

The Dark Is Rising

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Starter For Tench

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Loneliness On Air

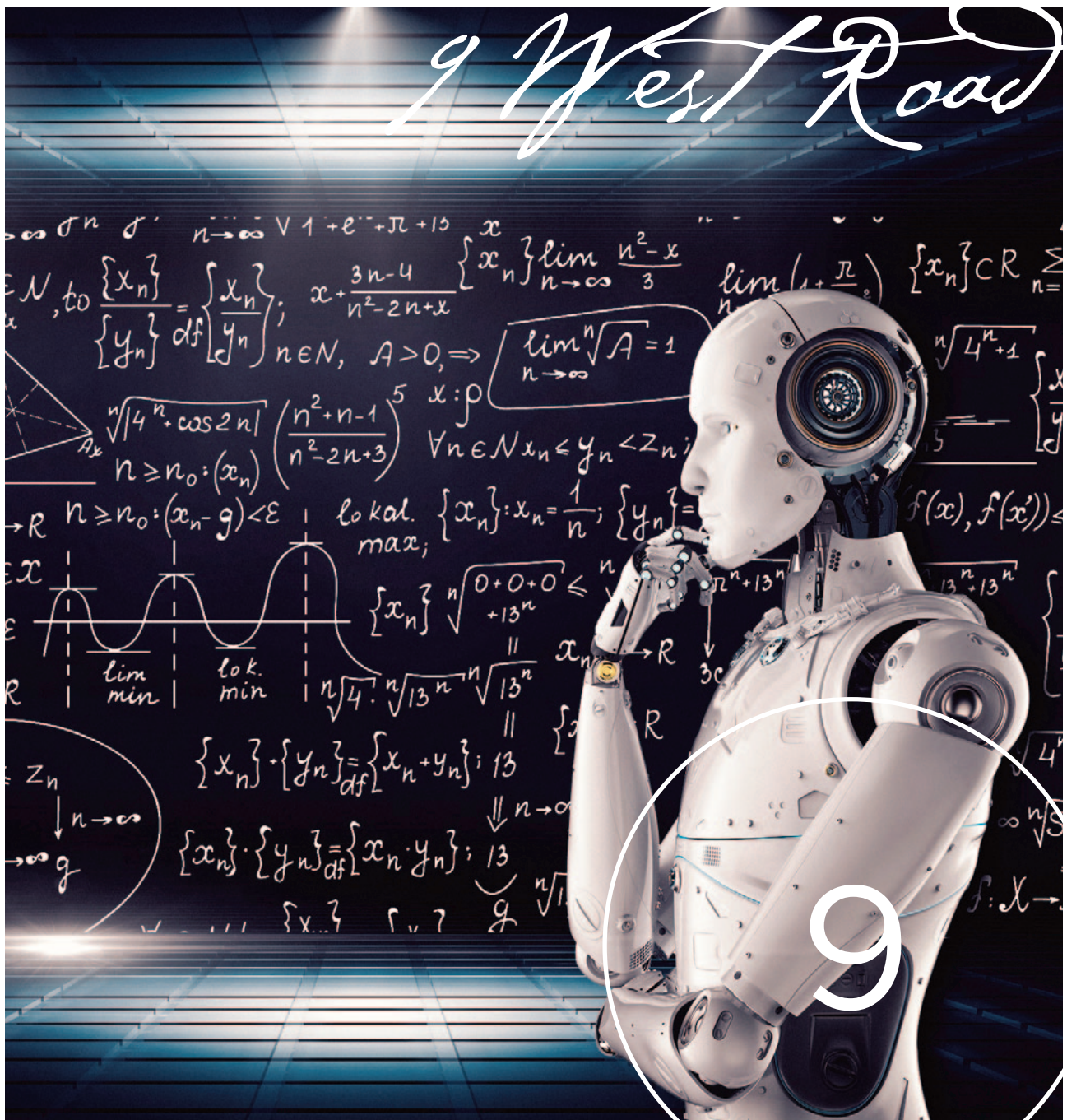
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Immortal Minds

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News from the Faculty of English, Cambridge

# 9 WEST ROAD



# LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

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This is the second of my three scheduled Chair's letters, and my intention for the middle year of my tenure is to spend as much time as I can looking to the future. That seems to be the right thing to do: having learned the ropes (somewhat), it's time to make plans. For the most part, I am doing that optimistically. With excellent colleagues, excellent students, and expanding intellectual horizons in teaching and research, we have a lot to be positive about. The pages of *9 West Road*, this issue and past issues, show you many specific reasons why.

I said I was optimistic for the most part, and I want to spend a bit of time in this letter explaining why my outlook cannot be wholly positive – but also what we might all do about that. The subject nationally faces huge challenges, which are escalating rapidly. Future projections of the numbers of English Literature students applying to UK universities suggest a large decline. These are being contested, but some universities already have them in mind as they make cuts. Closely related to this – a cause of the downbeat projections, but also another symptom of the general problems in attitudes towards our subject – is the steep decline in the number of pupils taking English Literature A-level.

My hope is that Cambridge will play a significant part in national efforts to promote the subject, work with school teachers, and resist narratives – some very flawed ones – about the way that studying English affects career prospects. The real figures about earnings, for example, do not support a fear-inducing narrative that the arts and humanities negatively affect students' financial futures. We can continue, of course, to talk about what we think are the non-financial benefits of critical, analytical, thoughtful work. We are being joined by a new Outreach Coordinator, Anne Winship, who will help us get positive messages into the right places.

Former students can help us a lot as we think through these arguments and try to make them better. I would be very happy to hear from readers of *9 West Road* who have reflected on their studies and the ways they have fed into the other aspects of their lives. Over the years I have heard lots of people's reflections on their work in Cambridge, and have some ideas already from these conversations. However, there has been one trend in the comments that I have often wanted to push back against, but have not done so systematically. This seems like an opportunity to do so.

It may be that I have spoken to an unrepresentative sample of former students, but it has often struck me that when relating memories of student days, especially of undergraduate study, there is a tendency to be too self-critical and self-deprecating. People think of their younger selves as rather hapless, somewhat idle and chaotic. Lectures passed by in a daze, seminars

were dominated by the need to stay out of view, supervisions were mostly bluffing; essays were last-minute and fragmentary, and exam success was more or less inexplicable.

In every specific case I have encountered, this seemed to me to be an unfair characterization of student achievement, sometimes radically so. They came from people who had covered lots of ground, constantly come up with interesting ideas, and in some cases had battled against adversity of one kind or other, to their great credit. Too often, I have come to think, it seems like people remember moments of embarrassment and a general feeling of term-time haste more readily than the many instances of careful thinking, insightful writing, and worthy survival, a highly impressive thing really, when there are different books to read and complex ideas to form every week.

Of course, in some of these cases, I was the one possibly being fooled by a sketchy effort. It's in my interest to think that in reality the preparation was creditworthy and the discussion soundly based. Even allowing for that bias on my part, I still think that people err too far on the side of self-caricature. It may be a kind of retrospective 'impostor syndrome'. It may be that the feeling of making progress in one's life depends on identifying some characteristics that have been left behind. The characteristics identified may well all have been there, but somehow or other the vast majority of students achieve a great deal while they are here, and I wish they all recognized it.

I think it's important to set aside some of this tendency to downgrade the achievements involved in studying a subject like English in a place like Cambridge. Self-deprecation can slide into a feeling that one's studies didn't contribute a great deal to the things that happened later. It makes it harder to think or speak with conviction about the value of something that lots of us think is very valuable. In many cases the specific benefits of fathoming the politics of the post-pastoral, or the dynamics of desire in sonnets, must of course be difficult to trace. However, when remembered fully, the practice of critical, careful thinking, the need for independent reading and research, and the kinds of accountability the teaching system brings into play, must be something of an education.

So, as I think about how to address the threats to student numbers and to the whole ecosystem of literary study in the UK, I would like to reassure most of those self-deprecating former students – maybe not quite all – that if you have memories of dodgy work and wavering commitment, they are not the whole story. Most likely, as is also true of our current students, you were great.

**Raphael Lyne**

Professor of Renaissance Literature

Chair of the Faculty of English

Fellow and Director of Studies at Murray Edwards College

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<sup>1</sup>Please get in contact at [newsletter@english.cam.ac.uk](mailto:newsletter@english.cam.ac.uk) if you have any observations to share, about either the past or the future of English studies! These may form the basis of an article, but nothing will be printed in the newsletter without express permission.



On adapting Susan Cooper's *The Dark Is Rising*  
as an audio-drama for BBC World Service

# the dark is rising

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**“When the dark comes rising, six shall turn it back;  
Three from the circle, three from the track;  
Wood, bronze, iron; water, fire, stone;  
Five will return, and one go alone.”**

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Michael Heslop's cover art for  
the 1976 Puffin edition of *The  
Dark is Rising*

I first read Susan Cooper's novel *The Dark Is Rising* (1973) in the summer I turned thirteen, the year the Berlin Wall came down. I read it by torchlight under the bedclothes, not because of parental curfew or power-cut, but because that seemed the safest place to read what was then, unmistakably, the eeriest book I'd ever met.

Eeriness is different in kind to horror. Eeriness thrives in edge-of-the-eye glimpses; horror is full-frontal. The

eerie lives in the same family of feelings as Freud's 'uncanny', which in its original German, *unheimlich*,

famously means 'unhomely'. A core power of Cooper's novel lies in its counterpointing of the homely and the unhomely. It opens in the domestic clamour of the Stanton family house, in a quiet English village in the upper Thames valley. It's 20th December: the eve of both the Winter Solstice and the eleventh birthday of Will, the youngest of the Stanton children. Inside the house, all is pre-Christmas chaos, baking smells and familiarity. But in the wintry landscape around, something is very wrong. Rooks are behaving strangely, dogs are suddenly afraid of Will, a blizzard is coming, and 'a shadowy awareness of evil' is building. Will's life is about to change forever — for he will become caught up in an ancient battle between the forces of the Light and those of the Dark, which are always strongest at Midwinter. His young shoulders are soon to bear an immense burden.

*The Dark Is Rising* sank deep into my bones. Its characters — tall Merriman, capable of such warmth



Rob Macfarlane (R) and Simon McBurney (L) during the workshop/development phase of *The Dark Is Rising*, at Hawkwood College in Gloucestershire in April 2022. Photo credit: Complicité Theatre Company.

and such wrath; the Lady with her leitmotif of haunting, ethereal music; wise young Will; horned Herne — leapt into my imagination, and have never left. I was also durably influenced as a writer myself by Cooper’s sense of landscape as a memory-shaping, time-slipping medium, present more widely in the tradition of Anglo-American fantasy fiction that runs from John Masefield’s *The Box of Delights* (1935), through Alan Garner (whose excellent *Treacle Walker* was shortlisted for the Booker Prize last year), Ursula Le Guin’s *EarthSea* books (1968-2001), Cooper herself and on to Robert Holdstock and Philip Pullman. Places, in the work of all these writers, carry auras and memories; they act both archivally and prophetically. Landscape is a palimpsest upon which ancient stories are both contested and renewed.

I know of many other writers and artists, among them Katherine Rundell and Helen Macdonald, for whom Cooper’s work has also been influential. For Max Porter, author of *Lanny* and *Grief is the Thing With Feathers*, *The Dark Is Rising* series ‘did more for my imagination, for my vocabulary, for any curiosity or concern I had for Englishness, for History, for listening, than anything I learnt at school’; it gave him and his brother ‘a mythology that we could see and feel around us in rural England, and on our windswept holiday weeks in Snowdonia.’ Porter and I both read the novel in the same edition: a Puffin paperback with

a surreally haunting cover design by Michael Heslop, which I can still summon it in a blink to my mind’s eye: a green-pink Herne, part-human, part-deer, part owl, part god-knows-what, mounted on a white horse, galloping towards the viewer over winter fields, and held in the cross-hairs of a rifle sight.

