was pushing for Tanzanian independence and serving as its first president. These bold translations, which are a cornerstone of the Swahili literary canon, produced not only a reading of *Caesar* by someone with unmatched experience of regime change and its aftermath, but also a *Merchant* which draws out that play's rich confusion of love and money as a parallel to Nyerere's own developing philosophy of 'African Socialism' (*'ujamaa'*). In a darker parallel to this, the last Emperor of Ethiopia, Haile Selassie, was at the same time forging an African Shakespeare in a series of state-sponsored Amharic translations; these translations, however, ended up turning against their patron, and providing a dramatic commentary on the collapse of Selassie's deeply Shakespearean court.

For some, though, even a Shakespeare made African still allowed the former colonizing culture too much presence on the continent, and in the 1970s and 80s Shakespeare was at the centre of a debate about whether independent East African states should (or *could*) share anything with their former colonizers. The later history of Shakespeare's presence in East Africa saw an intense struggle between African intellectuals and the soft power of the West in the closing years of the Cold War. Yet while the end of the Cold War took some of the edge off these debates about cultural colonization, the story of Shakespeare in East Africa is far from at an end. My account of this history ends with the curious story of how Shakespeare is once again playing a central role, now in the culture and politics of South Sudan, where bardolatry is affecting not only the cultural scene in war-torn Juba but also influencing the language politics of this deeply complex region. And so, as the saying goes, the whirligig of time brings in its revenges.

Edward Wilson-Lee

Fellow in English at Sidney Sussex College. His book *Shakespeare in Swabililand* was published earlier this year. www.edwardwilsonlee.com

What. When. Where.

The Faculty has hosted a wide variety of events in the last year, from a day of readings from David Foster Wallace's work marking the 20th anniversary of the publication of *Infinite Jest* –

www.english.cam.ac.uk/multimedia/dfwallace

– to the Judith E Wilson Poetry Lecture, in which Jeremy Prynne spoke on 'Reading Kazoo'.

For up-to-date information on other events of interest in the Faculty and beyond, look at our news listings and calendar:

www.english.cam.ac.uk/events

To find out what Faculty members are contributing to the University's annual Festival of Ideas, see:

www.festivalofideas.cam.ac.uk

Digital Knowledge

In the 2015 issue of the newsletter, Hazel Wilkinson described her efforts to establish an online database of printers' ornaments. A year on, it's up and running. She explains below what its uses might be. And Ewan Jones, who is also working with the Eighteenth-Century Collections Online (ECCO), describes his work with the Concept Lab.

Fleuron

Fleuron is a database of eighteenth-century printers' ornaments, broadly defined as the decorative features of the pages of printed books. 'Printers' ornaments' is an umbrella term for the devices, flourishes, and images that decorate printed books. Ornaments were usually cut by hand in blocks of wood or metal, or cast in metal, and came in the form of headpieces, tailpieces, initial letters, factotums, and dividers. The database also includes printers' flowers, or fleurons (the database's namesake), which are two terms for ornamental cast type. Fleurons could be assembled into designs consisting of many pieces, or used individually and in pairs for smaller flourishes.

Printers' ornaments are often overlooked in both literary criticism and art history, since they have fallen through the gap between the two disciplines, being neither full-scale illustrations nor (supposedly) part of the text. There has previously been no central catalogue of them, and no way of locating and studying them other than by browsing through books. Fleuron is the largest collection of printers' ornaments ever assembled, and it aims to enable new research by making it easy to locate them and track their usage across multiple books.

There is extensive and exciting research to be done both on the subject of printers' ornaments themselves, and by using them as evidence. Early printed books were much more highly decorated than their modern counterparts, and we do not yet understand enough about how they affected the reading experience, and how early readers interpreted them. They are interesting and often beautiful examples of graphic design, and are untapped resources for the study of iconography. More elaborate printers' ornaments can feature images that will be useful for historical research across disciplines, such as depictions of women at work, theatrical scenes, landscape gardens, cityscapes, and scientific instruments. Printers' ornaments can also be used as evidence in bibliographical studies. Ornaments that were cut by hand, or casts



that developed unique flaws, can help us to discover when and where a document was printed, two pieces of information not always conveyed accurately on title pages. This has applications for the study of authorship, piracy and counterfeiting, and book trade relations.

Fleuron was created using a custom-made image detection program, the creation of which was sponsored by the Bibliographical Society. The program was designed by Machine Doing Ltd., in collaboration with the Cambridge Research Software Engineering group. We began with 32 million page images, provided by the online publisher Gale-Cengage, from their digital repository Eighteenth-Century Collections Online (ECCO). Our program was trained to identify and extract ornaments from these pages. The analysis and extraction process took place on the High Performance Computing cluster at University Information Services, which allowed multiple images to be processed at once. The result was a database of over 15 million images. To ensure we captured as many ornaments as possible, the program was designed to be lenient in its inclusion criteria, so it incorrectly identified as ornaments some library stamps, handwritten notes, and blurred or overexposed areas of text. We are using machine learning to gradually identify and remove these items from the database.

Currently, the 15 million ornaments, engravings, and other decorative material are all searchable on the Fleuron website by date, location, author, publisher, and book title. You can also search for ornaments by their size, and restrict the kinds of ornaments you see by searching within subject areas such as 'History and Geography', 'Law', and 'Religion and Philosophy'. The next step for Fleuron

is to add an 'image search' function, which will allow matching ornaments to be found within the database. This is under development by Cambridge's Research Software Engineering group, and should represent a major resource for the identification of anonymous printers and authors.

Using the keyword search functions currently available, users of Fleuron have already begun finding ornaments that have furthered their research into individual printers and publishers, as well as topics such as depictions of eighteenth-century London, and early zoological illustrations. We have also carried out experiments using 3D printing to recreate eighteenth-century woodblocks. At the Radcliffe Science Library in Oxford we have turned 2D images of ornaments from Fleuron into relief models, and printed them on the 3D printer. The reincarnated printers' ornaments have then been used on a hand press to create new images. You can see photographs of these experiments on Fleuron's Twitter feed (@fleuronweb), and find out more about the ongoing development of the project on the blog (accessed from the Fleuron homepage).

Hazel Wilkinson

Junior Research Fellow, Fitzwilliam College, and Principal Investigator on Fleuron.

Introducing the Concept Lab

How do we practice intellectual history when the full extent of the cultural repository is no longer restricted to the academic expert armed with a reader's pass but available at the click of a button? When the archive extends beyond the established Big Names to encompass an unmanageable number of obscured texts, forgotten treatises and long-forgotten

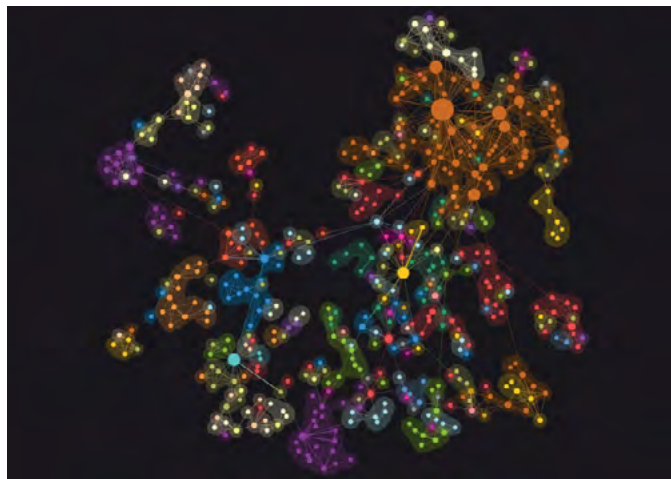
minor works, how does humanistic enquiry necessarily change? These questions lie at the heart of the Concept Lab, an interdisciplinary research project that for the past three years has been running under the auspices of Cambridge's Centre for Digital Knowledge, under the direction of our current Chair of the Faculty, Professor Peter de Bolla.

The Concept Lab brings scholars from the Faculty of English (Peter de Bolla, John Regan and myself) into contact with researchers in cognitive science and corpus linguists (Paul Nulty and Gabriel Recchia, both affiliated to CRASSH). Together, we design new computational resources to read, understand and manipulate large historical datasets. A resource such as Eighteenth-Century Collections Online (ECCO) offers a case in point, containing as it does digital reproductions of some 136,291 titles. This scope has transformed eighteenth-century scholarship. Yet ECCO's front-end interface remains fairly rudimentary: users can search for a keyword or two keywords within a specified lexical window, and ... not much else. By using the data that underlies a corpus such as ECCO, we have constructed a variety of more complex measures: these demonstrate (among other things) the power of attraction that a given word exerts on all other lexical material.

The principle underlying such a procedure is that work in the digital humanities should not merely expedite what we could have established through analogue means; rather, it should reveal what we might well not have anticipated. The protocol outlined in the previous paragraph does just this: while we start with a particular word in mind, we cannot always predict what kind of environment it will be embedded within. This reference to 'environment' serves notice of a second cardinal point within the Concept Lab's research. We seek to redirect scholarly attention away from *individual* words so as to grasp more fully the networks of which they form part, as they emerge, mutate and decay over time. The field of study known as corpus linguistics has for some time been investigating massive datasets so as to predict and explain linguistic patterns. Our approach

differs from such precedents, insofar as we are less interested in the semantic or grammatical patterns that emerge at proximate lexical distances than we are in the more unsuspected relationships that emerge at very large distances—distances that transcend the clause, sentence or paragraph.

