

King Edward VII Chair of English Literature

If Cambridge has now a Faculty of English of the highest international standing, it was, nevertheless, the last British university to have a Chair in the subject — or, indeed, to have a full degree course. When, exactly a century ago, the King Edward VII Professorship of English Literature was inaugurated, there was no formal study of English, no students to teach, and certainly no Faculty for the Professor to address. The Chair was, to say the least, unusual — unusual in being offered to Cambridge in such circumstances, unusual in its terms of reference, and controversial at every stage. The story is worth recalling.

There was an irresistible irony at the start. In 1910 Sir Harold Harmsworth, Bart. — the future Lord Rothermere, owner of the *Daily Mail* and the *Mirror*, in other words the Rupert Murdoch of his day — gave £20,000 to endow a Chair of English Literature in memory of King Edward VII. The donation was communicated to the Vice-Chancellor by Viscount Esher in a letter dated 9 November 1910: Esher found it “singularly appropriate” that the endowment should come “upon this day, which is the anniversary of the birthday of our late beloved King.” The terms of the bequest were precise: it was to be a Chair in “English Literature from the age of Chaucer,” intended to “promote the study in the University of the subject of English Literature.” They stipulated that the subject be treated “on literary and critical rather than on philological and linguistic lines” (Statute E, XXXII), clearly differentiating the duties of the holder of the Cambridge Chair from those at Oxford. They also state that “any British subject or American citizen may be appointed to the Chair.” To my knowledge, no holder of the Chair to date has been a citizen of the United States, although some have made significant contributions to the study of American literature. Every element of the brief was to prove contentious.

The proposal was announced in *The Reporter* of 15 November 1910, and welcomed by the Council of the Senate. Thanking the benefactor, the Vice-Chancellor (R.F. Scott) acknowledged that “the instruction of our students in English Literature...is altogether inadequate...Your munificent gift and foundation will at once provide for the subject that support and academic status which we have long desired.” However, by the time the formal Report of the Council was published other voices were making themselves heard, in increasingly strident opposition. The source of the funds had more than a whiff of vulgarity, and there were thought to be “very grave objections” to the proposed Chair. The record of the Discussion held on 13 December makes strange reading today. It was argued that the study of English literature was “not only useless but positively harmful to the University”; that “With that knowledge they [the students] obtained in the nursery, nothing stood between them and the acquirement of a knowledge of current English literature. No further training was required”. “The period of Chaucer was already provided for. Had they not already a Professor of Anglo-Saxon?” “The Charles Oldham scholarship stood to encourage students to read Shakespeare and general literature. And had they not, in the library provided by the Vice-Master of Trinity College, erudition enough?” The Chair proposed would be merely “a Professorship of English fiction, and that of a light and comic character, [...] unworthy of this University.” The terms ‘literary’ and ‘critical’ were seen as evidence of all that was meretricious in the proposed subject. Resistance to the formal study of English, on other than philological grounds, was widespread and remained so till well after the First World War. There were grumbles, too, about a Crown appointment, as it was outside the direct control of the University. One speaker only noted dryly that “every other university in this country and in the

United States had a Professorship in the subject and Cambridge came absolutely last in the field in that matter.” Since the Grace had been passed with a large majority, the key objectors saw no point in forcing the matter to a vote (though they were confident that they could count on a significant number of ‘non placets’). The Chair was assigned to the Special Board of Modern and Mediaeval Languages, and appointment procedures put in train.

We can catch glimpses of the back-stage politics. A.C. Bradley was approached but, comfortably ensconced at Oxford, he declined. When *The Reporter* of 28 February 1911 announced A.W. Verrall, Litt.D., Fellow of Trinity College, as the first King Edward VII Professor of English Literature, it was clear that a different internal candidate had been expected. A.C. Benson, Master of Magdalene and editor of several volumes of the *English Men of Letters* series, had been offering lectures on Milton and other writers for some years. He had also, invited by Edward VII, collaborated with Viscount Esher in editing the *Letters of Queen Victoria*. Later, Benson’s library was to provide the nucleus of the English Faculty Library. But that February has another version of events — one redolent of the gossip of the day. A Fellow of Trinity, J.M. Image, wrote to a friend: “Verrall is the new Professor of English Literature — an unhopd for event to the Cambridge world which tremblingly has anticipated A.C. Benson as a certainty. To a disdainful Oxford Premier [Asquith] Verrall’s is of course a name totally unknown — [Augustine] Birrell, who is a friend of V. and is said to have been recently staying with him, must have given the tip. V’s politics are of the requisite scarlet dye — and his Lecture room, when discoursing on Tennyson and Browning, was so packed with u.g’s as well as damsels, that a special bench had to be reserved for Fellows of the College. It is the right appointment.”