Millions of other readers have met Cooper’s work and never forgotten it. Five years ago, with the poet Julia Bird, I co-ran a midwinter *Dark Is Rising* reading group on Twitter. Thousands of people joined from dozens of countries. #TheDarkIsReading trended nationally on Twitter, and the online outpouring of affection for the book was immense. This winter *The Dark Is Rising* has, I hope, found new audiences around the world. For — working with the actor, director and theatre-maker Simon McBurney, and supported by Complicité (the theatre company that Simon co-founded) — I spent much of 2022 adapting *The Dark Is Rising* as a 12-part audio drama for the BBC World Service. The project had its origin in 2017, when I gave a copy of *The Dark Is Rising* to Simon, after realising he’d never heard of it. Around that time, Simon and I had been discussing possible work we might make together concerning questions of landscape, language, belonging and myth — questions which fascinated us both greatly, and which had been given extra urgency both by Brexit and by the planetary poly-crisis increasingly named as ‘the Anthropocene’.



Simon read Cooper's novel aloud to his young son, Teyo. Then he read it aloud to Teyo for a second time. Then he and Complicité developed the idea of adapting it — and I jumped at their invitation of involvement. It made immediate sense to me to translate *The Dark Is Rising* into sound. For this is a novel, far more than most, to which one listens with the mind's ear as well as seeing in the mind's eye. Its soundscape is deeply complex; brimful of noises, melodies, songs and chants. A smith hammers on his anvil, the Yell Hounds howl when Herne launches the Wild Hunt, and the ice cracks on the Thames when the Dark's cold is at its fiercest. Speaking aloud is often crucial in Cooper's novel: words hold force when given voice — you must watch what you say.

Early in the process of adaptation, in discussion with Complicité's producer Tim Bell, Simon and I resolved on four creative principles. First, that we would honour Susan's novel and its fifty-year-long power of enchantment. Second, that we'd make something far more ambitious than 'just' an abridged reading of the book; third, that the supernatural elements of the production would be recorded binaurally (using two microphones to create a 3D effect), to immerse the listener acoustically; and fourth, that we'd draw out the trans-national nature of Cooper's vision. For the 'Old Ones' — the warriors of the Light — are taken from every country and background, and it is a Jamaican 'Old One' who gives to Will an object of immense power, without which his quest cannot be completed. It felt right to us that our adaptation would be broadcast on the World Service, and heard in nearly ninety countries.

Working with Simon on the adaptation was inspirational; a twelve-month masterclass in the skills of narrative pacing, dramatic tempo and creative perfectionism. As well as co-adapting the text with me, Simon also directed the performances and voiced the narrator. Complicité slowly gathered a superb cast including Toby Jones, Harriet Walter, Miles Yekinni as Herne, Natasha K. Stone as the 'devil-girl' Maggie Barnes, and 13-year-old Noah Alexander, who plays young Will Stanton.

Though it is structured around a Manichean opposition of Light and Dark, Cooper's novel refuses to cleave into neat binaries. I think of it, in fact, as a Cold War novel, first published in 1973 and kindred in its moral complexities to early Le Carré; describing a conflict fought in the shadows, in which no one is clean. At its heart is the relationship between the central 'Old One', Merriman (played by Paul Rhys in our adaptation), and his 'liege man' Hawkin (played by Toby Jones). Merriman must have a splinter of ice in his heart to do what he does to Hawkin. 'This is a cold battle we are in',

Merriman tells Will, chillingly, 'and we must sometimes do cold things'. At the novel's core is a hard question: when the dark comes rising, who will turn it back?

Susan Cooper was born in Buckinghamshire in 1935. When I met her in America in 2019, she told me how, when the air-raid siren sounded during the Blitz, her mother would hurry her and her brother down into a nearby bomb-shelter. There, by candlelight, she would tell stories to the children to take their minds off the danger. What Susan recalled — a detail that lifted the hairs on the back of my neck as she told me — was that when the bombs fell, their detonations would cause the candle-flame to quiver. The nearer the explosion, the more the flame shook. Boom...shiver... Boom...shiver...Boom! Shiver!

People have been telling stories to one another around fires of one kind and another for thousands of years. Susan learned the power of story-telling in the air-raid shelter as bombs fell around her. I first read her books by torchlight, and they helped me cope with the anxiety I felt then at the possibility of nuclear conflict. Now new-old fears — climate chaos, war, ecological collapse — menace our minds. The dark is always rising, and it is the work of the greatest stories to hold it back.

*The BBC World Service adaptation of *The Dark is Rising* was broadcast between 20th and 31st December 2022, and is available on BBC Sounds.*

**Robert Macfarlane, Emmanuel**



# A GOOD DEATH?

What might a good death look like, and how can works of past literature help us to find out?

A brief and apparently matter-of-fact exchange recorded by Boswell captures in miniature a battle that Samuel Johnson fought, intensely and viscerally, all of his life.

**Boswell:** 'But is not the fear of death natural to man?'

**Johnson:** 'So much so, Sir, that the whole of life is but keeping away the thoughts of it.' (*The Life of Samuel Johnson, 1791*).

This, Johnson tells us, has been the 'remedy' of 'all ages' for the fear of death: 'chase it away from the present moment' and 'gain a suspence of the pain that could not be cured' (Sermons). Unfortunately, this 'keeping away' of the inevitable was held in a very uneasy relationship with another equally long tradition, which Johnson also advocated: 'A frequent and attentive prospect of the moment, which must put a period to all our schemes [...] is, indeed, of the utmost efficacy to the just and rational regulation of our lives' (*The Rambler*).

One of the texts Johnson read as he grappled with these conflicting demands was Jeremy Taylor's *The Rules and Exercises of Holy Dying* (1651), a popular work of Christian instruction in the mode of the *ars moriendi* ('arts of death'). His admiration for it, however, was in large part aesthetic. 'It is grand, it is awful, it is pathetic; bright and energetick, it irresistibly seizes the attention'; it is, too, 'copiously diversified'. To illustrate this claim he quotes at length from what he calls Taylor's 'painting' of the 'various ways' that death 'accosts' us.

*"Death meets us everywhere, and is procured by every instrument, and in all chances and enters in at many doors; by violence and secret influence; by the aspect of a star and the stink of a mist; by the*

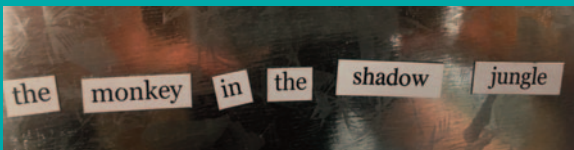
*emissions of a cloud and the meeting of a vapour; by the fall of a chariot and the stumbling at a stone; by a full meal or an empty stomach; by watching at the wine or by watching at prayers; by the sun or the moon; by a heat or a cold; by sleepless nights or sleeping days; by water frozen into the hardness and sharpness of a dagger, or water thawed into the floods of a river; by a hair or a raisin; by violent motion or sitting still; by severity or dissolution; by God's mercy or God's anger; by everything in providence and everything in manners; by everything in nature and everything in chance."* (Johnson, 'A History of the Language').

It was from a tentative set of conversations between two researchers of eighteenth-century literature and culture (Dr Laura Davies and Dr Emma Salgård Cunha) about this and other fascinating examples of historical death literature – reflecting on how and why they are unlike a great deal of what is written today even when the fears and struggles that Samuel Johnson experienced remain familiar to many of us – that the 'A Good Death?' project originated in 2019. What, amongst other things, we wondered, was it about this particular quotation that so spoke to Johnson, and later also to Samuel Beckett, whose unfinished play *Last Wishes* dramatises a bleakly comic exchange at Johnson's house at Bolt Court in 1781 between the various people on whom he had taken pity and allowed to live with him? One of them reads Taylor, and they all speculate on the line about death meeting us 'by a hair or a raisin.'

An interdisciplinary research and impact initiative based in the Faculty of English, we bring historical and contemporary ideas about death, dying and grief into conversation with one another: not only recovering for wider audiences texts and authors



*Fortune tellers (adapted from the kind many of us made at school). Workshop participants make these by thinking about the ideas they associate with death and grief; they then share them with other participants as a conversation-starter.*



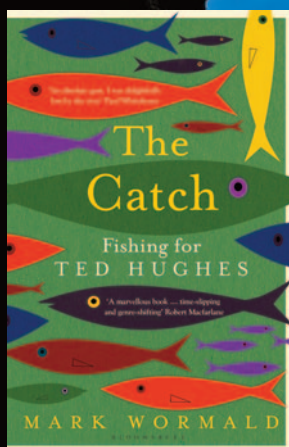
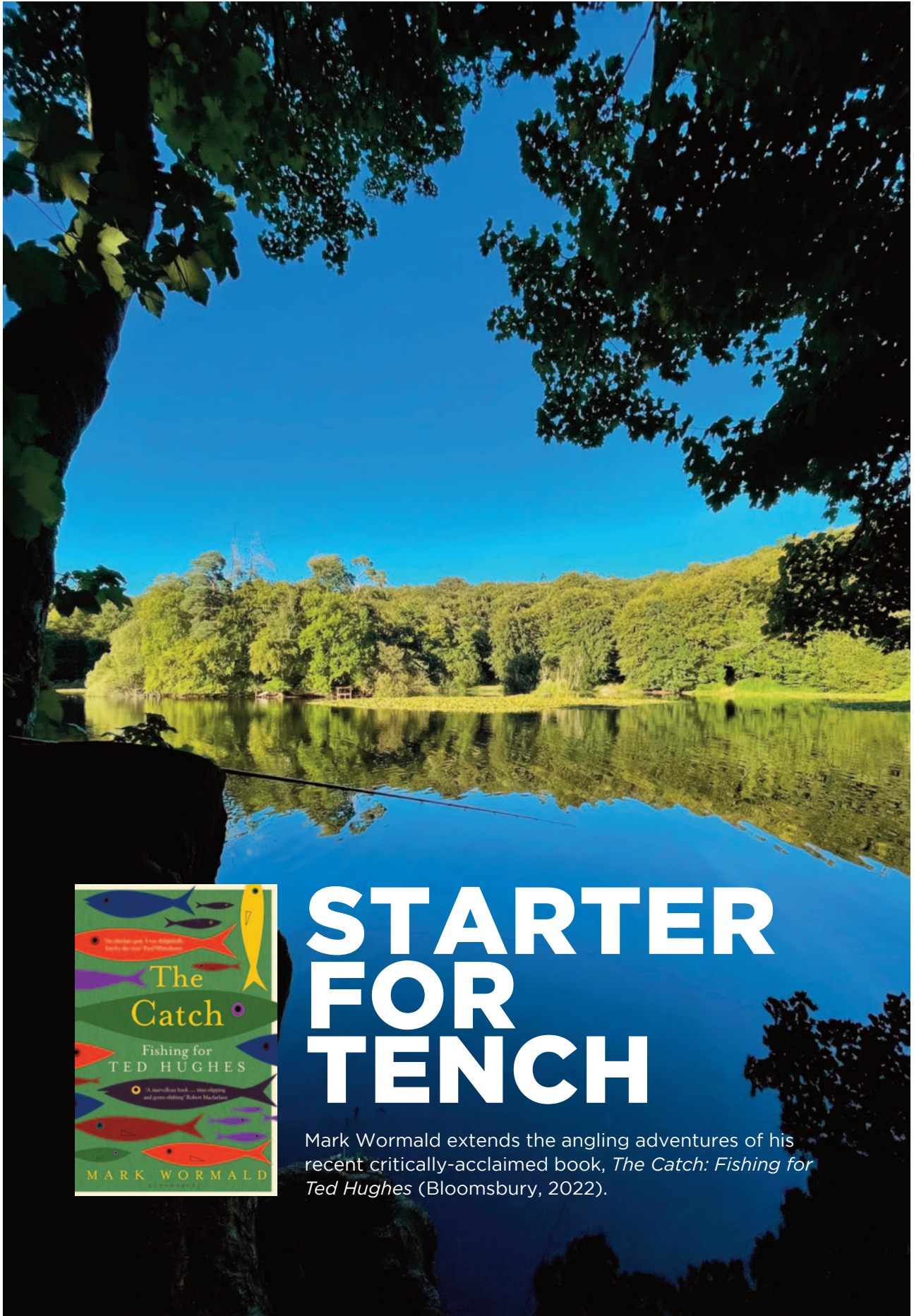
*Magnetic Poetry on the theme of death, created by a member of the public at an event in Cambridge City Library.*

that are no longer well-known, but also drawing on the power of literature and creative writing to tackle the challenge of talking openly and thoughtfully about death, and to enhance our twenty-first century understandings of what it means to die well. We do this through a range of activities: public events open to all involving creative writing and craft activities, invited speakers, discussion sessions and so on; collaborations to create original new creative works, including four short plays written with Menagerie Theatre; bespoke workshops for those who work in end-of-life care or bereavement support; and, through our partnership with Arthur Rank Hospice, monthly reading and discussion sessions with individuals who have a terminal diagnosis. You can read about all these activities and watch or listen to our short plays, as well as browse our collection of poems and reflective writing, on our website: <https://good-death.english.cam.ac.uk/>.