We take these latter patterns to indicate conceptual structure, as distinct from grammar or syntax. The distinction between word and concept feels intuitive enough—yet research into concepts traditionally falls back into the analysis of words. Raymond Williams's *Keywords* (1976) is a case in point: a brilliant, engaging discussion of the manner in which the semantic extension and political resonance of individual terms ('power', 'culture', etc.) change over time. But what if word and concept are not identical? What if a concept might exist in a culture,



prior to its having been articulated as a word? Or what if the same word indicates, at separate historical moments, very different concepts?

A practical illustration clarifies such questions. A dictionary or thesaurus would tend to define 'freedom' and 'liberty' in broadly similar terms, as synonyms or cognates. While intellectual historians have at separate moments sought to contrast their meaning or application (often based on their respective derivation from Anglo-Saxon or French roots), such an approach is necessarily piecemeal, relying as it does upon the selection and consideration of a small fraction of the available documents. When we plot the relationship between the two terms across ECCO as a whole, some very interesting patterns emerge.

Both terms occur frequently around one another, even at very large textual distances. This is unsurprising, given that a text that employs one word is likely to employ the other, so to avoid excessive repetition (linguists call this phenomenon 'elegant variation'). What is more unexpected, however, is that the data shows that 'liberty' has a pronounced tendency to occur more frequently *before* 'freedom' than after it. Why should this be so? After all, to say 'freedom and liberty' seems just as plausible an utterance as 'liberty and freedom'.

When we move from the data back to the texts that generate it, we find a partial answer, in that the comparative priority of 'liberty' consistently indicates an abstract notion or ideal, which would then produce or result in freedom as a concrete entity. 'By this means our liberty becomes a noble freedom', states Edmund

Burke in his *Reflections on the Revolution in France*. 'It carries an imposing and majestic aspect. It has a pedigree, and illustrating ancestors'. Alternatively, such a process may fail to take place: 'this whole state of commercial servitude and civil liberty taken together', continues another extract from the same text, 'is certainly not perfect freedom.'

This example merely sketches the possible applications of a computational analysis of large datasets. On the simplest level, we can imagine such techniques being used to verify or falsify existing

large conceptual histories, or to recover concepts (and conceptual clusters) that have remained obscured. The Concept Lab certainly sees such case studies as part of its intellectual justification. But it also wants to raise larger philosophical questions regarding what it might mean to 'possess' a concept. Concept-use, we suggest, cannot ever be the same thing as looking up the meaning of a word in a dictionary; rather, it relies upon a broader, often subliminal network of associations, which the culture at large hands down to us. It is in the recovery of these networks that our work consists.

Ewan Jones

Lecturer in Nineteenth-Century Literature
Fellow of Downing College

Samuel Beckett's Letters

Shortly before he died, the novelist, playwright and poet – and prolific letter-writer – Samuel Beckett (1906-1989) finally agreed that his letters could be published. He asked the academic Martha Dow Fehsenfeld to take charge of the project, handed over some letters in his own possession and advised her of other people she should approach. He only had one proviso: that publication should be restricted to ‘those passages only having bearing on my work’.

Since Beckett's death everyone involved has tried to carry out his wishes, but what exactly did he mean? To a scholar almost everything a writer writes has bearing on their work, and every omission risks creating distortion. The writer's family and friends – understandably – would see things very differently. For a long time it seemed as if the problem of interpreting this vexed phrase would scupper any efforts to publish any of the letters, particularly since Beckett's friend, publisher and literary executor Jerome Lindon saw his main role as protecting the privacy of Beckett and his family. For years Martha and a growing editorial team worked steadily on the project in hopes of finding a publisher who could help break the deadlock. Once Cambridge University Press became involved in the late 1990s there were extensive exchanges between Andrew Brown, the Press's Academic Director, and Lindon, which consisted largely of Brown suggesting items which he felt might reasonably be included and Lindon saying – in the politest of terms – ‘non’.

And in fact it was only after Lindon's death in 2001, when Samuel Beckett's nephew Edward took a more active role in the discussions, that a way was found between estate, publisher and editors to publish what in the end was a generous selection of letters (though still only a small part of the whole), many of them for the first time, letters which cumulatively offer new insights into both the works and the man who wrote them.

By now there were four editors of the project. Martha, now retired, had already taken on a more advisory role. Lois More Overbeck, a theatre historian at Emory University in Atlanta, set up an office for the Letters project and proved a formidably efficient fundraiser, finder of letters and – through sheer persistence



– gainer of permissions to use them. George Craig, newly retired from the University of Sussex, took on the near-impossible task of producing effective and accurate translations of Beckett's difficult, idiomatic and often punning French. Dan Gunn, a literary critic and novelist in his own right teaching at the American University in Paris, took charge of the introductions and notes.

Arrangements with the Press were finally confirmed in 2005, with agreement for four volumes, divided chronologically and marking distinct periods of Beckett's life. The first volume – covering the period between 1919 and 1940, including Beckett's early literary endeavours and his move away from Ireland (the country of his birth and with which he always had a troubled relationship), and ending in 1940 with Beckett in war-torn Paris – was published in 2009. It was immediately apparent what a remarkable body of work the letters were proving to be. Reviews of the volume were spectacular: Seamus Heaney wrote of ‘prose that is undoubting, delighted and demanding’; Paul Muldoon saw the volume as ‘one of

the highlights of the year’. ‘Can a writer's letters – occasional and ephemeral as these tend to be – really qualify as great literature?’ asked Marjorie Perloff; ‘In Beckett's case, yes.’ Tom Stoppard wrote that ‘The prospect of reading Beckett's letters quickens the blood like no other's, and one must hope to stay alive until the fourth volume is safely delivered.’ Stoppard's concern about timing was an understandable one: very often it is hard to keep up the initial impetus of a huge project such as this, and the publishing world is full of examples of late or non-existent follow-up volumes. But miraculously the Beckett Letters volumes accumulated. The second volume appeared in 2011. It covers the period 1941 to 1956 and takes account of Beckett's wartime activities in France (for which he was awarded the Croix de Guerre in 1945) as well as the published work leading to his landmark play, *En Attendant Godot*, which in its English translation has been described as the most important play of the twentieth century. The third volume (1957-1965), reflecting Beckett's continuing struggle with the creative process, whether in

A Correspondent

drama, the novel or (a new venture) radio, while also coming to terms with the demands of growing international fame, appeared in 2013. The fourth and final volume, published in September 2016, reveals yet more about the writer and the man as a literary giant facing old age and the sense of failing powers with a spare eloquence and bleak wit. It was Beckett, in his 80s, who wrote (in *Worstward Ho*), 'Ever tried. Ever failed. No matter. Try Again. Fail again. Fail better.'

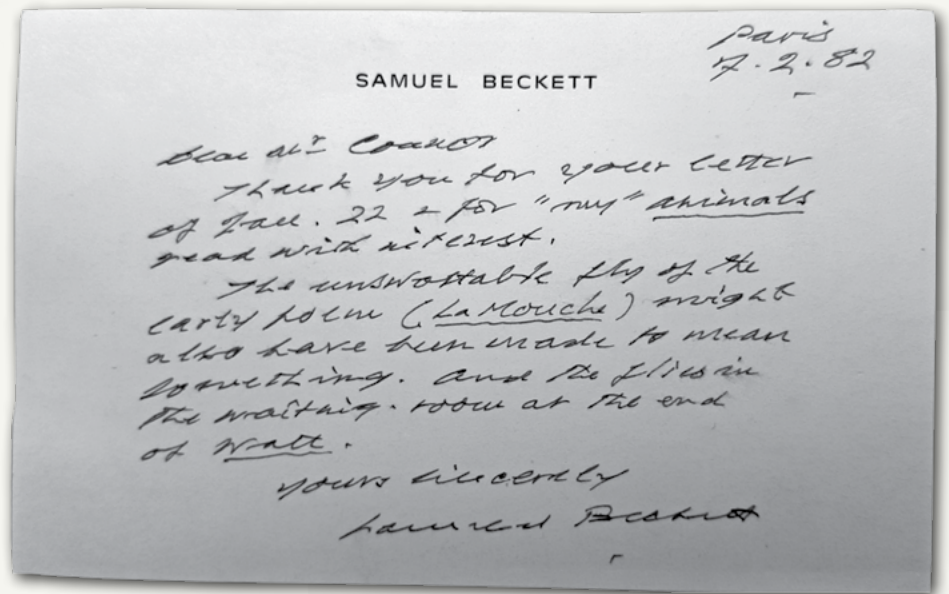
Beckett was a very private man. He was notorious for not giving interviews. When offered the Nobel Prize in 1969 he tried initially to turn it down and then asked whether he could accept the prize but refuse the money; and when he was told this wasn't possible he proceeded, quietly, discreetly, to give the money away, often to other writers in distress. What would he have made of the celebrations around the completion of the Letters project? We have had receptions and readings at the Irish Embassy in Paris, the Ecole normale supérieure where Beckett briefly taught, and the Centre Cultural Irlandais; the Department of Foreign Affairs in Dublin will be holding a celebration in November; and there will be further celebratory events and readings in Atlanta, New York, London and – not least – in Cambridge.

We have all – family, publisher, editors – been on an amazing journey with Beckett over the past decades, and none of us have been untouched by his achievements and his eloquence. We can all only hope, now, that we have done our subject justice as we have finally made public the great letters of a great writer.

Linda Bree

Senior Executive Publisher and Head of Humanities, Cambridge University Press.

CUP are kindly offering English alumni 20% off these books. Get your discount by using the URL www.cambridge.org/tlsb



I find myself one of the correspondents in volume 4 of the Cambridge University Press Letters of Samuel Beckett which has just appeared. In early 1982, I was a newish lecturer in Birkbeck and the Head of Department, Barbara Hardy, took me out to lunch to celebrate the publication of my second article (these were genial, gentler times). The article was called 'Beckett's Animals', and Barbara encouraged me to send a copy to Beckett. I thought this a bit of a neck but, as I was already starting to think like an academic, vanity got the better of me and I sent it off to Paris. A couple of weeks later an envelope arrived containing a postcard, on which (after several squinting goes), I made out the words:

Dear Mr. Connor

Thank you for your letter of Jan. 22 and for "my" animals read with interest.

The unswottable fly of the early poem (La Mouche) might also have been made to mean something. And the flies in the waiting room at the end of Watt.

Yours sincerely, Samuel Beckett

I continue to enjoy the slight ribbing ('might have been made to mean something') I got in the card, even as I appreciated being reminded of two rather marginal creatures in Beckett's work and the fact that, pestering and pestiferous though they might seem, flies are kinds of animal too. Indeed, Beckett's sentences were still buzzing in my ear 24 years later when I came to write a little book on flies in literature and culture. And in 2013 I made good the deficit teasingly registered in the card with an essay on flies in Beckett's work for the CUP volume *Beckett and Animals*, edited by Mary Bryden, which I had no choice but to call 'Making Flies Mean Something'.

Steven Connor

Grace 2 Professor of English
Peterhouse

Read Any Good Books Lately?

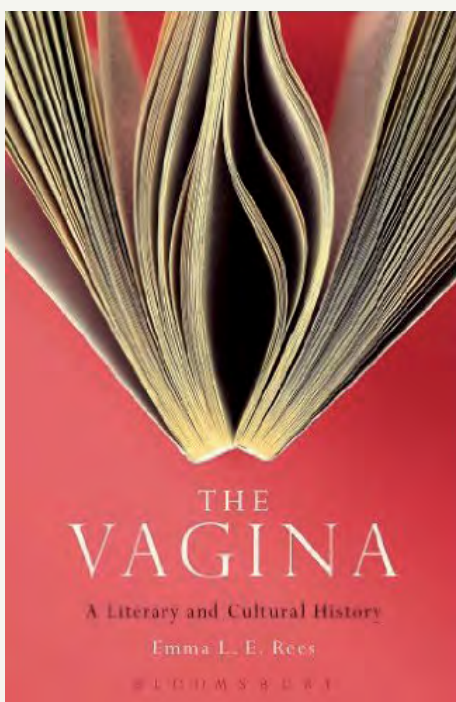
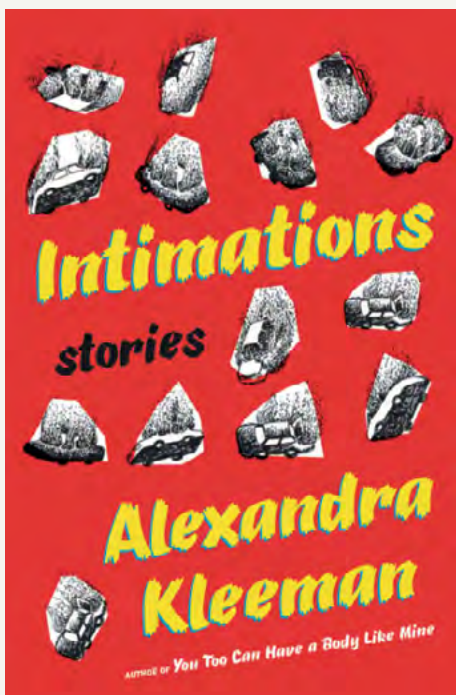
Members of the English Faculty recommend books, and other things, that they've recently enjoyed.

Mark Ford's *Thomas Hardy: Half a Londoner* (Harvard University Press, 2016) is the most enjoyable as well as the most informative study of an individual author I've read for a long time.

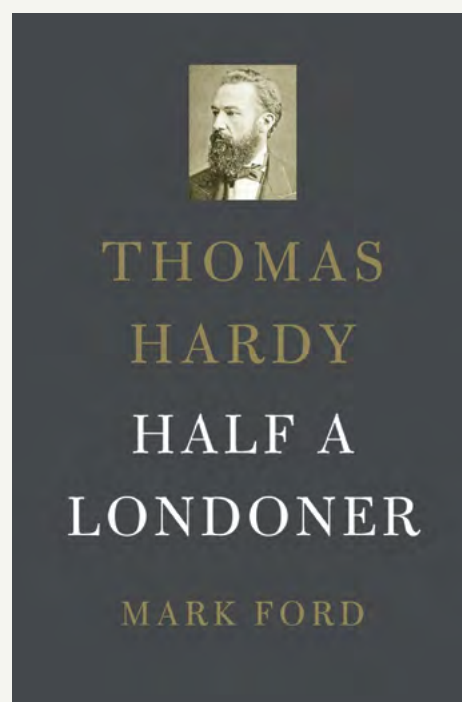
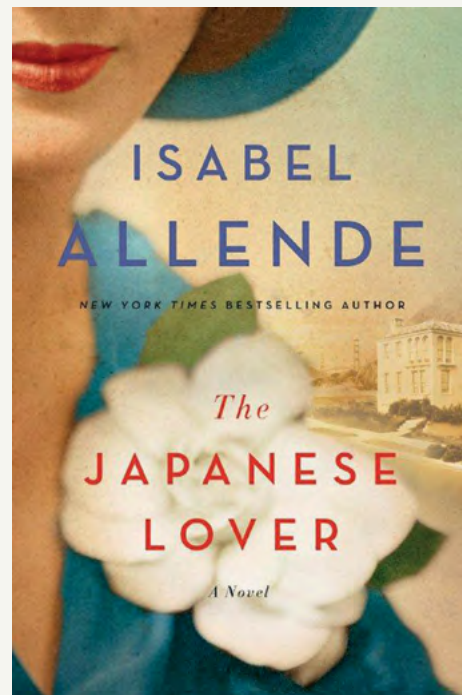
The last of the many strange things to happen to Thomas Hardy happened in the days immediately after his death, on 11 January 1928, at Max Gate, the house he'd had built for him on the outskirts of Dorchester in 1885. Hardy's will stated that he wished to be buried in the Stinsford Churchyard near to the graves of his parents and of his first wife, Emma. But his pushy literary executor, Sidney Cockerell, thought that a niche in Poets' Corner in Westminster Abbey would constitute a more appropriate resting-place for the remains of an internationally celebrated British writer. Hardy belonged to the nation. His body was accordingly taken by hearse to a crematorium near Woking, and the ashes transferred to Westminster Abbey. While it still lay in the bedroom at Max Gate, however, the heart had been removed, by a local surgeon, and deposited temporarily in a biscuit tin (they'd forgotten to bring a casket). And this bit of him, at least, did eventually find its way to Stinsford Churchyard. Throughout his life, Hardy had been a man torn between opposing impulses. Ford finds in the gruesome episode at the very end of it a 'telling re-enactment' of the 'tensions' – between metropolis and province, commerce and pastoral, gentility and earthiness, public and private – that made him the writer he became. Had he not spent a formative five years in London during the 1860s, and thereafter returned to the capital for varying periods as often as he decently could, Hardy would not have gained, for all his intellectual precocity, 'the kinds of perspective on Dorset that would eventually enable him to transform it into Wessex'. Ford 'gets' Hardy. His blend of shrewd commentary on the life and times and detailed analysis of the poems and novels doesn't just illuminate the latter: it's a continual provocation to go back and read them again.

David Trotter

Edward VII Professor of English



Isabel Allende is known for romances that have strong historical undertones peppered with contemporary social malaise. *The Japanese Lover* is no exception. In Lark House, an idyllic retirement home in San Francisco, the two heroines, Alma Belasco and Irina Bazili, take us on a journey of memory – the WWII Jewish persecution and diaspora and early nineteenth-century American racism – social trauma –



illegal abortion, AIDS, sex trafficking, paedophilia and child abuse – and always triumphant love. This book is a perfect holiday companion for devotees of the genre and will, as Chaucer fondly said of another romance, 'drive the night away'.