Broadly speaking, then, the 'A Good Death?' project sits within the research field of the medical humanities. There is an established body of scholarship around arts therapies and creative activities in palliative care, and Rita Charon's work on narrative medicine has, over the last twenty years, been instrumental in bringing story-telling and the structure of literary narratives into the training of healthcare professionals in the US. But there remains a great deal to investigate. Much of the existing work on poetry and non-narrative forms in relation to end of life is vague, and the dominance of medical paradigms and terminology around such key concepts for patient choice as the nature of care and the experience of pain continues to mean that expressing wishes and communicating authentically is often harder than it might be. Our view is that through the alternative imaginative possibilities to which literature can provide access, by its capacity to capture, signify or mean many (often contradictory) things at once, and by its taking seriously of the inherent unknowability of death – something that Taylor, Johnson and Beckett clearly do grasp – a mode of medical humanities research that is truly literary-critical in its sensibilities represents a vital and humane public health intervention.

**Laura Davies, King's**





# STARTER FOR TENCH

Mark Wormald extends the angling adventures of his recent critically-acclaimed book, *The Catch: Fishing for Ted Hughes* (Bloomsbury, 2022).

One sweltering afternoon last August, I found myself driving north out of Kilkenny, the ancient cultural capital of Ireland's south east, on one of those expeditions I've grown to love, over the past decade of fishing in Ted Hughes' footsteps. It was, I already knew, looking like the kind of adventure where even mischance has its yield – where advance research and reading nearly always fall short but then swim together with sheer luck, happenstance, good or bad.

Take my ten minutes on the parking clock by the medieval bridge over the river Nore. I was, though already furnished with weirdly sophisticated baits – a tin of pineapple-syruped sweetcorn, a resealable bag of krill-flavoured boilies, which the proprietor of Hooked!, Newmarket's tackle shop, assured me would prove wholly satisfactory gob stoppers for my intended Irish quarry – out for old-fashioned local backup. Maggots. This had always been part of the plan: way back east, I'd also bought a tub for the writhing beauties, with a perforated lid to let them breathe.

My phone did its job, led me to the covered passage just down from Kytler's Inn where the tackle shop stood – closed, for three days! A fishing trip of his own, I guessed, remembering the framed photograph with a carp my Newmarket authority had shown me when I'd dared to explain my current mission. Still, though, I was cursing my luck when I emerged into the Kilkenny sunlight and, blinking, turned back along the Nore towards my car – straight past the ticket office for the internationally renowned Kilkenny Arts Festival, in full swing that week. I grabbed a brochure, to read on the ferry home in a few days' time, then crossed the river, beat the parking clock, and was, within a quarter of an hour, sipping a drink on the hotel terrace waiting for Aoine Landweer-Cooke and the lunchtime conversation that was the essential prelude to my day's real target forty-five minutes north-west.

We'd first met six years before, in Cambridge. What Aoine told me then – of her father the artist Barrie Cooke's friendship with Ted Hughes, and her own time with them both, on riverbanks in Devon as well as Ireland, and afloat with Ted's son Nicholas on storm-torn pike-haunted loughs – had done almost as much to convince me of the wild realities of what fishing with them all was like as Ted's diaries. She's the one survivor of those trips. 'Fishing is my way of breathing,' Ted had told her once. She saw how much that meant to me. The following year, she'd shown me Barrie's fish book, his own record of trips, catches, with the Hugheses and Murphys and Cullens and, just once, with 'S.H.', initials that she knew would thrill me too.

Now, over lunch, she fed me, as casually as she always does, more confirming detail of where I was headed. She and Barrie went there in all seasons. She was expected, as a young girl, to pitch the ex-army canvas

tent, to lug it round the lake and back again whether it was soaked or ice-stiffened. But the rewards? Well, bags full of tench, and the odd pike, and photographs of them. And a connection to her father she never lost, and was now prepared to share with me. She'd found a letter from Barrie to her when she was, at eleven, alone in Norway, telling her that he'd sent one such picture to Nicholas Hughes, and that it had piqued his determination to outdo her – she was three years younger – by catching big Irish pike, and that he'd just arrived with his father. It was this letter, which she sent me as an attachment when my book *The Catch* was in press, that had hooked me, as Aoine must have known it would.

The letter named the townland where that tench lake lay, as neither the Fish Book nor anyone else among Barrie's fishing friends had, at least to me. Their guesses or guidance had been well-meant but partial. 'Oh, at Castlecomer, or somewhere near.' In 2021 I'd got close to a wooded lake on the outskirts, but it's now a leisure park, and the pay-as-you-enter rising barrier that confronted my car on my last trip over had left me convinced that if that was Barrie and Aoine's tench lake, then history had done it a disservice; the same kind of sanitizing opening up that has befallen the oxbow lake beside the River Don where the teenage Ted Hughes had once fished, but which is now a securely fenced match fishery with its own car park. I've not felt tempted to fish there.

Until I listened to Aoine over lunch that sweltering August, I'd had my doubts about this candidate too. But what she said dissolved them – as well as stopping me fretting about the maggots: as 'live animals', the British blends on which Irish anglers had always relied fell victims to Brexit, so even if the tackle shop had been open I'd have had to settle for frozen. So as I skirted Kilkenny and headed north on the Castlecomer Road, then pushed beyond that leisure park, through a maze of country lanes, and finally passed a row of estate cottages to edge through vast stone gates and towards what, yes, must be the wood which held what Barrie called 'Wood lake', nothing but excitement mounted.

Why? Not just because this was the lake to which, a marginal pencil annotation in Barrie Cooke's Fish Book had suggested, he had once brought S.H., in August





1974 – 1974 being the first running of the Kilkenny Arts Week, which Barrie and Sonja Landweer, Aoine’s mother and in due course, as ‘A Dutch Potter in Ireland’, the subject of her own poem by the Nobel Laureate, had been instrumental in founding. It was also that it had produced a poem, and paintings, of its own.

Among the hundred or so annotated typescripts of poems by Seamus Heaney in Barrie Cooke’s literary archive, now in Cambridge at Pembroke College Library, there is one, ‘The Guttural Muse’, dated 19 September 1977. A note recalls that Sunday evening at Barrie and Aoine’s tench lake, along with another Heaney had spent 120 miles north in a Monaghan hotel. The rich young voices he’d heard spilling out of a disco and into the hotel car park that midnight beside the hotel’s own lake reminded him of ‘oily bubbles the feeding tench sent up / That dusk’. Within seconds of emerging from the trees that August afternoon I knew at once that dusk had fallen here, beside the tree-girdled lily-padded wonder of an islanded lake I was parking by now. I recognized it at once, from the intensely vivid paintings Barrie Cooke started making of his ‘Tench Lake’ in 1974.

The full story of that evening, and my return the following dawn, to a favoured lie under a particular tree that Conor Sims, the guardian of this lake, had pointed out, after an exchange of WhatsApp messages had him cycling out to meet me, and indeed of ‘Tench Lake’ and ‘The Guttural Muse’, will need to wait for the book I’m writing now, *Casting and Gathering: A Painter and Some Poets*, about the half-century of great creative friendships Barrie Cooke sustained with Seamus Heaney



and John Montague as well as with Ted Hughes. But I’m pretty sure from what Conor told me that the poet and the painter must have stayed till midnight, if not all night, to catch those bubbles. I saw and even photographed them at 5.50 am, when my boilies and sweetcorn combined first to bring the feeding tench within range, then persuaded one of them to take my bait, make my float slide away and, my barbless hook set, swim with supreme power fully eighty yards towards the lily pads before the monofilament parted.

So I lost the fish, and so have yet to handle the doctor fish, or feel for myself the tench’s healing slime. But in those moments I had lived the line, caught the lake, and knew myself launched on the quest for even bigger fish.

**Mark Wormald, Pembroke**





## INTRODUCING NEW MEMBERS OF FACULTY: JULIA MICHIKO HORI, FACULTY OF ENGLISH

I arrived at Cambridge in January of 2022 after completing a postdoc at the California Institute of Technology where I designed and taught literature and visual culture courses on a broad range of topics including plantation economies and aesthetics, colonialism and tourism, and the politics of heritage culture. Combined, these offerings helped me to cultivate and refine the questions that guide my research and teaching here at Cambridge. Since joining the faculty, in addition to my lecture and seminar offerings, I have had the pleasure of working closely with students via our unique supervision system. A first for me, this structure of teaching has been very meaningful to the development of my pedagogical approaches in postcolonial and Caribbean literatures.

My current book project, *Restoring Empire: British Imperial Nostalgia, Colonial Space, and Violence since WWII*, examines the relationship between built space and violence in the legacies of British imperial rule and Caribbean plantation slavery. I investigate the battlegrounds of cultural memory in material sites and architectural rhetoric on both sides of the Atlantic, tracing the enduring powers of colonial planning, plantation aesthetics, and imperial nostalgia after WWII. In five chapters, I analyze architecture not just as the authored design of buildings but as the material organization of ideas and bodies in space and, in particular, as archives of imperial narrative. By reading the narratives encrypted within built space, the book seeks to expand the approaches to postcolonial theory and the materials of literary study. The book contributes to ongoing academic debates and public conversations about postcolonial reconciliation and heritage culture in three ways. First, it analyzes the paradigms of colonial heritage restoration in the British Caribbean after WWII. Using plantation restoration schemes as case studies, it dissects the practices of leading architects and institutions to show how their redesigns celebrate the power of the planter class while concealing the inherited structures and ideologies of white minority rule that continue to shape postcolonial life. Second, *Restoring Empire* explores how a climate of postwar imperial loss, decolonization, and architectural devastation met with racial panic over newly visible Caribbean migrant populations in Britain. Key witnesses and interpreters of this racial/spatial confrontation include George Lamming,

Sam Selvon, Ruth Glass, and Stuart Hall. Third, *Restoring* looks closely at the aesthetic remainders and inherited political silences of postwar imperial heritage culture to identify colonial logics that still operate in contemporary invocations of traditional architecture and planning. The defensive tracts of conservative British intellectuals such as Roger Scruton and the classical architectural mandates of white supremacist organizations such as Traditional Britain Group make vivid the relation between the protection of empire's monumental structures through narratives of heritage preservation and the preservation of structural racism.



Hew Locke,  
*Colston* (2006)



La Vaughn Belle,  
*Constructed  
Manumissions* (2017)



Kara Walker,  
*Fons Americanus*  
(2019)

The stories that the built world embodies and tells about slavery and empire matter. By examining public memory as a product of architecture, design, and architectural narrative, *Restoring* is a starting point for my long-term goal of expanding the interdisciplinary study and pedagogy of postcolonial space and aesthetics. Though still very new to Cambridge, I have greatly enjoyed collaborating with colleagues and students on questions of empire, anticolonialism, and heritage discourse. I look forward to continuing these enriching conversations as I work towards the completion of my monograph.