Orietta Da Rold

Lecturer in Medieval Literature and Fellow of St John's College

The Faculty Library and Twitter @eflcam

Donald Barthelme once had a character declare, grandly, that ‘The aim of literature . . . is the creation of a strange object covered with fur which breaks your heart.’ Alexandra Kleeman’s new story collection *Intimations* updates Barthelme’s absurdist legacy with pieces derived from fairy-tales, dreams and small secret moments. The range is broad: Kleeman is as comfortable reflecting on bad Hallowe’en costumes as she is on the challenges of motherhood and food ethics. Full of strange objects (some even furry), the collection is a funny, moving curio shop that seeks to redraw the lines between the intimate and the unfamiliar.

Gillian Moore

PhD Student in American Literature at Darwin College

I’ve enjoyed three quite different books recently: *The Vagina: A Literary and Cultural History* by Emma L E Rees (Bloomsbury, 2013) is a wide-ranging academic study of the representation and misrepresentation of female genitalia through history in literature, film, TV, visual and performance art; *No Medium* by Craig Dworkin (MIT Press, 2013) examines works that are blank, erased, clear, or silent, by luminaries such as Jean Cocteau, Robert Rauschenberg, Maurice Blanchot, and John Cage; and finally, *Correspondences* by Nisha Ramayya (Oystercatcher Press, 2016) is a beautiful pamphlet from a London-based poet of experimental feminist poetics examining Tantra and Hindu mythology.

David Rushner

Senior Library Assistant, English Faculty Library



Academic libraries have a habit of adopting new technologies pretty quickly. The Faculty Library is certainly up for trialling new things and, along with trials of other social media, Twitter made its first appearance in 2010 here. Since then we ambled along for a time trying to find our way with this new technology, aware at first that those engaged in English Literature were not quite so interested. Six years later things have moved on significantly and the Faculty itself now has a Twitter account @englishunicam and we have more than 1,000 followers.

What do we do with Twitter?

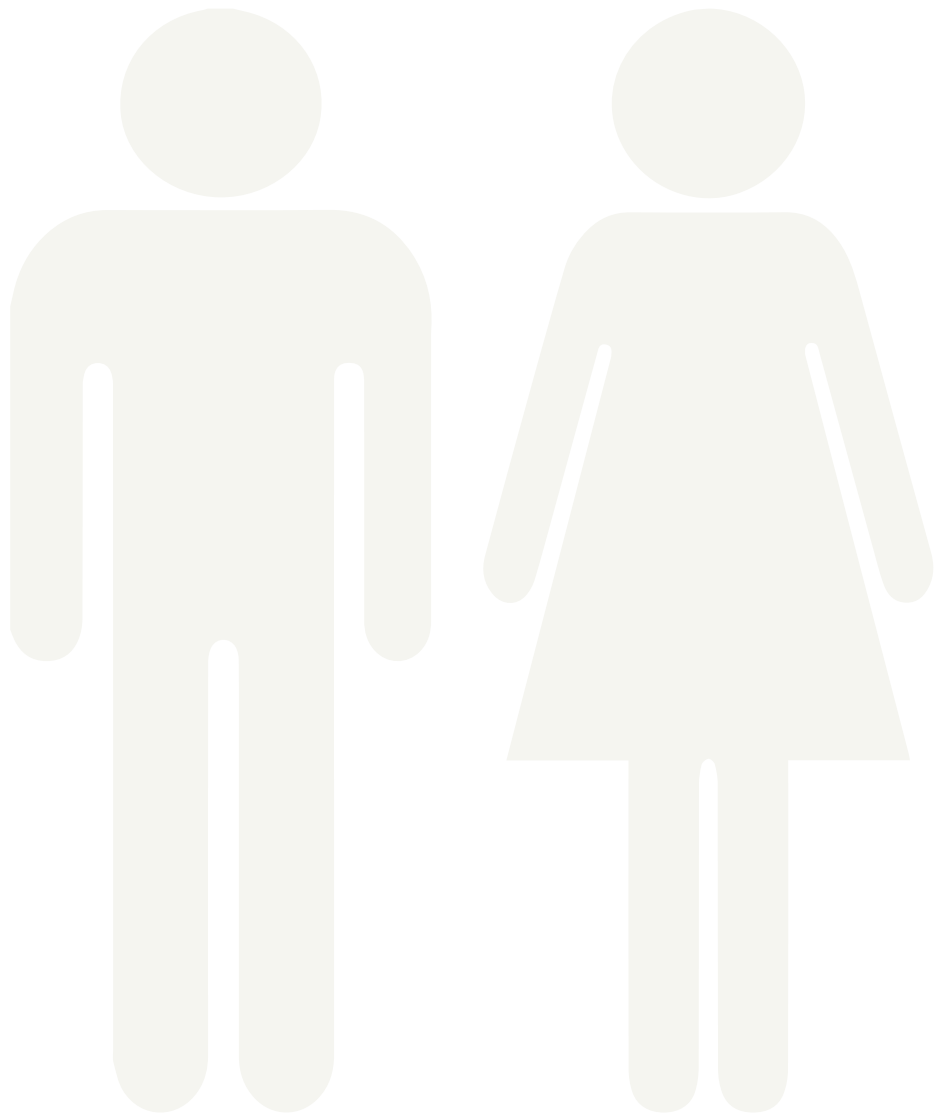
- **Share library information and online content**
- **Focus on local Faculty information such as graduate training**
<https://twitter.com/eflcam/status/786578841946816512>
or giving Freshers a map to find lectures <https://twitter.com/eflcam/status/783946538322132992>
- **Advertise the many local events where Faculty members are represented**
- **Raise awareness of recent publications**
eg. <https://twitter.com/eflcam/status/687301023560527872>
- **Promote the Faculty to prospective students**
eg. <https://twitter.com/eflcam/status/748446954091339776>
- **Follow publishers, other libraries, and academic colleagues in order to keep informed about their activities**
- **Retweet/advertise useful information from other University departments**
- **Keep users apprised of changes in the Library**
eg. <https://twitter.com/eflcam/status/778562685919195136>
- **Raise our profile with other libraries, both in Cambridge and outside**
- **Engage, in ‘instant messaging’ style, with student questions**
- **Keep in touch with alumni**

According to statistics our followers are most likely to appreciate posts relating to events and library updates. The EFL staff have a very good sense of humour which often permeates library-specific tweets. This is not entirely accidental, as we always aim to be approachable and friendly, and humour plays a useful part in that. Twitter is one of the many ways we engage with people.

Of course, now it’s getting popular we’ll be on to the next technology.....so try looking us up on Instagram.

Libby Tilley
English Faculty Librarian

Athena SWAN Gender Equality and Diversity in the Faculty



The Faculty of English and Department of ASNC are now participating in the Athena SWAN Initiative, a nation-wide award-giving scheme for promoting gender equality and diversity in academia. Athena SWAN concerns itself with equality and diversity across the full range of academic activities, from undergraduate intake and experience to senior promotion and the working conditions of administrative staff. In Cambridge the scheme initially started in STEMM subjects (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics and Medicine), but is now being brought in across the rest of the University. It might be thought that we in English and ASNC were ahead of the game in this area, but this is not necessarily the case. Historically, in English both our undergraduate and MPhil graduate results reveal better results for male candidates over female ones in a number of papers and courses (though this was less apparent this last year in undergraduate final results). At the other end of the scale, we have

serious concerns about the promotion of women in the Faculty. Despite the fact that a few years back the Faculty had a very high proportion of female professors, for example, this is no longer the case, and we now have only one female professor in English and one in ASNC.

The plan is that departments and faculties appoint a self assessment team ('SAT'), which, under its chair, Nicolette Zeeman, and in collaboration with the University Equality and Diversity team, consults, and collects and assesses data on the current successes and weaknesses of the faculty or department in this area. As part of the programme, we are trying to think not just about gender, but also about other kinds of diversity too. The team then draws up an action plan with identifiable – and check-able – targets, which is then submitted in November 2017 to the national Athena SWAN scheme in the hope of an award; over the following years, the SAT will continue to monitor progress in all target areas identified in the submission. We are

already generating a number of plans, some of which are being put into action right away: for instance, embedding reflection on our admissions process as it proceeds; making sure we have a variety of teaching role models and that we study a variety of types of author; instituting pedagogic practices that are supportive of gender and diversity and encouraging supervisors to attend unconscious bias sessions. Amongst these initiatives we have been considering having a photographic 'showcase' not just of former academic staff, but also of successful and influential alumnae/i. Suggestions requested!

Nicolette Zeeman
Professor of Medieval and Renaissance
Literature
Fellow of King's College

Please contact the Newsletter editor if you have any suggestions for our showcase.

Faculty People

Richard Beadle

Richard Beadle, Professor of Medieval English Literature and Palaeography, who joined the Faculty in 1975, retired in September. Richard is known both for his work on medieval drama - his magisterial two-volume edition of the York Cycle appeared in 2009 and 2013 - and for educating many generations of students and future scholars in the reading of medieval manuscripts (not least through the development of the MPhil in palaeography). To mark the occasion of Richard's retirement a symposium on Textual and Related Studies took place at the Faculty of English, the University Library, and St John's College, on 22 September.

In October we welcomed the arrival of six new lecturers, who describe their work below.

Edward (Ned) Allen

Lecturer in British and Irish Literature, 1830-present, and Fellow of Christ's College

I came up to Cambridge in October 2005 to read for a degree in English, and I continued here (after a sunny hiatus in Padua) as a graduate student in 2009. I've since held research positions at the Library of Congress, Washington DC, the Huntington Library in California, and most recently at Jesus College, Cambridge, where I've spent three years as a Junior Research Fellow.