**Julia Michiko Hori, Faculty of English**



# Revolutionary Papers

## Counter-Institutions, Politics and Culture in Periodicals of the Global South

**April 28—30, 2022  
Community House  
41 Salt River Rd  
Cape Town**

**For registration and programme visit [revolutionarypapers.org](http://revolutionarypapers.org)**

Revolutionary Papers is a transnational collaboration between the University of Cambridge, London School of Economics, and the University of the Western Cape

Conference Poster. Designed by Lizzie Malcolm

'Revolutionary Papers', a new research and teaching initiative on anticolonial and anti-imperial periodicals from the Global South, explores this question and looks at how these publications circulated new political ideas and built networks, often under conditions of intense repression. The project was set up by Dr Mahvish Ahmad from LSE's Department of Sociology, Dr Hana Morgenstern from Cambridge University's Faculty of English and Dr Koni Benson from the Department of History at the University of the Western Cape. It pulls together researchers from a myriad of disciplines worldwide creating a global network of projects exploring different journals.

### CONTEXT IS KEY

What started as a small idea between the group to host a workshop on radical anticolonial journals very quickly spiralled into a much bigger project. "We put a call out for papers and were expecting maybe 15 applications. Instead, we got over 80. Then, COVID-19 hit and we've had two years working together online, running study circles and creating a website with the idea of developing digital teaching tools on how to work with movement materials in the classroom," explains Dr Benson.

Creating a space where researchers working on anticolonial journals can come together to collaborate and share their work is very important to the team.

## REVOLUTIONARY PAPERS: an exploration of anticolonial and anti-imperial journals

How have periodicals in the form of newspapers, magazines, journals, and newsletters played a key role in establishing new social and cultural movements and institutions?

*Mahvish Ahmed, Chana Morgenstern and Koni Benson in conversation with Charlotte Kellaway*

However, they are keen to stress the importance of not just unearthing and sharing periodicals in the project but also understanding the context in which they were produced.

"Anticolonial pamphlets and magazines are usually published in very urgent political conditions. Often, they are reacting to something that's happening, current events and figures. You can't understand the content of the journal if you can't understand that context," explains Dr Ahmad. For example, she is currently researching *Jabal*, a banned underground pamphlet from the 1970s in Pakistan. This has involved in-depth conversations with the people who were

involved in its production and careful checking that it is safe for her to share.

Dr Benson agrees and highlights the project's ethical considerations. "There's a long history of colonial extraction of archives. If you want to challenge those archives, you don't just want new content, you need new forms and new ethics and so a lot of this is around building relationships with people who were at the forefront of these movements where people's lives were on the line and there were high stakes," she says.

## LOST HISTORIES

For the project, Dr Benson is researching *The Namibian Review: A Journal of Contemporary South West African Affairs*. She explains that it took her a year to confirm just how many editions were put out. It is common that journals produced in the midst of militant movements remain scattered and difficult to find. And the project is full of other similarly long-lost revolutionary papers used by groups from the Black Panthers to collectives working in opposition to Pinochet's regime in Chile in the 1970s and 1980s. Many of the people working on social movements were killed or imprisoned, their stories lost with them. Where the movement's papers have survived, there has often been a lack of infrastructure and resources to keep them in good condition so unearthing them can be an incredibly difficult task.

"As someone who studies anticolonial movements and cultures, it's exciting to see there are people in so many different countries across the world digging up archives about, sometimes really major, social movements that we know nothing about because our history is so Euro-centric and narrow. It excites me that those projects will exist and will, on some level, be publicly available for people to read about," enthuses Dr Morgenstern, whose work focuses on two Palestinian anticolonial journals.

## A SHIFT IN PERSPECTIVE

Through the project, the team hope to create a space which brings people together to build on anticolonial thinking. "I'd like this project to help shift the way that disciplines in the humanities and social sciences look at anticolonialism and incorporate, understand and teach postcolonialism and postcolonial histories and cultures. One of my big goals is for it to reach students deep inside their education," says Dr Morgenstern.

Dr Ahmad agrees and adds: "The thing that has always irked me is that studying empire, colonialism and racism is still treated as a niche subject or a theoretical area when these are key questions in most of the world. Most of the world was colonised and subjected to racial

subjugation and imperial intervention. For that reason, the debates around these themes are incredibly rich. What does it mean when you say empire? What is it when you talk about it in Ethiopia versus when you talk about it in Mexico or Korea?"

The team underline the ongoing significance of the project and highlight how it raises important questions for today about borders and citizenship, inclusion, exclusion, and migration. "We are living in a moment where we're not given a sense there is an alternative to neo-liberal capitalism, and these journals were written where there was a sense of an alternative and they raised questions around what socialism means. This is something we can only collectively figure out. I can't just figure it out from reading *The Namibian Review*, so I really appreciate the space to learn across global and thematic areas," says Dr Benson. Going forwards, the team hope to expand the project, building on the work of their ancestors to open up the imaginations of what can be possible and highlight the alternatives available.

You can explore Revolutionary Papers here:  
<https://revolutionarypapers.org/>

*Dr Mahvish Ahmad, Dr Hana Morgenstern and Dr Koni Benson were speaking to Charlotte Kelloway, Media Relations Manager at LSE*

This article was first published in *Research for the World*, the social science magazine by LSE.

<https://www.lse.ac.uk/research/research-for-the-world/> / <https://www.lse.ac.uk/research/research-for-the-world/race-equity/revolutionary-papers-an-exploration-of-anticolonial-and-anti-imperial-journals>



*From the left, Dr Chana Morgenstern (Cambridge), Dr Mahvish Ahmad (LSE), Phokeng Setai (Exhibition Artist), Dr Koni Benson (UWC). Photo by Barry Christianson.*



# LITERARY CRITICISM AS ATTENTIONAL PRACTICE



We live, it is often asserted, in a distracted age. New digital technologies, the widespread prevalence of ADHD, a growing corporate focus upon the ‘attention economy’: all contribute to the sense of a pressing crisis for concentration. Johann Hari’s *Stolen Focus: Why You Can’t Pay Attention—and How to Think Deeply Again* (2022) offers but one recent instance of a spate of popular works that seek to counteract informational overload. A range of academic disciplines (psychology, philosophy of mind, neuroscience) has explored the nature and practice of attention with growing preoccupation over the past three decades.

How might literary criticism engage such topical concerns? One possible answer lies in the absorptive focus that ‘close’ reading has historically encouraged. Literary study, on this account, would be a refuge or redoubt from a constantly accelerating world. F. R. Leavis encouraged such a view, when he bemoaned the ‘vast and increasing inattention’ of mass culture. Yet Leavis himself is curiously unspecific about what the act of attending to literary texts actually comprises. Reading slowly, presumably, and carefully, armed with deep learning—but beyond that?

My present research aims to redress this shortfall, by considering more explicitly the widespread yet curiously unaddressed claim, that literary criticism represents a form of attentional practice. By charting

a broader history of readerly protocols and routines, I seek to put pressure on the belief, shared by Leavis and a good many critics who otherwise share little, that past historical periods betray a cognitive plenitude that contrasts with our own contemporary digital distraction. Cultures have never not been distracted, and never not worried over distraction: the historical archive repeatedly offers something more dynamic than the black-and-white contrast between unitary focus and passive diversion.

This research will produce my third monograph, in addition to a volume of essays, co-edited with Marion Thain (KCL), which explores how close reading represented a form of attentional practice, from the medieval period to our own contemporary culture. These connected works have three inter-related aims. The first is to provide the historically broad and multi-modal history of attention that remains to be written. Charles Le Brun's *Conférence sur l'expression générale et particulière* (1698) sought to realise René Descartes' description of the attitude in scientifically exact form background image the attentive viewer would develop her cognitive abilities by learning to read the state of attention itself. Yet as the centuries wore on, heated discussions interrogated what counted as 'pure' attention, which perennially risked devolving into monomania or the *idée fixe*, and whether it should be, as Le Brun suggested, free from affect or passion.

Literature plays a pivotal role in this broader cultural history. Twentieth-century formalisms have postulated a properly attentive reader as undistracted by body or emotion, engaged in the solitary contemplation of artworks: the art historian Michael Fried's description of a beholder 'so deeply absorbed in his meditation that it would be hard to distract him' proves exemplary in this regard. Yet previous cultures have read texts in very different ways. Henry Vaughan's *Silex Scintillans* (1650/1655) represents distraction as not only a cognitive but also a devotional state. Perfect attentiveness is reserved for God alone, with cognitive disruption a corollary of the Fall. Vaughan's metrical variations and disappointed rhymes do not merely represent distraction: they compel it.

Such effects are, moreover, not only experienced by individual readers. Charles Wesley's hymn 'Sober Vigilance' called for an attitude of total focus that, unlike with Vaughan's scattered lyric, could be perfected. Significantly, such vigilance was to be sung into being by a group of worshippers who maintained focus over extended temporal periods: the Watch Night that the Wesleys imported from Moravian forms of worship.

This cultural instance brings me to my second motivation in considering literary criticism as a form of

attentional practice: by so doing, we can relate humanistic enquiry to current research in cognitive science. Much experimental work over the past decades has demonstrated the significantly shared nature of attention: the neuroscientist Victoria Leong, with whom I am currently developing an interdisciplinary collaboration, has demonstrated that, when parents read rhythmically regular nursery rhymes while maintaining eye contact with their infants, the neural activity of both parties synchronises. Similarly, much recent cognitive science has explored what has become known as the 'default mode network'—a brain region that is activated in 'resting' states, in addition to the extended contemplation of art works. Humanistic researchers, I firmly believe, can do more than simply name-check such experimental work: they can also suggest ecologically valid empirical settings, through which we can better grasp the varied ways in which individuals and groups experience art.

Finally, my current research aims to forge two links between two aspects of our professional work that have, in recent decades, become increasingly estranged: our research and our teaching. My conviction that literary criticism is a form of attentional practice derives to no small extent from my own pedagogical experience: many of the readings of poems that my past books have offered belong not to me alone, but the complexly communal form of reading that emerges in a supervision setting: a difficult thing to acknowledge in a footnote.

But I believe that there is much to be gained from considering the teaching of English as a means of testing, extending and de-habituating attentional routine. To this end, I have developed a series of teaching 'protocols', loosely modelled on I.A.Richards's own experiments into cognitive priors. These cumulatively seek to challenge the model of the absorbed reader that I charted above, by restoring the shared, corporeal and productively distracted nature of reading. In one such exercise, in place of the silent reading of printed poem on the page, I offer my students an mp3 recording of a given work, ask them to walk through an area of Cambridge that they have never previously walked through, find a park bench, and record on their smartphones an oral essay, which they submit to the group along with a map of the chosen itinerary. These qualitative experiments in distributed attention can usefully augment more quantitative metrics. Over the past years I have been gathering as much such subjective data as I can; if you would like to add to it, by taking a walk, please do get in touch at [ejj25@cam.ac.uk](mailto:ejj25@cam.ac.uk).

**Ewan Jones, Downing**



## INTRODUCING NEW MEMBERS OF FACULTY: JOSEPH BITNEY, SELWYN COLLEGE



film still from *There's Always Tomorrow* (Douglas Sirk, 1956)

I came to Cambridge in 2021 from the University of Chicago, and I'm originally from Oregon in the 'Pacific Northwest' region of the United States. I was hired over Zoom during the pandemic, and thus ended up in the rather unique position of never having once set foot in the UK until I arrived to take up my lectureship. Despite this unusual start, I have found the Cambridge environment extremely congenial and stimulating, and it is a real privilege to be working in such a terrific Faculty.