My research centres for the most part on literature of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and especially on the interface between literary invention and technophilia. My first book illuminates this interface in relation to a cluster of North American poets - Robert Frost, Wallace Stevens, Marianne Moore, and Langston Hughes - each of whom became more than usually attached in the early years of the twentieth century to elements of their new media ecology, from rural telephone lines to synchronized cinematic sound. I'm also engaged at the moment in finishing two edited collections of essays that have grown out of - but which remain somehow intertwined with - my principal teaching interests. One is a series of essays about



Dylan Thomas, the multimedia modernist *par excellence*; and the other is a book about the subgenres of twentieth-century poetry, which will be among the first attempts of its kind to evaluate the formal integrity of avant-garde poetics since the 1940s, from the elegies of W. S. Graham, to the misremembered songs of Denise Riley. My contribution to the volume turns on the nocturnes of Jeremy Prynne.

My next research project, which is funded by the Wellcome Trust, has to do still with hearing literary voices, but is specifically attuned to the phenomenon of sticky listening - that is, the experience of getting a tune or poem stuck in your head - and to the problems this phenomenon may pose for cognitive behaviour and artistic representation. A good deal of my work stems from an unabashed enthusiasm for the (old) new media, and from a related curiosity as to how we read, write and make sound history. My new book is consistent with these interests, but what I hope to do in *Sticky Reading: The Literary Life of Earworms* is offer a model for thinking about modernism's acoustic sensibilities that speaks also to the findings of the clinical and cognitive sciences. In most recent approaches to the subject, 'stuck song syndrome' (or 'cognitive itching') has been attributed unequivocally to the influence of recorded music, and commentators have been quick to reassure maddened listeners that the only way to expunge or explain an earworm is to pin it down with the latest software (witness the rise of *Shazam*, an app designed to process 'acoustic fingerprints'). What I propose to illustrate in *Sticky Reading*, however, is that the sensation of getting a tune lodged in your head antedates the moment streaming and storage media converged as material possibilities, and that attempts to articulate

an earworm's neurotological effects can be traced back at least as far as the 1840s. While attending to the jingles of Moore, Eliot, Proust, and Riley, I will be returning in *Sticky Reading* to a number of earlier case histories, including Poe's 'The Imp of the Perverse' (1845) and Twain's 'A Literary Nightmare' (1876): these took the syndrome seriously for the first time, and they garnered renewed attention in the 1920s, when jingle-writing was turned into a commercial enterprise. In revealing this bumpy history, I hope to demonstrate that the interest of earworms may not reside in their ubiquity, or in the fact of their cognitive dissonance, but rather in how artists have managed to render them legible, turning them from everyday pests into creatures of the imagination.

My research for *Sticky Reading* has gained momentum in recent months, thanks to the generosity of the Wellcome Trust and its provision of a medical-humanities grant. This will enable me to undertake archival research next summer in Philadelphia, New York City, and Washington DC, where I have arranged to work with a range of lab technicians and sound archivists, initially with a view to documenting the semantic drift of the syndrome through time - from 'earworms' to Involuntary Musical Imagery (INMI). The Wellcome Trust has also provided me with funds to host an international conference in December 2016: *Ear Pieces: Listening, Diagnosing, Writing*. One aim of the conference is to talk about the definitional contours of harmful listening in the last 200 years, from colloquial strains of otitis, like 'glue ear' and 'swimmer's ear', to peripheral kinds of hearing loss, impairment and excess, such as otosis, sound-blindness, and melomania. How have such complaints been understood historically? Whose vocabulary are we drawing on when we speak of neurotological trauma? In bringing historians, musicologists, neuroscientists, and literary scholars together, the aim of *Ear Pieces* will be to excavate the parallel histories of otology and literature, and to gauge their present affinities, in public policy and the popular imagination. I hope it will be the first of many such events in the Faculty of English, which I'm delighted to have joined, and which is already beginning to feel like home.

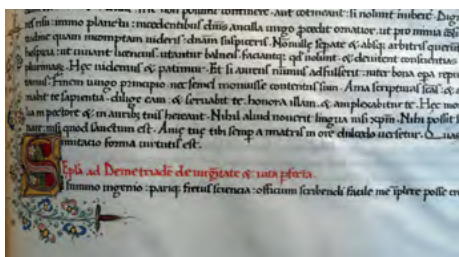
Ali Bonner

Lecturer in Celtic History of the Medieval Period, Department of Anglo-Saxon, Norse and Celtic

I read Classics at Oxford and then after a period working outside academia, I studied Anglo-Saxon, Norse and Celtic in Cambridge, and have now returned to the department to teach Celtic History.

My research has focused on Pelagius, the first known British author whose work survives, who was excommunicated for heresy in 418 AD. I work on the manuscript transmission of Pelagius' *Letter to Demetrias*; this Latin text was his full, considered statement of his arguments for free will and for the retained capacity of human beings for goodness, even after Adam's expulsion from Eden. There are about 140 surviving manuscript witnesses, held across Europe. The fact that Pelagius' works were a staple of medieval monastic book-collections, and the content of marginalia associated with the text, raise questions about the paradigm of 'Pelagianism', and during my PhD I realised I had to address those questions before I went any further. This led me to a wide-ranging study of patristic authors of the late fourth and early fifth centuries, and also to heresy studies generally and sociological analyses of heresy accusations. In a sense 'Pelagianism' is the *Ur*-heresy because the paradigm still stands, and still arouses controversy. The result was a book, *The Myth of Pelagianism*, which is now in the final stages of revision and will appear in due course. I can now return to studying manuscript witnesses of Pelagius' heartfelt and engaging defence of free will.

Meanwhile my overall interest lies in the history of the Insular milieu in the early medieval period. Relatively little hard evidence survives about Britain in this period, but what we do have speaks of Christianity and the influence of the ascetic movement, for which Pelagius was an eloquent spokesman. Another example of how Christianity dominates our evidence for this period is Faustus of Riez, our second known British author whose work survives, who also lived in the fifth century and wrote in Latin. In the early 400s AD Faustus went down to the newly-founded monastery of Lérins, off the coast of what is now Cannes on the French Riviera, to live a life of ascetic discipline;



The opening lines of Pelagius' 'Letter to Demetrias'. Trinity College R.17.5, s. xv, f. 156r. Courtesy of the Master and Fellows of Trinity College

he became abbot of Lérins in the 420s, and then bishop of Riez, not far inland from the monastery, up among the lavender plateaux of Provence. Faustus too wrote about the free will issue; he gave somewhat half-hearted assent to the doctrine of original sin, but withheld his consent for the doctrine of predestination. Meanwhile Patrick, the British apostle to the Irish, took the opposite view on these issues, and gave his wholehearted assent to the doctrines of original sin and predestination as set out by Augustine of Hippo. My next project will trace the impact of the myth of 'Pelagianism' on the history of the Insular milieu and Continental Europe. The controversy kept recurring and was never resolved, and much surviving literature addresses the issue.

The history of the Gaelic-speaking peoples likewise reveals the profound impact of Christianity on the literature, law and society of the Irish people. One of the most exciting things about working in the department has been the chance to study how law was shaped by Christianity, and the productive tensions between kin-based private law and Christian norms. The Insular milieu produced many legal texts, both Celtic and Anglo-Saxon, and these reveal a vibrant scholarly environment in Britain, Ireland, and Brittany. Overall, however, perhaps the most debated topic currently in the history of the Brittonic- and Gaelic-speaking peoples is ethnogenesis; the story of how the different language groups in the Insular milieu created and switched their cultural identities. The literary cultural memory that was created is not always backed up by other historical evidence. For example, Bede conveyed a picture of hard and fast ethnic divisions, but the flexibility revealed by the personal names and marriages of the élites belies this account. British praise-poetry too has

in the past been read as reflecting ethnic divides, but recent new interpretations of this linguistically challenging material has undermined simple ethnic equations. In Scotland the contemporary issue of British and Scottish identity has produced some exciting scholarship, for example, Dauvit Broun's *Scottish Independence and the Idea of Britain*.

The increasing numbers of medieval manuscripts being digitised and put online has given a huge impetus to all areas of scholarship on the medieval period, and made possible so much that was impossible before; it is a very exciting time to be working in the field, and a special privilege to be working in the department of Anglo-Saxon, Norse and Celtic.

Philip Knox

Lecturer in Middle English Literature, Fellow of Trinity College

I arrive in Cambridge still preoccupied by a question I've been asking myself for the past few years: how was it that fourteenth-century English poetry was so indelibly marked by the influence of that hugely popular and richly complex French poem, the *Roman de la rose*? The conditions of its English circulation, the environments in which it was read, and above all how poets responded to its disorientating exploration of the nature of love, the place of love *in* nature, the powers of poetry to represent it — all these issues are making their way into the monograph that's taking shaping on my desk and my hard-drive as I write. Although a deeply learned work, the poem's depiction of sexual desire is so outrageous and so destabilising that the *Rose* seems at once to inaugurate the possibility of writing philosophical poetry in the vernacular for English writers, while also establishing the shakiest imaginable grounds for such a project. Some of the strange effects it could have on medieval readers can be seen, I think, in the image I include here from a fifteenth-century French copy of the poem, but unfortunately there is no space here to discuss just how this scene is (even) weirder than it might appear. Ask me about it.

I am interested in how the 'intellectual culture' of the Middle Ages (in the broadest sense) interacts with poetry, and one element of my work on the *Rose*'s English afterlife is how ideas about nature — its



Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Douce 371, f.139v.

representation, its position in a tradition of philosophical Latin poetry, that tradition's interaction with poetry about love and desire — makes its problematic way into a great deal of Middle English writing. Medieval ideas about lyric and narrative (categories that interact in a particularly fascinating way in the period) are also a recurrent concern. Since I work on literary texts written in both English and French in both France and England, I think a lot about how to conceptualise the culture I study in a period in which French was (like Latin) a living literary and political language in England. When England's frontiers were shifting restlessly across the Continent and were contested across the British Isles, and when writers would move through and work in different cultural environments, I wonder about the category of 'English literature' in my period. It often seems inadequate to accommodate all the local particularities of the writing produced in the shifting territories of this corner of the European continent (continental poets writing in French in English courts, Welsh clerics writing francophone poems in England, Hiberno-English bureaucratic literary culture, a constant traffic of books and people across the Channel). Although I'm interested in a great many late-medieval poets — the *Gawain*-poet, William Langland, and John Gower in English (and French); Machaut, Christine de Pizan, and Charles d'Orléans in French (and English) — under pressure I usually describe myself as a Chaucerian.

I am from a town called Warrenpoint on the north coast of Carlingford Lough on the east side of Ireland. Interestingly enough, the border that runs through the lough between the UK and Ireland (and soon the UK and the EU) is one of the few European maritime boundaries to remain technically under dispute. Like everyone, I've done strange jobs at different

times. Stranger than writing material for a Californian website about yoga (an activity in which I have never engaged) was promoting cat food in the Kilkeel branch of Asda. I had better luck as an assistant at the Belfast-based *Irish Pages* — a remarkable publication and one of the best places for contemporary writing that can be found anywhere today. I was educated at my local Christian Brothers school, the Abbey Grammar, in Newry.

With a brief hiatus, my academic education and career to date has taken place entirely in Oxford, where I was most recently a junior research fellow at New College. I went to a talk by Terry Eagleton a few months ago where he said that his Cambridge training had left him forever out of place among the whimsical pedants of Oxford. I am looking forward to the same experience in reverse.

Chana Morgenstern

Lecturer in Postcolonial Literature

I come to Cambridge University from Brown University in the United States, as well as via multiple cities and research facilities in the Middle East where I completed my graduate and postgraduate research. This journey facilitated the foundation for my work on the resistance cultures of Palestinians and Israelis across the backdrop of international Marxism and the anti-colonial movements of the Arab world and the three continents. During this time, my interests gravitated from the study of individual monographs to literary journals and material traces that revealed the complex conversations between anti-colonial writers on a local and worldwide scale.

My current book in progress *A Literature for All Its Citizens: Democratic Aesthetic Practices in Palestine/Israel* uncovers the relationship between Palestinian and Israeli resistance cultures in regional and global contexts. It begins with the first study of the literary movement established by Arab Jewish and Palestinian intellectuals and writers of the Israeli Communist Party (MAKI) between 1948 and the early 1960s. During this period, key Arab Jewish (Mizrahi) Communist intellectuals such as Sami Michael, Shimon Ballas, Sasson Somekh and David Semah, and Palestinian intellectuals such as Emile Habiby, Emile Tuma and Mahmoud



The cover of the Palestinian, Arabic language literary magazine *al-Jadid* (March 1968)

Darwish, developed a common program in MAKI's Arabic literary journal *al-Jadid*, as well as in other party publications. Analyzing cultural criticism, images, manifestos, prose, and poetry in journals and magazines, I reconstruct this lost cultural archive, arguing that the program of *al-Jadid* provided the only democratic cultural alternative to Zionist nationalism within Israel during the 1950s and early 1960s.

The book then goes on to excavate the influences of this early movement by tracking its relationship to two parallel streams in Israeli and Palestinian literature. Firstly, I uncover the conversation between Arab Marxism, anti-colonialism and popular literature in the Arabic-language stories of Arab Jewish Israelis (Mizrahim) in *al-Jadid*, and the Hebrew protest literature these same writers published in the sixties and seventies. This transit camp literature (*sifrut ha-ma'abarah*) provided imaginative accounts of the material and existential deprivation of Arab Jews in Israel and is considered the bedrock of Mizrahi literature, as well as a critical genre in minority Israeli literature.

Second, I look at the aesthetic project of the writer and intellectual Emile Habiby, one of the founders of *al-Jadid*, who was dedicated to developing a socialist Arabic literature and culture promoting co-existence within Israel/Palestine. My study will for the first time look closely at

Habiby's rich intertextual and multilingual prose in direct conversation with the radical aesthetic Marxist circle he was at the center of. I will first examine how Habiby's early short stories enact an idiosyncratic development of popular socialist realism. Then I will analyze Habiby's literary vision of revolutionary co-existence as seen through his linguistic and referential networks that put multiple histories and temporally disparate cultural elements such as Marxist thought, Jewish, Christian and Islamic discourses, and contemporary Palestinian and Israeli narratives into a radical constellation of the past and the present.

Alongside this scholarly volume, I plan to publish a collection of translated stories, poems and literary manifestos from *al-Jadid*. The overall project will trace a multi-generational cultural genealogy of shared Palestinian-Jewish literary and cultural activity in dialogue with developments in the Middle East and North Africa.

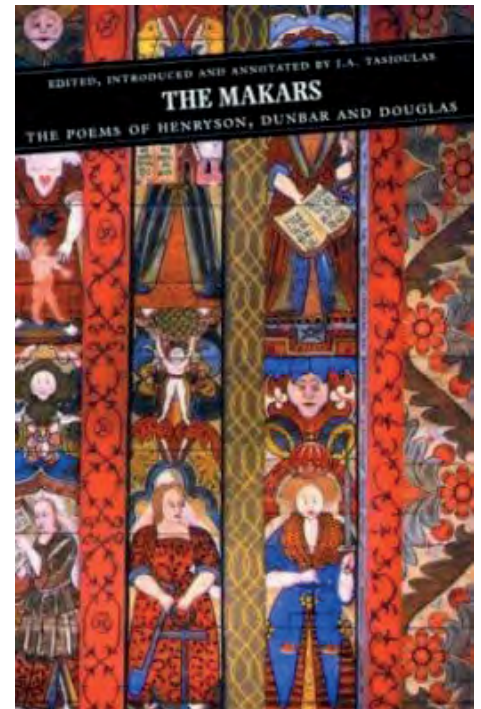
In addition, I am beginning work on a project that theorizes the conditions of anti-colonial archives and their relationship to cultural production. The physical conditions of the archival collections in multiple former colonies—afflicted variously by plunder, as well as the destruction, loss and repression of documents and materials—will provide models that will elucidate the study. Thus, I will proceed from the understanding that the writing of anti-colonial cultural histories demands a non-traditional temporal framework that understands ruptures and gaps not as deviations from the normative, linear flow of time but rather as intrinsic to the practice of cultural resistance, which progresses in fits and starts and is punctuated by interruption as writers are censored, imprisoned, driven underground or assassinated. This formulation speaks to the question, which my research will pursue, of how to write anti-colonial genealogies, as they reveal that radical tradition appears in a manner that is idiosyncratic and non-linear. In Israel/Palestine specifically, instances of cultural and political resistance cannot be made to appear in the form of a continuous historical narrative. Rather, they have thrived for short periods only to be co-opted, labeled as failures, or pronounced dead; yet they re-emerge time and again at particular moments of danger, resurrected by scholars, artists

and movements. I will approach these dynamics through frameworks opposed to teleological notions of lineage and time, looking instead at how anti-colonial artists and activists in different periods connect through collectivity and memory and by way of dialogic modalities such as affiliation and intertextuality, themes which illuminate alternative modes of conversation and transmission across time.

Jacqueline Tasioulas

*Lecturer in Middle English Literature,
Fellow of Clare College*

I have been a Fellow of Clare College since 2004, and before that I was a Fellow of Newnham for five years, so I can claim that this is technically my third decade in Cambridge, and I have loved every minute of it. I did my undergraduate degree at the University of Glasgow, where it was possible to combine interests as diverse as Germanic philology and Modern American literature. From Glasgow, I took the well-trodden path to Balliol College, Oxford, and a doctorate in Middle English drama. My interest at that point was in dramatic engagement with theological problems: those moments in a medieval play when the action is halted in order to consider some difficulty, usually in the context of scientific knowledge. This might mean a pause to contemplate the physical form of Christ in the womb of Mary, or a digression on the capacity of angels to produce sound. It seemed remarkable that plays performed by the trade guilds in the city streets should have engaged so directly with these issues, and this interest has informed a great deal of my work. One of my current projects, therefore, is a monograph that investigates popular ideas about the human body in the later Middle Ages (*The Flesh Transformed: the Confrontation of Science and Theology in Middle English Religious Literature*), and the ways in which scientific beliefs often confront the demands made by theology in terms of the bodies of the holy, of medieval saints, or the physical forms of angels. Occasionally, literary authors use scientific knowledge to emphasise the humanity of Christ, or the perfect femininity of the Virgin, but more frequently, the relationship between medical treatises and theological texts is a difficult one, resulting



in problems and dilemmas for the authors of religious literature. They are problems, however, that these authors choose not to ignore, and which, in many cases, they choose to explore in artistic terms. It is this relationship, sometimes fraught, sometimes confrontational, and sometimes conciliatory, that is the focus of the book.