My official position is very broad—'post-1900 Anglophone Literature and Culture'—but my own research focusses especially on classical Hollywood

cinema, film criticism and theory, and the modern novel. My current book project, which combines all of these interests and more, is centred on 'melodrama' as a wide-ranging modality of modern fiction and thought. Tentatively titled *Passionate Exchanges: Melodrama and the Commodity Form*, the book proposes a new way of thinking about melodrama as a mode in which emotions function more like commodities than like personal, interior 'feelings'. I first became interested in the topic when I began to think about why Douglas Sirk's celebrated Hollywood melodramas were giving unusual prominence not just to 'symbolic objects', as previous critics had claimed,



but to commodities in particular—a toy robot, a television set, or a Wedgwood teapot. In *All That Heaven Allows* (1955), for instance, one of the most self-consciously melodramatic scenes turns curiously on a particular kind of teapot—Wedgwood’s ‘Jasperware’—that was invented in 1774, the very year that Rousseau coined the term melodrama. Why, I began to wonder, was Sirk going out of his way to include this 18th century ur-commodity in the middle of his 1950s melodrama? And might we imagine that this and other similar scenes were actually allegorizing something about the operations of melodrama itself?

Across four chapters and a coda, my project aims to rethink some of the central concepts in melodrama studies and to provide a way of out of some of the field’s longstanding definitional debates. Part of this involves reading broadly across modern fiction and film; through examples ranging from early acting manuals to the novels of Dickens and Balzac to the famous Hollywood ‘women’s films’ of the 1930s and 40s, I trace the development of melodrama across media and analyse the particular way in which the mode turns emotions into standardized, fungible properties for exchange. But a large part of the project is also meta-critical in nature, returning to and reassessing the foundational 1970s scholarship on melodrama by critics like Peter Brooks and Thomas Elsaesser in order to chart a new path forward. In a chapter on the genre of ‘the family melodrama’, for instance, I undertake a detailed rereading of early film theory in order to highlight the fact that all of the films cited as archetypal ‘family melodramas’ are really films about family *businesses*. And this previously unmentioned fact, I argue, is actually the key to understanding the genre: it reveals that the ‘family melodrama’ is defined by the way that it treats the personal relations of the family like the impersonal, contract- and exchange-based relations of the market.

In addition to this current melodrama project, I have future pieces in the works on such topics as Nathaniel Hawthorne and distraction, surveillance cinema and the concept of ‘the interior’, and the long history of ‘*mise en scène*.’ But in the meantime, I am also enjoying teaching film and modern literature at both the undergraduate and MPhil level. I am particularly keen on introducing students to the close analysis of film form, prompting them to think carefully about things

like camera movement, shot composition, editing, the blocking of actors, and the use of lighting and colour. These are, of course, the very things that make film *film*, but they are simultaneously the kinds of things that tend to be neglected in popular film discussions. I recently came across an article from 1961 by the great film critic Robin Wood (who studied at Cambridge) lamenting the fact that discussions of movies revolve mostly around ‘the script’. What we need instead, Wood wrote, is ‘some means of analysing what Dr F.R. Leavis would call “local life,” some method of practical criticism of *mise-en-scène*’. More than sixty years later, it seems to me that this is exactly what we still need, and I am thrilled to have the opportunity to do it here at Cambridge.

**Joseph Bitney, Selwyn College**



9

# LONELINESS ON AIR



Radio broadcasts had a transformative role in combatting postwar cultures of isolation – sometimes in quite surprising ways.

In a footnote to his 1921 paper 'Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego', Freud discusses Schopenhauer's parable about the dilemma faced by porcupines in cold weather who 'crowded themselves very close together one cold winter's day so as to profit by one another's warmth and so save themselves from being frozen to death. But soon they felt one another's quills, which induced them to separate again'. The porcupines were 'driven backwards and forwards from one trouble to the other', until they found 'a mean distance at which they could most tolerably exist'. Freud's work is preoccupied by the question of closeness: how much can we take? How much is necessary for our survival? What drives us towards a group?

In the 1940s and 1950s, writers and psychoanalysts turned to the radio to experiment with generating feelings of intimacy, closeness and connectivity that mediate feelings of isolation. The emphasis was on 'get(ing) right inside the listener', as one audience member recalls of tuning into a Beckett play on the BBC's Third Programme. To get a better sense of their audience, the BBC set up a Listener Research Department in 1937 to gauge responses to programming. A December 1945 report notes that "listening" embraces a range of different modes of behaviour so wide as to strain the elasticity of the term. At the one extreme there is the "listening" which consists of no more than a background noise to the family party on the one hand, and at the other, the "listening" which is the only solace of the lonely listener.' The role of the BBC during the war was to convey a sense of security and continuity in the face of national upheaval, and its wartime role influenced its postwar presence as a kind of aural welfare.

The psychoanalyst Donald Winnicott recalls driving his car 'over the glass and rubble of the previous night's air-raid' to reach the BBC recording studio at Langham Place in London to record his broadcasts. This was the first time that psychoanalysis was heard on air (though Freud broadcast on the radio once from his home in Hampstead in 1938) and it revolutionised the language in which it was spoken. The first series that Winnicott delivered was titled 'Happy Children' and was transmitted on the Home Service Talks on Friday



mornings. The programme was dressed in a maternal sentimentalism that the BBC producers Janet Quigley and Isa Benzie would quickly tone down. Quigley and Benzie played an instrumental role in editing the talks so that they might more effectively address their audience. The emphasis was on making motherhood seem as ordinary as possible.

In a series of broadcasts 'The Ordinary Devoted Mother and Her Baby' on Women's Hour in January 1952, Winnicott addresses mothers directly, assuring them that their 'mixed feeling' would 'ease in the course of a few months'. The radio functions here as a kind of super-ego, dispensing comforting childrearing advice. The capacity for psychoanalysis to penetrate the home and make the mother feel less alone is noted by Benzie, who writes in a letter to Winnicott on his transformative presence on the radio: 'on the Home Service - you were alone with the listener, and now no one is alone! I find I imagine the listener as interrupted while feeding her baby by the man who has come to read the gas meter'. The radio is frequently imagined, in this way, in postwar diaries and correspondence as a simulated presence or companion in the home during a period when living structures, particularly for the postwar mother, were increasingly private and isolated.



The question that psychoanalysis poses in the postwar years is, as Winnicott frames it, 'how to be isolated without having to be insulated?' Part of this question was answered by the more public-facing psychoanalysis created through the collaboration between Winnicott and the BBC producers.

Psychoanalysis on air shaped the everyday life of ordinary citizens

as it played an active role in family life. Winnicott's reputation on psychological topics would become so esteemed that Eileen Molony, producer on the BBC radio programme *Parents and Children*, tried to persuade him to appear on her show, writing that 'nobody will ever believe [sic] my programme is any good until you broadcast in it!!'.

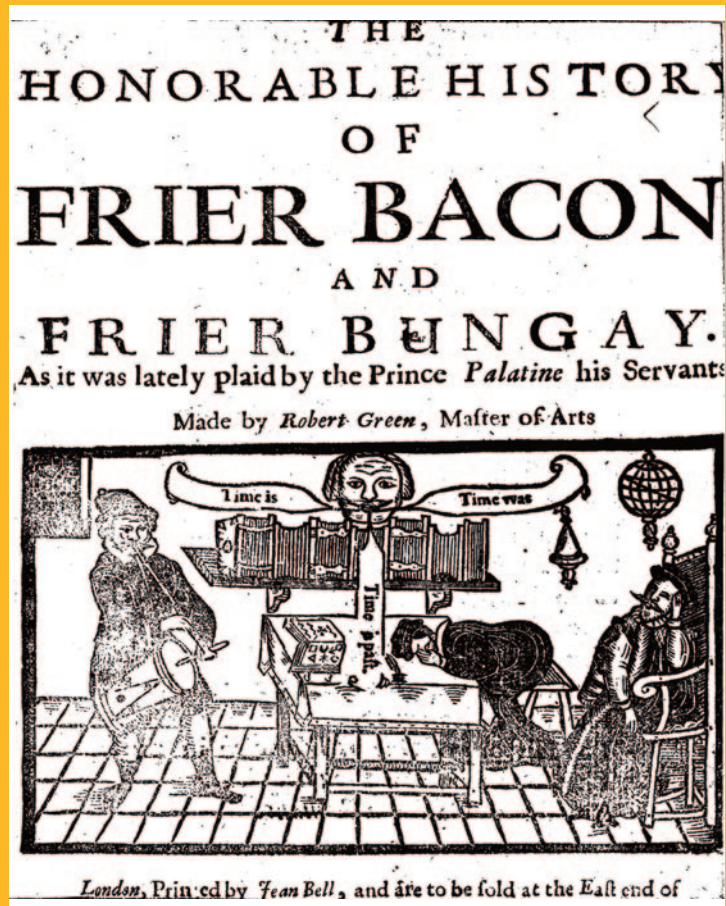
In these intimate acts of radio broadcasting, the BBC takes on a therapeutic role, as it thinks of its recordings as acts of communication rather than passive listening. During this period, when Winnicott was involved with radio recording, his thinking would undergo a momentous shift, as he left behind the one-body

psychology associated with classical Freudian conceptualisations of the psyche to devise a two-in-one model of the self that emerges through an understanding of the transitivity of maternal-infant experience at the earliest stages. This two-in-one relationship presumes the self not as an individual from the start, but rather as a co-dependent and co-emergent being.

It is this understanding of the individual as dependent that would prove crucial to his theorisation of loneliness. In his 1958 paper 'The Capacity to Be Alone' Winnicott frames the ability to tolerate loneliness as a psychic achievement. It turns on a paradox: 'it is the experience of being alone while someone else is present' - a presence that is modelled by the mother for her child. If the capacity to be alone has not been achieved and loneliness poses a psychic risk, then, the radio and the therapist offer vital transitional objects through which the individual can play with voices and experiment with forms of belonging. What radio listening offers, then - that more recent digital technologies do not - is an engagement with the human voice that proves instrumental in generating a sense of imagined community and collective presence that draws the lonely subject out of their isolated place, softening the quills of the prickly porcupine.

#### Jess Cotton, Leverhulme Early Career Fellow





frontispiece to Robert Greene's *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay*

## TALKING HEADS: BUILDING AN EARLY MODERN PUPPET

Two Elizabethan plays by Robert Greene feature a large disembodied talking head, well known from the frontispiece illustration to *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay* (1594), where it gives a prophecy before self-destructing. It appears again in *Alphonsus, King of Aragon* (1599), where it offers further prophecy as 'Mahomet' and shoots flames. This so-called 'brazen head' has attracted some critical attention, but not substantially for its materiality as a recycled prop or a performing object.



My research recognizes the brazen head as one of the earliest English puppets for which we have visual evidence. The brazen head is thus crucial to English puppet history and in turn that history offers a crucial context for understanding the brazen head's work in the plays.

The stage directions detailing the brazen head's actions—some of the scant evidence for how it functioned in performance—align it closely with other forms of early modern puppetry. Its climactic moment in *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay* is described thus:

*'Here the Head speaks, and a lightning flasheth forth and a hand appears that beraketh downe the Head with a hammer'*

Talking objects—especially anthropomorphic talking objects—are typical sites of puppetry, which we might define broadly as objects animated as characters in performance. Puppets that break apart, called 'breakaways,' have been common trick-puppets throughout theatre history, and puppetry was known for its use of firecrackers, flames, explosions, and other pyrotechnics. The hand appearing gestures to the presence of the puppeteer, who is often visible alongside the puppet.

Though the brazen head's puppet status seems straightforward, it and many other objects have escaped classification as puppets based on a narrow view of puppetry, limited often to marionette or glove puppets, like those used by Ben Jonson. My work over the past few years has aimed to highlight the range of early puppetry styles by making familiar objects visible as puppetry and using puppetry as a lens to reexamine object agency. Recognizing these objects as puppets enables us to see them entangled with puppetry's extensive set of theatrical practices and cultural associations.

The brazen head is embedded in the rich intersection of religion and puppetry in both plays, linked to Reformation associations of puppetry with iconoclasm (the hammer smashing its face) and idolatry (priests bowing down to the head as an Islamic idol). We can elaborate these contexts and the extensive cultural meanings of puppetry in relation to these plays' larger themes about power, interpretation, magic, and more. Puppets are especially dense conceptual objects, but they are also physical things whose

presence in performance is directly shaped by their materiality, movement, and sound.