At the same time, I am under contract with Routledge to produce a volume for their *Basics* series. *Chaucer: The Basics* marks a departure in the series in that its readers will be asked to engage with texts in Middle English. I'm delighted to be writing this volume, as one of my key concerns as a medievalist is to ensure that this wonderful literature is accessible to everyone. I have published a considerable amount on Chaucer recently, much of it centred on the role of the imagination in his works, particularly the lover's imagination, whether in the form of obsessive lovesickness, or the desire of the lover to create, rather than find, perfection. It is a theme that Robert Henryson finds in Chaucer, and develops in his *Testament of Cresseid*. My recent work on Henryson has explored the connection between the two poets' interest in Aristotelian concepts of the imagination, a subject which has intrigued me since I edited *The Makars*, my volume on Robert Henryson, Gavin Douglas, and William Dunbar.

Having left Balliol to take a Junior Research Fellowship at New College, Oxford, I found myself travelling north

again, to a lectureship at the University of Stirling. Stirling was a great opportunity for a young academic, offering the chance to lecture on a wide range of subjects to audiences sometimes as large as four hundred people. One of the department's key concerns was that courses should be available in Scottish literature, and so an interest in the late medieval Scots poets that had been kindled at Glasgow took form as an edited volume of verse that became *The Makars*. Henryson, in particular, has been an abiding interest and is the focus of some of my most recent research. It's neither fashionable nor just to think of him as a 'Scots Chaucerian', but re-establishing those links with the older poet, while seeing Henryson as one of the most innovative and dark of the fifteenth-century authors, is crucial. There is a monograph there that I am keen to write, but it must currently take its place in the queue. In the meantime, I shall continue to enjoy lecturing on the makars as on everything else, and helping to shape the next generation's interest in medieval literature.

Helen Thaventhiran

Lecturer in British and Irish Literature, post-1830, Fellow of Robinson College

Wittgenstein explored his philosophical concept of 'family resemblances' in strikingly material form by producing composite photographs that layered four faces: his own and those of his three sisters. My 'portrait' as a newly appointed lecturer here has a similarly layered composition; in it are the traces of past roles in Cambridge as undergraduate, PhD student, research fellow, and then Director of Studies.

I arrived here in 2001 as an undergraduate at Trinity Hall. I then spent a year in Oxford for a Master of Studies, where my thesis considered how modernism made new that puzzling aesthetic category 'grace', by reconstructing some dance choreographies from the early twentieth-century. As I did this, I discovered that Cambridge's closest reader, William Empson, had, improbably enough, written a scenario for a ballet (as yet unperformed). But it was Empson's *logopoeia* – the dance of the intellect among words' that drew me back to Cambridge for a PhD (King's, 2006-9), which took its impetus from Wittgenstein's seemingly simple question in *Philosophical Investigations*: 'Well, what

does go on when I read the page?' This thesis explored practices and philosophies of close reading criticism through the very particular example of Empson's prose.

I wrote a book about these concerns while a Junior Research Fellow at Christ's College (2009-13). This book, *Radical Empiricists: Five Modernist Close Readers* (OUP, 2015), presents a new history of criticism in the first half of the twentieth-century by turning close reading back on itself, paying careful attention to the styles of some major poet-critics whom we associate with looking closely at 'the words on the page': T.S. Eliot, I.A. Richards, Empson, R.P. Blackmur, and Marianne Moore. Its chapters explore various critical counterfactuals, for example, what if we could admire a critic who refused either to argue or to explain? What if paraphrase, that violent heresy critics inflict on poems, wasn't so bad after all? It circles around and delineates one of the most tenacious puzzles both for modernism and for the student of English Literature in general: 'the meaning of meaning'.

Since 2013, I have held a College Lectureship and Fellowship at Robinson College, where I've been Director of Studies for Part I and Part II. When not teaching, I've been working towards a new edition of Empson's *The Structure of Complex Words* (1951), with Professor Stefan Collini. In this monumental study, written across decades, continents, wars, Empson explores the intraverbal powers of ordinary-seeming words: sense, dog, honest, wit, fool. Our edition hopes to show how Empson engages a host of acute mid-century concerns about how we explain language to ourselves and others; with what techniques, tact, and power of truth-telling.

I'm also working towards a book, provisionally titled *Extraordinary Language: Reading with Austin and Wittgenstein*, about two ways of thinking about language that seem thoroughly insulated from each other, or even allergic to each other: analytical philosophy and literary criticism. Some of these research energies give shape to an MPhil course I'll teach this coming year: 'Phantom Tables: philosophy and literature (1890-present)'. This course departs from encounters or collisions between literature and philosophy to inquire into how modern and contemporary writers think about their forms, sources, and limits of (self-)knowledge. What, for example, is it like



to write poems in an intellectual context of solipsism, or when you're uncertain that the table on which you write exists? How does it feel to write philosophy alongside modernist and postmodernist revolutions of the wor(l)d? I'm looking forward to exploring such questions with students, while continuing the work of close reading by engaging with some of the unique archival resources of Cambridge: the unpublished papers of G.E. Moore, T.S. Eliot, Wittgenstein.

Another archival project I'm beginning, under the working title, *Clarion Call: Socialist Modernisms*, concerns a circle of Manchester socialists, who met in the first half of the twentieth-century to discuss their cultural and political encounters, touching on suffragism and conscientious objection, the little magazines, difficult modernist poems. By turning to this heterogeneous set of autodidacts, who read at a time of transition towards more structured forms of literary education, I hope to complicate our picture of the high literary culture of modernism and to explore some unexamined possibilities for new democracies of reading.

Alongside these linguistic, cultural and philosophical preoccupations with forms of reading, I continue to be preoccupied by what cannot quite be written, dance. In the coming academic year, I'm excited to be able to include, within the diverse scope of the English Tripos and its 'Contemporary Writing' paper, lectures that consider the avant-garde performances of Merce Cunningham and Yvonne Rainer; the composite forms of their twentieth-first century choreographies, writings and sketches.

Literature Cambridge

A trip to Bloomsbury

Summer schools are a rich part of Cambridge life, attracting students who bring great energy and commitment. For years I had thought how satisfying it would be to devote a summer course to a single author or topic, immersing ourselves in a particular subject, all day, every day, for a week. I imagined lectures by expert scholars, the unique experience of Cambridge supervisions, and outings to relevant places, all in a community of people with a deep, shared interest. Now this daydream has been realised. I have set up *Literature Cambridge* with my business partner, Ericka Jacobs. We started by offering a focused, intensive summer course open to all, with lectures and supervisions by Cambridge academics, on the writings and context of Virginia Woolf. There is a particular joy in learning about an author and his or her context in great depth, and in trying to understand the nuances of the history out of which the literary work emerges. There is another kind of satisfaction in the skills of close reading with which all of us, students and teachers, have been grappling since the 1920s. We wanted to bring these traditions of Cambridge English to a wider audience.

Following this successful inaugural course, with 21 students from all over the world, ranging in age from 23 to 74, we realised that there is a demand for high quality short literary courses, and so we have expanded our offerings to include not only week-long, immersive summer residential schools, but also lecture-based Study Days, and a fusion of literature and cooking, Literary Kitchen afternoons, which combine an academic lecture with a hands-on cooking session. We held our first summer course, *Virginia Woolf in Cambridge*, in July. This offered a week's immersion in some of Woolf's best-known writings, including *A Room of One's Own*, *Mrs Dalloway*, and *To the Lighthouse*. The participants lived like Cambridge students in the lovely setting of Homerton College, and immediately bonded as a community. Our lecturers included Alison Hennegan, Susan Sellers, Gillian Beer and myself. Each day we had a lecture followed by supervisions by Alison, Steve Watts, Clare Walker-Gore,



and Nadine Tschaschsch. We finished the week with a moving lecture by Gillian Beer, much-loved Emeritus Professor and former President of Clare Hall, on her experience of reading *The Waves* across a lifetime.

Woolf knew Cambridge well and visited quite often. Her father had been at Trinity Hall in the 1850s and 60s. Her brothers and her husband Leonard were at Trinity College. She knew Maynard Keynes and Bertrand Russell at King's, and Jane Harrison at Newnham. Woolf was somewhat sceptical about universities as places to cultivate the intellect, and refused to accept any honorary degrees. When asked to write for an academic series, she refused, noting in her diary, 'To think of being battered down in the hold of those University dons fairly makes my blood run cold.' Yet she was much interested and engaged in the question of education, especially for women. We visited Newnham and Girton to see the rooms in which she presented the talks which became *A Room of One's Own* (1929). Another day we went to Bloomsbury for a lecture on art by Claudia Tobin.