These factors—the puppet's texture, weight, range of motion, interface with the puppeteer—are difficult to recover from an image alone. In lieu of consulting the original object, we can take lessons from practice-based research which uses contemporary performance to reconstruct historical possibilities. Because very few early puppets survive, artistic reconstructions play a key role in imagining what they could do, so to explore the brazen head I'm partnering with the Cambridge Festival Student Creative Team to build a practical puppet version of it. A team of postgraduate students from English and beyond – Rebekah King, Francesca Gardner, Gregory Miller, Ilya Wray and Abraham Alsalihi – are designing and building the puppet to be performed at the Cambridge Festival in March.

As the puppet build progresses, conversations about the practicalities of design and construction become conversations about historical theatre practices surrounding props, companies, craft labor, and materiality. Conversations about how a puppet is constructed raise questions about how it performs, and inevitably, how it creates meaning in its theatrical context. Questions about what constitutes a puppet and whether puppetry is a historically contingent category stitch together early modern and modern theatrical practice while negotiating their differences. The last twenty years have seen a rise in puppetry performance as part of Shakespeare productions, especially at the RSC, a movement part of broader trends in West End and Broadway staging. As contemporary puppet play sheds light on the puppet possibilities of the past, early puppet history also offers a foundation for understanding English puppetry today.

This Cambridge Festival build is part of my broader monograph project about late medieval and early modern puppetry. The book offers a prehistory to the typical histories of English puppetry that begin with Punch and Judy in the eighteenth century. As it ranges across religious spectacle, clowning, animal performance, costume, prosthesis, and more, the book demonstrates the scope of puppetry as a resource for early modern performance and thought. Puppetry proves to be a very old critical tool for thinking through human-object dynamics, aesthetics, and hierarchy and the challenges of recovering its practices in the archive make it a particularly useful place to reflect on how we write literary theatre history.

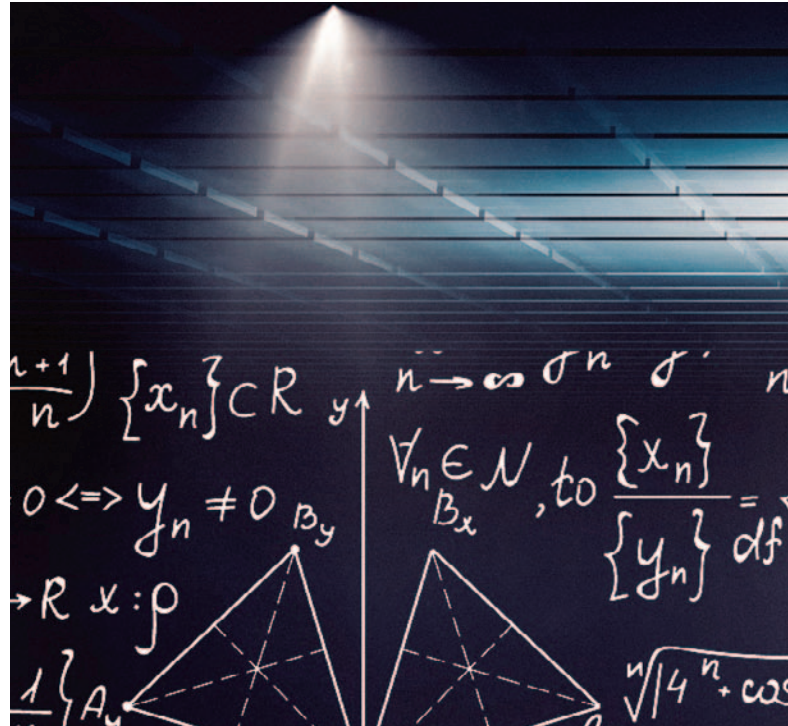
**Nicole Sheriko, Christ's**

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## What if our social media posts could help us to live forever?

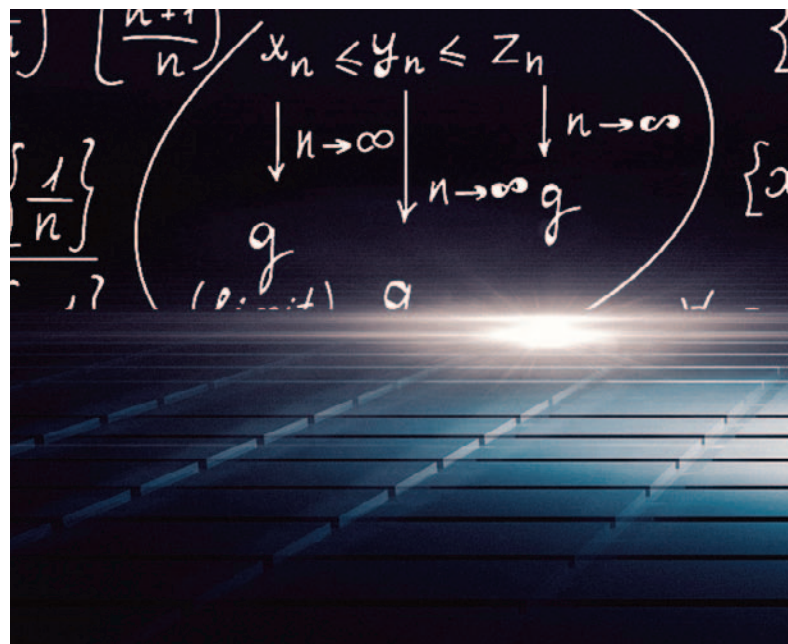
In March 2015, Martine Rothblatt, founder of SiriusXM, collaborator with the Human Genome Project and transhuman activist (to name only a few of her accomplishments), discussed in a TedTalk why she wanted to live forever. Rothblatt recounted her journey into robotics and the medical field from her career in satellite communications, and outlined the new frontier as recreating human consciousness through machines. The current project at the time, BINA48, a head and shoulders replica of her wife, Bina, was the beginning of Rothblatt's ambition. For Rothblatt, "There are so many things to do in this life" and if "we could have a simulacrum, a digital doppelgänger of ourselves that helps us process books, do shopping, be our best friends" life possibilities are seemingly endless. These mind clones, "these digital versions of ourselves, will ultimately be our best friends," and through this technology, Rothblatt and her wife can continue to be together and have their never-ending love story.

Rothblatt's TedTalk was not the first time I had encountered mind uploading. Indeed, the idea of replicating human consciousness through artificial intelligence (AI) has been a mainstay in science fiction since the genre's inception. The first time I had come across mind uploading in a research context was while I was researching chatbots as a type of sex robot, and

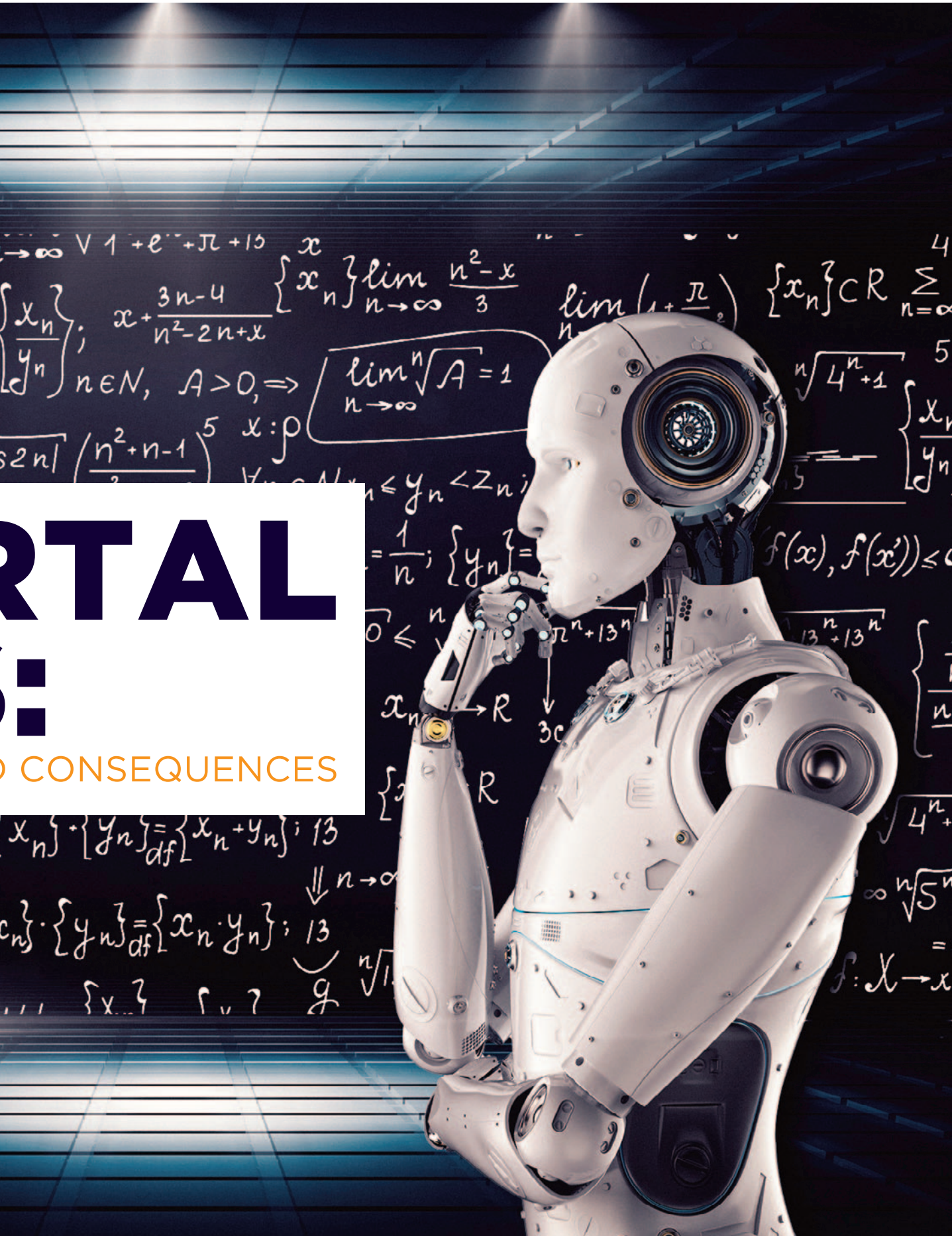


# IMMOR MINDS

AI CONSCIOUSNESS AND







# RTAL

## CONSEQUENCES

learned of Joshua Barbeau. In 2012, Barbeau's fiancée, Jessica, died. Eight years later, partially in response to his grief, he turned to technology. His story is relayed in the *San Francisco Chronicle* article, 'The Jessica Simulation: Love and loss in the age of A.I.'. He used Project December, a program that uses artificial-intelligence technology to create hyperrealistic chatbots vis-à-vis user inputs. A chatbot is, on the most basic level, an AI that has the ability to read user inputs to respond accordingly. All Barbeau had to do was "plug in old messages and give some background information, and suddenly the model could emulate his partner with stunning accuracy" (MacColl para. 2). The article went viral; Barbeau never expected the story to have such a wide impact; he only wanted to honour his dead fiancée and to see if he had any unresolved grief. Jessica, the dead fiancée, never gave consent for her information being repurposed. Regardless of Barbeau's intent, she became an online gimmick, a point of curiosity for others, and a facsimile of the no-longer-present wife, rather than a memory of an actual woman. Aside from sounding like an episode of *Black Mirror*, this foray into AI companionship and digital immortality is not new.

Currently, scientists are attempting to develop mind uploading that replicates human consciousness through artificial intelligence (AI) vis-à-vis quantum computing. My research examines the ethics, possibilities, and limitations of mind uploading – replicating human consciousness through artificial intelligence (AI) – and the role of science fiction in shaping anticipatory assumptions about the technology and the future. While there has been research into mind uploading (Agar 2010 and 2011, Wiley 2014 and 2015, Turchin 2018), this research has been mostly done in philosophy, medical sciences, and AI studies. Critical posthumanism has begun to engage with mind uploading (Sharon 2013, Schneider and Mandik 2015), but again, mostly through a philosophical lens or from a purely technological mindset.

There are two main approaches to mind uploading right now: implants and complete disembodiment. My research will examine these two main approaches while suggesting a broader and more holistic approach to mind uploading as a concept. The research will be a combination of textual analysis and ethnographic research, and will utilize narrative future methods along with feminist and posthumanist theory as theoretical frameworks. I intend to compare the technology and the cultural depictions of mind uploading within science fiction to understand mind uploading as more than a discrete technology and more as a cultural function. Further, through group interviews, I want to ascertain public perception of mind uploading as a concept from a variety of stakeholder groups. Currently, neural implants that upload our online and

personal data seem more plausible than complete disembodiment. We are, in essence, participating in a form of mind uploading through social media, our online presence, and technologies such as our phones, laptops, and cameras. Still, these are more fragmented versions of us, not our whole consciousness. Conversely, if the aim is total disembodiment, while the body will decay and one day die, we could possibly live on forever through our uploaded consciousness.

This research is interested in questions that go beyond representation and whether science fiction film, literature, and media have technological fidelity. There is more at stake than mind uploading's current AI driven imaginings. How different modes of cultural production – literary text, art, film, and video games – embody the same principles needs to be considered. By allowing for a more nuanced understanding of mind uploading, we see how it is less of a specific type of technology and more of a cultural function with broad societal implications. Whether mind uploading will ever be a possibility is not the question. Nor is looking at the past and gleefully evaluating what we got wrong when thinking about the future. I am more interested in asking why. Why do we want to create technological immortality? What are the implications of these technologies? How will ideas of power change or not change? Does mind uploading offer a liberating possibility? Or does it only further entrench current power dynamics, especially around class, race, sex, gender, dis/ability?, to name some. Mind uploading, therefore, becomes one element of a larger rethinking of human-machine relationality, power, embodiment, and immortality.

**Julia A. Empey, Corpus Christi**





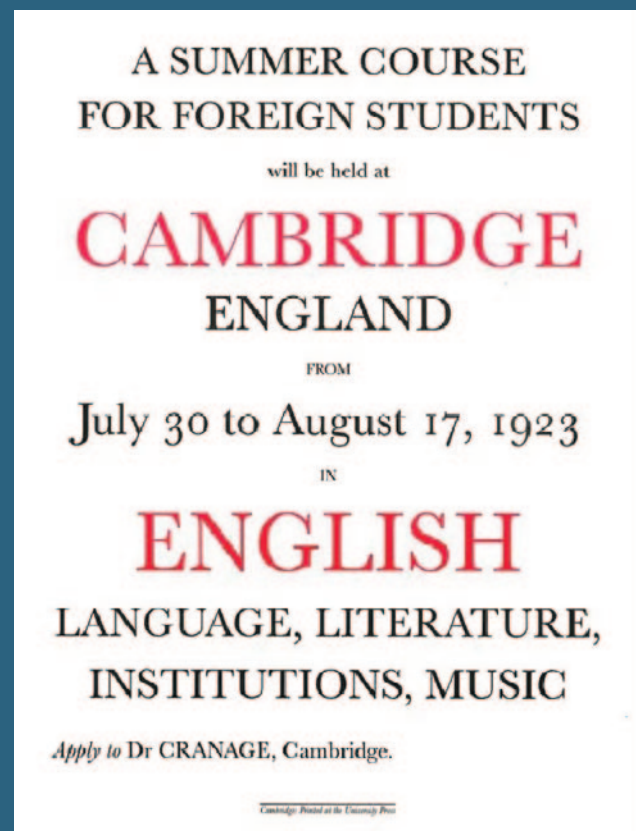
# ICE NEWS

2023 is a gala year for the University's Institute of Continuing Education (ICE), as we mark two significant anniversaries. It's 150 years since the University sanctioned the Local Lectures Syndicate, which sent lecturers from Cambridge out across the country, beginning in with open lectures in the East Midlands in the autumn of 1873.

James Stuart, a pioneering Engineering Fellow of Trinity College, had responded to calls for learning opportunities for women and working people from feminist campaigners Anne Clough and Josephine Butler by offering open lectures in the north of England from 1867. The appetite for these talks convinced the University to allow him to make the scheme official. The Local Lectures series led to the establishing of the Board of Extramural Studies, for which E. M. Forster was a notable tutor, which then became the Institute of Continuing Education as we know it today, based at Madingley Hall, just outside Cambridge. Literature courses were a key part of the developing ethos and academic direction of the programmes, celebrating the power of adult education and the freedom to enjoy 'independent thought, free discussion, and the reading of good books'<sup>1</sup>.

We also celebrate the 100th birthday of the International Summer Programme this year. Cambridge had offered 'Summer Meeting' programmes for adult students, including women, from the 1890s. The Summer Meetings attracted students from around the world and in 1923 an International Summer Programme was offered which, by its second iteration in 1925, was attended by 242 students from 20 countries, including the Argentina, Estonia, Finland, Latvia and Ukraine, creating – the Cambridge Daily News reported – an 'excellent practical demonstration of a miniature League of Nations at work [...]. If the nations of Europe could display and practise the sweet reasonableness that has characterised their individual representatives at Cambridge in August 1925, international problems would stand a fairer chance of amicable solution.'<sup>2</sup>

The Summer Programme continued to be held every year, even through the challenges of the Great Depression and World War II. In more recent times, when the Covid-19 pandemic hit we moved ourselves online to offer courses in a Virtual Summer Festival. It was wonderful to be able to welcome students back to Cambridge in person in 2022 and we're very much looking forward to celebrating the centenary in Summer 2023. We hold classes in the Faculty of English itself and this year there are courses ranging from Medieval Literature to the contemporary short story, with much in between. Those of us who teach on the Summer Schools really value the opportunity to be with students from around the world who come to spend their time with us and to enjoy the fruits of wide reading and 'sweet reasonableness'.



100-year old flyer for English course

For adult students whose summers are devoted to less scholarly pursuits, ICE offers year round courses in literary study and also in creative writing, online and in person. Please join us as we gear up for the next 150 years of study!

## Jenny Bavidge, Murray Edwards

<sup>1</sup> Fifteenth Annual Report, Board of Extra-Mural Studies, University of Cambridge, 1939, quoted by Sarah Ormrod, University of Cambridge: International Summer Schools, 1923-2013, p. 8. [https://www.academia.edu/23986707/University\\_of\\_Cambridge\\_International\\_Summer\\_Schools\\_1923\\_2013](https://www.academia.edu/23986707/University_of_Cambridge_International_Summer_Schools_1923_2013)

<sup>2</sup> Cambridge Daily News, 25 August 1925, *ibid.*, p. 7.



# FACULTY NEWS

Some Faculty highlights from the past year; for more detail and more stories, please visit <https://www.english.cam.ac.uk/news/> . If you have anything to add for the next edition, contact the newsletter editor at [newsletter@english.cam.ac.uk](mailto:newsletter@english.cam.ac.uk).

## **Dr Mathelinda Nabugodi wins the 2022 ‘Publications of the English Goethe Society’ Prize**

Mathelinda Nabugodi was awarded the English Goethe Society’s 2022 *Publications of the English Goethe Society* Prize for an outstanding article published in the journal in the previous year. The award is for the article ‘The Contexts of Percy Bysshe Shelley’s *Faust* Translations’, which appeared in *PEGS* 90.1 (2021), pp. 31-52.

## **On Style in Victorian Fiction, edited by Dr Daniel Tyler (Trinity Hall), is published by Cambridge University Press**

This collection provides a major assessment of style in Victorian fiction and demonstrates that style – the language, techniques and artistry of prose – is inseparable from meaning and that it is through the many resources of style that the full compass of meaning makes itself known.

*On Style in Victorian Fiction* includes chapters by three members of the Faculty: Corinna Russell, David Trotter and Daniel Tyler.



## **The ‘Romance of the Rose’ and the Making of Fourteenth-Century English Literature by Dr Phil Knox (King’s) is published by OUP**

Philip Knox’s new book has been published in the new *Oxford Studies in Medieval Literature and Culture* series at OUP. The book looks again at fourteenth-century literary history from the perspective of a single text, the thirteenth-century French love allegory and medieval ‘bestseller’, the *Romance of the Rose*, and thinks about Chaucer,

Gower, Langland, and the *Gawain*-poet, as well as the history of reading, the relationship between England and Europe, and how texts traverse time and space.

## **Mert Dilek’s Turkish translation of Ayckbourn’s *Bedroom Farce* premieres at Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality City Theatre**



Mert Dilek’s Turkish translation of *Bedroom Farce* premiered at Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality City Theatre on 9 February 2022. Dilek, PhD candidate at Trinity College, was commissioned to translate Alan Ayckbourn’s play; he also provided the cast and the creative team with dramaturgical guidance throughout the production process. The play’s Turkish version, titled *Yatak Odasi Komedisi*, joined the City Theatre’s repertoire and was staged across ten venues in Istanbul in 2022.

## **The English Faculty and Newnham College host the ‘First Story Young Writers Festival’**

On Tuesday 29th March, 350 KS3 and 4 children from around the country spent the day in Cambridge working with professional writers on composing the story of their lives. Khadijah Ibrahim was MC in Lady Margaret Hall, with guest appearances by Bonnie Lander Johnson and Phil Knox. The day finished with a showcase of students’ work, read from the big stage.

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## Professor Sarah Dillon in conversation with Jeanette Winterson

In March, as part of 2022's AI UK event, the UK's national showcase of artificial intelligence and data science research and collaboration, Professor Sarah Dillon was in conversation with novelist Jeanette Winterson. They explored Winterson's new work, *12 Bytes: How Artificial Intelligence Will Change the Way We Live and Love*, and discussed the relationship between the future of AI and humanity, art, religion and the way we live and love.



## Two radio appearances for the Cambridge Saffron project

In April 2022, the Cambridge Saffron project made two radio appearances: Bonnie Lander Johnson (Downing) shared stories about the historic role of Cambridge University in the global saffron

trade, its medical recipes and its role in political and religious controversy – on BBC Radio Cambridgeshire and TalkRADIO.

Kasia Boddy (Fitzwilliam) and Bonnie Lander Johnson (Downing) received a grant from the University's Research & Collections Programme to examine the history of Cambridge's involvement in saffron production and consumption, both locally and globally. The project culminated in a workshop hosted by CRASSH in June 2022 and an online exhibition, hosted by the University Library.

## Professor Pete de Bolla (King's) elected an International Honorary Member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences

In May 2022, Professor Pete de Bolla was elected an International Honorary Member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.

## Dr Chris Townsend (Christ's) publishes two books

Dr Chris Townsend's *Philosophical Connections: Akenside, Neoclassicism, and Romanticism* was published by Cambridge University Press, as part of their Elements series. It takes Mark Akenside's *Pleasures of Imagination* as a vital link between Alexander Pope's poetry and the Romantics. Dr Townsend draws attention in particular to Akenside's focus on appearances and how the world seems to be; in Pope, Akenside, and the Romantics alike, the relation between what we know and what we think we see is a primary concern for poetry.



*George Berkeley and Romanticism: Ghostly Language* was published by Oxford University Press. It's a study of the idealist philosopher Berkeley and his impact on the poets Blake, Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Shelley, offering new readings of each poet in light of their debt to Berkeley's thought.

It's also an effort to think about Romanticism's role in the history of ideas more broadly, and about what it means for a group of poets to pick up on the ideas of a philosopher.

## Professor Subha Mukherji (Fitzwilliam) wins a Global Humanities Initiative Award

Subha Mukherji has won a prestigious Global Humanities Initiative Award (with Martin Crowley, MMLL), to start a collaborative teaching and research programme on Migrant Ecologies with Ashoka University, New Delhi, in September 2022.

## 'Eric Ravilious: Drawn to War', co-produced by Professor David Trotter (Caius)

*Eric Ravilious: Drawn to War* was released in June 2022. Co-produced by David Trotter, the film concerns the life and art of the great landscape painter Eric Ravilious, one of only three British war

*continued overleaf...*

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artists to be killed on active service during the Second World War. Features Robert Macfarlane (Emmanuel), Ai Wei Wei, Alan Bennett, and Grayson Perry, with Freddie Fox and Tamsin Greig.