In the evenings, we heard Susan Sellers read from her novel *Vanessa and*

Virginia, and Kabe Wilson discuss his project which rewrites every word of *A Room of One's Own* into a novel about an African woman studying English at Cambridge, *Of One Woman or So*, by *Olivia N'Gowfri* (discussed by Malachi Macintosh in the Newsletter in 2014).

Alongside her ambivalence about universities, Woolf valued what she called the common reader – she counted herself as one – readers with things in common, looking for common ground even as ideas might be in dispute. The course was offered in this spirit. Our next summer course on Virginia Woolf is *Woolf's Rooms* (17-21 July 2017), with a second course on *Reading Bloomsbury* (24-28 July 2017).

Our day courses started in September with lectures by Gillian Beer, Frances Spalding, and me on *To the Lighthouse* (1927). People came from all over the UK and abroad for a fantastic day of lectures and discussion at Stapleford Granary. On 18 March 2017 we will offer our first Tragedy Study Day, inspired by the monumental Tragedy course in the Cambridge Tripos. Former students often say that the course gave them resources to think about many issues – in politics, in culture, and in their daily lives – and to understand

Literature and Creative Writing Courses at the University's Institute of Continuing Education

things with depth and nuance. We wanted to offer this rich intellectual experience to a wider audience, and to offer English Alumni the chance to revisit these powerful works and ideas. There will be three lectures with discussion: Jennifer Wallace on Greek tragic performance: *Antigone*, *Electra*, and *Bacchae*; Adrian Poole on Shakespeare and Rome: *Julius Caesar*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, and *Coriolanus*; and Alison Hennegan on modern tragedy: O'Neill, Orton, and Kane.

Further Study Days in 2017 include *Alice in Space* with Gillian Beer in February to celebrate her new book on Carroll's engagement with Victorian science, linguistics, education, and mathematics; Jane Austen on 22 April; Creative Writing on 13 May with Susan Sellers; Reading *The Waste Land* on 11 June; Virginia Woolf on 16 September; and Charles Dickens on 12 November.

As well as high seriousness of the summer courses and Study Days, we offer a slightly whimsical set of classes in partnership with the renowned Cambridge Cookery School. *The Literary Kitchen* presents a unique combination of literature and food: a lecture by a leading scholar, followed by a hands-on cookery class taught by the School chefs. Offerings include Hugh Stevens' lecture on E. M. Forster's love of Italy, followed by a class making focaccia and fresh pasta, and Susan Sellers on Proust's thinking about memory, followed by a class making madeleines. Also on the menu are Katherine Mansfield and the Cream Puff (Trudi Tate), John Clare: Bread and Roses (Paul Chirico), Alice's Tea Party (Gillian Beer). Fine literature and simple but inspired cooking. Whimsical, yet still entirely serious.

Trudi Tate

PhD Darwin College 1994
Fellow, Clare Hall
Director, Literature Cambridge

Find out more:

www.literaturecambridge.co.uk

[www.cambridgecookeryschool.com/
classes/category/the-literary-kitchen](http://www.cambridgecookeryschool.com/classes/category/the-literary-kitchen)



Maybe you didn't make it out to Maddingley village when you were a student, but 10 minutes drive north-west of the English Faculty is beautiful Maddingley Hall, home to the University's Institute of Continuing Education (ICE). ICE offers regular day schools and weekend courses in English, and also has a thriving community of creative writers attending workshops and courses. If you ever find yourself thinking back with some nostalgia to supervisions and classes and that feeling of total and pleasurable immersion in reading and learning, then a Maddingley course could take you back to that happy place, or introduce you to a totally new area of writing which you didn't have a chance to pursue during your undergraduate days.

Coming up for Lent term are evening classes on Dante, the contemporary novel and 'making sense' of poetry, 'one day, one novel' Saturday day schools on a range of novels from *Moby Dick* to *On the Road*, and short courses which combine creative writing and close-reading. ICE's creative writing programmes cover a variety of genres, including 'first steps' courses and more focused sessions of short-story writing,

non-fiction and life-writing and poetry masterclasses. Or come and stay for a weekend for a course on pre-Raphaelite poetry or the history of the oak tree in literature. Details of all these can be found on our website: <http://www.ice.cam.ac.uk/literature>.

Maddingley Hall is a lovely place to stay, offering good food and comfortable accommodation, and beautiful Capability Brown gardens to wander in when you're not in class. Students come year-round from all over the world to discover or renew old acquaintance with Cambridge. Literature Courses are taught by members of the Faculty, College and ICE tutors, and our creative writing tutors are all published authors. Recent writing courses have been taught by Midge Gillies, Sarah Howe, Elizabeth Speller, Adam Mars-Jones and Roger Garfitt. You might also be interested in the Institute's part-time Master's Course in Creative Writing: <http://www.ice.cam.ac.uk/mst-creative-writing>

Jenny Bavidge

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Your Say

In last year's Newsletter, Steve Connor asked for suggestions about ways of strengthening connections between the Faculty and its alumni as we approach our centenary in 2019. Here are some responses.

I am intrigued by the changing emphases in syllabus and examinations. In my time as a student, 1955-58, Leavis reigned almost supreme, John Donne's was the poetic voice of interest, and literary criticism was, to a huge extent, textual analysis. It might be interesting to examine a syllabus and examination papers of a particular generation to see the underpinning assumptions and areas of exploration. What has happened in criticism between then and now? Are there any lost areas? I regret the fading influence of Alexander Pope and would wish for a re-appraisal.

Another idea might be an anthology of 'alternative' literary events which occurred outside the formal programmes. One such might be an account of a visit by F.R. Leavis to a small literary gathering at Trinity Hall in 1957 (?) where he was due to talk about his relationship with T.S. Eliot. It was a wonderful diatribe of total hostility, so much so that when he was ushered out of the door, very late, he was still in full flow, declaiming back at the students gathered on the landing, 'That man, Eliot, he is now such a conformist, if he goes into a room where they are all wearing suits, and these days he doesn't often go where they are not, and they all have only one button done up, he will fasten his jacket similarly, just to be the same!' And he disappeared into the darkness mouthing, now to his own satisfaction, repetitively, 'Just to be the same!' So much for the morally enlightening power of literary studies. One person who can confirm this story is Robert Rendell, Trinity Hall, 1955, if he is still alive!*

Amities,
Nigel Thomas (Trinity Hall 1955)

* *Sadly, Robert Rendell died in 2011.*

Why don't you ask alumni why they think Cambridge English should, or should not, survive for another hundred years. It should make for good reading . . . at least if the Faculty has been doing its job for the past hundred! I also think alumni would be fascinated to hear from their fellow grads how reading English at Cambridge has either enhanced or hurt their careers and lives. So might current students.

Jonathan Ferry (Magdalene 1966)

I was pleased to read the excellent Faculty Newsletter. The introductory essay by Professor Steven Connor discusses the question of the beginnings of 'Cambridge English' but does not mention a most informative book by E.M.W. Tillyard, a former Master of Jesus, entitled *The Muse Unchained*, the strap line 'An Intimate Account of the Revolution in English Studies at Cambridge' (published in 1958). Tillyard describes the steps by which the School of English secured a syllabus which gave it a scope freer than that allowed in any other British university. He relates how English was given a Tripos of its own in 1917 and that the actual examinations came into force in the Easter Term of 1919. Practical Criticism in the exam papers was introduced in 1925. This is not the place to continue with the many names and decisions involved but Tillyard patiently examines the whole history of which he was one of the founders. The book is essential reading for those interested in the founding of the English Tripos.

Yours sincerely,
Arnold Wilson (Selwyn 1951)

In the light of these comments, it might be interesting to consider an extract from W.W. Robson's 1958 review of Tillyard's book.

Dr. Tillyard's story was worth telling, and he has told it well. But it is a pity that he has avoided particular discussion of educational issues that are still in need of arguing. ... Dr. Tillyard avoids fundamentals. He is admirable in guiding us through the intricacies of academic politics, but he gives us no clear idea of what was—and is—at stake. Is 'English' a subject, or a meeting-point of several subjects? Has it one characteristic discipline, or several distinct disciplines, or a mixture of disciplines, or no discipline at all? ... his short epilogue, in which he offers a more general discussion of academic English, begs many questions. If 'criticism' is to be the paradigm for the discipline of an English school, its practice will involve evaluation—the assertion, implicit or explicit, of Personal preferences and rejections; no English critic, whatever he may have said or thought he was doing, has refrained from evaluative judgments, and it is hard to imagine any useful critic who did. But this raises many difficult and delicate questions about the relative maturity of undergraduates, about the setting and marking of papers, the phrasing of questions, the kind of criteria to be applied ... the Cambridge English School was and is a great educational experiment, the success or failure of which has a most pressing interest for anyone who has any cares or hopes for the future of humane studies in England. (*The Spectator*, 31 Oct 1958, p.22)

Dr Helena Shire's Books

Alisoun Gardner-Medwin wrote: 'Thank you so much for putting my message in the Newsletter. It seems to have been very successful. I've had lots of charming emails, with amusing tales about my mother.'