### Dr May Hawas (Newnham) wins the Balakian Prize, awarded for an exceptional first monograph in the field of comparative literary studies

May Hawas's *Politicising World Literature: Egypt, Between Pedagogy and the Public*, published by Routledge, has been awarded the Balakian Prize 2022. According to the jury, 'Hawas's book is a critical work of remarkable originality that is consistently analytical and argumentative in its presentation of ideas, with a strong comparative perspective'.

### Dr Mina Gorji (Pembroke) publishes a new collection of poetry, *Scale*, with Carcanet Press



At the volcano's edge, in exilic space, at the bottom of the Arctic Sea, or in the acid clouds of Venus, Mina Gorji's *Scale* traces life at its limits. The poems range across scales of distance, temperature and time, from vast to minute, glacial to volcanic, Pleistocene to present day, constellation to millipede. Adapting to the cold of a new continent opens a chromatic investigation of feeling. Shifting between scales, from insect to ancient star, *Scale* explores the forms, conditions and frequencies of survival.

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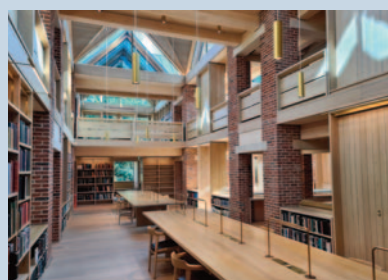
### Experience day for the BBC / Cambridge Young Writers Award

In September, five young writers shortlisted for the award were given writing workshops from Rupert Wallis and Nick Bradley of ICE/Madingley Hall, a tour of Newnham College, and a session in the rare books room of the University Library.

### Professor Angela Leighton (Trinity), Dr Anna Nickerson (Girton), and Dr Yui Kajita publish *Walter de la Mare: Critical Appraisals* (Liverpool University Press, 2022)

This volume provides a major assessment of the work of Walter de la Mare, and promises to restore his reputation as one of the most memorably haunting of poets, as well as a peculiarly unnerving writer of ghost stories. The collection includes wide-ranging essays on de la Mare's poetry, stories, novels, reviews, and lectures, as well as his literary friendships with more famous contemporaries such as Thomas Hardy, Robert Frost, W. H. Auden, T. S. Eliot and Katherine Mansfield. It also contains an invaluable survey of his library and archives (much of it unpublished) as well as specially commissioned poems reflecting on his enduring influence on English verse-writing.

### Dr Marcus Waithe, College Librarian, represents Magdalene College at the RIBA Stirling Prize 2022 Ceremony



At the ceremony in October, Magdalene College's new library was named the UK's best new building, winning the prestigious

RIBA Stirling Prize for architecture. As College Librarian, and a Director of Magdalene College's Design and Build company, Dr Waithe showed round



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the awards judges and wrote the client statement for the RIBA Stirling Prize winning New Library.

### Dr Diarmuid Hester (Emmanuel) goes On the Road with Penguin Classics podcast

Dr Diarmuid Hester was a special guest on a recent episode of 'On the Road with Penguin Classics' podcast. He joined Henry Elliot for a walk around Cambridge and a meander through E.M. Forster's classic novel *Maurice*. Dr Hester's new book *Nothing Ever Just Disappears*, a history of LGBTQ culture through its spaces will be published by Allen Lane/Penguin books next year.



### Dr Simon Jackson (Peterhouse) publishes *George Herbert and Early Modern Musical Culture* with Cambridge University Press

Described by one contemporary as the 'sweet singer of The Temple', George Herbert has long been recognised as a lover of music.

Nevertheless, Herbert's own participation in seventeenth-century musical culture has yet to be examined in detail. This is the first extended critical study to situate Herbert's roles as priest, poet and musician in the context of the musico-poetic activities of members of his extended family, from the song culture surrounding William Herbert and Mary Sidney to the philosophy of his eldest brother Edward Herbert of Cherbury. It examines the secular visual music of the Stuart court masque as well as the sacred songs of the church. Arguing that Herbert's reading of Augustine helped to shape his musical thought, it explores the tension between the abstract ideal of music and its practical performance to articulate the distinctive theological insights Herbert derived from the musical culture of his time.

### 'Submerged Reliquary of a Kentish Saint': a new essay-film by Sophie Mei Birkin, Dr Eleanor Myerson (Corpus) and Bartek Dziadosz



'For years the Middle Ages have formed the Paradise of my Imagination', wrote Derek Jarman. 'It is...something subterranean, like the seaweed and coral that floats in the arcades of a jewelled reliquary'.

Featuring original artwork by Sophie Mei Birkin, this new essay-film, released in December, takes the viewer on a journey into Jarman's medieval reliquary. Based on Eleanor Myerson's research, the viewer will encounter images from both medieval and modern archives. Lady Angharad, the anchoress from Jarman's unrealised film project, *Bob-up-a-Down*, meets Julian of Norwich, the medieval anchoress whose texts Jarman drew on for inspiration.

In 2018, following the death of Keith Collins, Jarman's companion and carer, Jarman's archives left Prospect Cottage and entered the repository in Tate Britain. The film explores Jarman's archive as a submarine space of grief and exploration. The reliquary becomes an image of queer mourning, both for Jarman himself, and for us, remembering St Derek of Dungeness today.

This film was produced at the Derek Jarman Lab using Wellcome/ISSF funding.

### Dr Rebecca Barr (Jesus) receives a Global Humanities Network Mobility Award to collaborate with the American University in Beirut

The project seeks to investigate satire as 'world literature', as texts which circulate internationally, changing and acquiring meanings beyond those found in their initial cultural and historical context. The award will fund a preliminary visit to Beirut in Spring 2023. As part of that visit, Dr Barr will give a research seminar on William Hogarth and British photomontage artist Cold War Steve (<https://www.coldwarsteve.com/>), considering the resonance of eighteenth-century satire in the current geopolitical crisis.

# LIBRARY NEWS

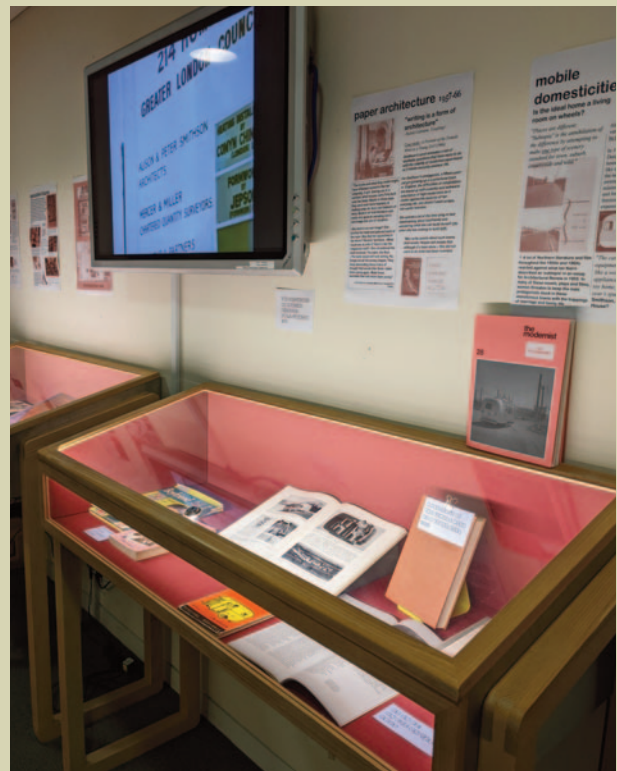
## Benson Gallery

Post pandemic, the Benson Gallery has re-opened with an exciting programme of exhibitions showcasing Faculty research. The first of these in Summer 2022, '116 Sunnysides' was curated by Professor Laura Wright. The exhibition showcased North British Sunnysides identified in Laura's research, and more information can be found in her book, *Sunnyside: A Sociolinguistic History of British House Names*.

The next exhibition, 'Inhabiting Brutalism: Books and Buildings' opened in Michaelmas Term, and was curated by recent PhD graduate and current library assistant Dr Kate Schneider. The exhibition was an introduction to New Brutalism - an architectural movement that sought to drag a rough poetry from the ruins of WWII. The Brutalist architects Alison and Peter Smithson believed that the writing and the putting-together of books went alongside designing better living spaces. On display were books from the Smithsons' back catalogue of works, including Alison Smithson's novel *A Portrait of the Female Mind as a Young Girl*, critical writings on postwar architecture, 1950s and 1960s guides to interior design and home improvements, and cultural objects bringing the material culture of the period to life, such as a 1960s "Boyfriend" annual.

At the beginning of Lent 2023, Dr Di Beddow, recent PhD Graduate of Queen Mary University London and Cambridge resident, will install her exhibition, "'That was our place": The Cambridge of Sylvia Plath and Ted Hughes'. The exhibition presents the importance of an area of Cambridge hitherto unexplored in Plath or Hughes criticism. Sylvia Plath interpreted the landscape around Newnham College where she was studying and Ted Hughes, in an unpublished poem, saw the 'river meadows' as a 'lieu de mémoire'. The exhibition will showcase the poets' response to a topographical space, which is reframed by them into a personal place.

If you have an idea for a future exhibition, the Library Committee would love to hear from you. Please apply via the form on our website.



# LIBRARY EVENTS

## Events

The Library also hosted a free talk relating to Kettle's Yard's current exhibition, *Paint Like the Swallow Sings Calypso*: 'In Conversation at the English Faculty Library', 28 January 2023, 12pm. The speakers examined the relationship between literature and the visual arts in the Caribbean Aesthetic. Visitors will also be able to view the paintings by Guyanese artist, Aubrey Williams, that hang in the Library.

## Displays

To highlight the breadth of our collections, the library regularly hosts pop-up displays on topical themes.

### Black History Month - October

We were inspired by the publication of a new anthology of Black British speculative fiction, *Glimpse*, edited by Leone Ross. This book brings together experiments in imagining Black futures by recovering Black heritages. Across the globe, Black speculative fiction has a rich history of disturbing power dynamics and engaging in political struggle by pushing the boundaries of literary form. We showcased authors featured in *Glimpse* alongside Afrofuturist canonical greats (Octavia E. Butler, Tade Thompson, N. K. Jemisin, Samuel R. Delany). It was great to 'stage' the breadth of the critical conversation and to promote Black British voices within it.



### Women in Printing - November

A new book for an MPhil course on the materiality of the book called *The Natural Enemy of Books: A Messy History of Women in Printing and Typography* was our next source of inspiration. This book responds to a 1937 publication called *Bookmaking*

*on the Distaff Side* which 'disclosed the monumental contributions which spinsters, wives, and widows have made to the graphic arts.' (Cary Graphic Arts

Collection website). Riffing off this, *The Natural Enemy of Books* is a kind of messy "sampler", or "pot-luck book", documenting further ways that women have shaped print histories in an unequal industry. It draws attention to the innovations of more familiar pioneering figures such as Gertrude Stein and the labour of anonymous workers and print collectives. From a bibliophile's perspective, we were excited about the idea of putting together physical and electronic resources spanning from the Medieval period to the contemporary. We were able to highlight anthologies published by writing workshops, critical histories of subversive reading and publishing, pamphlets put together by small presses, collections of women-edited literary magazines and more.

### Trans Awareness Week - November

The EFL aims to be an inclusive space and we are keen to amplify minoritised voices. For Trans Awareness Week (November 13-19) we created an online resource with links to e-books about the challenges of being trans and gender non-conforming.



### Disability History Month (16 November - 16 December)

Using the new books stand, a highly visible space, we picked fiction, poetry, theory and criticism by chronically sick and disabled writers and included leading work from Faculty members on disability studies.

The full details of our picks can be found on Twitter: follow us @eflcam! These displays inspire our users and encourage new book suggestions. If you're a current student, please use this form to suggest a book for the library.





*Faculty of English, Sidgwick Site, Cambridge by Michael Behrend*



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