QUILLER: "What about Beowulf?"
 COUCH: "Rats! our job begins with Chaucer—"
 Q.: "Why can't you men shut up? I want to write."

From *The Cambridge Magazine*, Nov 1, 1913.

His conclusion may seem surprising: Verrall is now a largely forgotten figure, so much so that Sir Arthur Quiller Couch or 'Q', who succeeded him to the Chair, is commonly taken to be its first incumbent. Yet Verrall deserves his place here. By 1908 an energetic, sceptical and often contentious career in Classics was largely behind him. Despite crippling arthritis, he was throwing himself into writing and lecturing on Tennyson as well as on Aristophanes. In 1909 he gave the Henry Sidgwick Lecture at Newnham on Sir Walter Scott. His unpublished (and now lost) Clark Lectures on Victorian poetry drew a huge audience — men, as well as "damsels". He had to be carried (as Tillyard remembers) to deliver the last two, "as helpless as a joint of meat on a dish." But Tillyard also saw that invalidity become part of a showmanship that made him the University's most popular lecturer on English literature. Five years earlier Verrall had just missed the Greek Chair; the King Edward VII Chair gave him a brief role in the shaping and eventual emancipation of English Studies at Cambridge. The one series of lectures he gave in the Chair, the *Lectures on Dryden* published posthumously by his wife, May Verrall, suggests

how welcome he found the change in direction. (He prepared but never gave a course on Macaulay.) At his death on 18 June 1912 he was once more planning an edition, not of a Greek text but of *Absalom and Achitophel*.

By 30 October 1912 the Chair was again filled. But in the brief interregnum the *Cambridge Review* carried an article addressed, not so respectfully, to the Prime Minister. "We know that there are other matters to occupy Mr Asquith's attention, and the University has indeed managed to make shift for some centuries without a Professor of English Literature. Still this is the era of the *Daily Mail*, and a Professor is surely needed." This time, the Chair was expected to go H.J.C. Grierson, the highly respected editor of John Donne. Once again, the outcome was a surprise. Apart from editing the *Oxford Book of English Verse* in 1900, Sir Arthur Quiller Couch's credentials were hardly more (it was thought) than those of a prolific minor novelist and *belletrist*. Here was a non-academic figure whose appointment had been stitched up by Asquith and Lloyd George for services to the Liberal Party. The old complaints

returned, ever louder, this time from the English Association, founded in 1906, as well as from within the University. There was one note of welcome: A.C. Benson, who had wanted the Chair himself, wrote to 'Q' generously. "It is a really great opportunity. What we want is a man who will really found and organise a *school*.... Everything is ready for this, and what is needed is a strong personality, to do for us what [Walter] Raleigh has done at Oxford. It is not only stimulating teaching that is wanted, it is a social centre for individual energies." These were qualities that 'Q' possessed in abundance. He was to hold the Chair from 1912 to 1944, and to oversee the creation of Cambridge English.

Benson remained an intellectually committed supporter of a 'School of English', and later — in the sharp exchanges that ran in *The Cambridge Magazine* over 1913 and 1914 — its outspoken defender. He once remarked a little ruefully of his family, "we are the kind of people who don't get things." By contrast, 'Q' told his sister: "I never sought, never applied for, a single thing that has come my way." He did not, however, underestimate the hostility or the problems that were to greet him in Cambridge and took careful counsel, especially from Raleigh. His Inaugural Lecture, delivered on 29 January 1913, was a masterpiece of tact and cultural diplomacy — as Basil Willey recognised when, 34 years later, he found himself, as 'Q's' successor, "*encouched* in Arthur's Seat." (The King Edward VII Chair was, he saw, Arthur's Seat by double prescriptive right, for the first name of both the only two previous occupants had been Arthur.) 'Q', casting himself as the Athenian stranger of *The Laws*, had raised Plato's "old question which he could never get out of his way — What to do with the poets?" For him, the Chair "was a new one, or almost new, and for the present would seem to float in the void, like Mahomet's coffin." Then, the sentences that most perfectly characterise 'Q': "if you put questions concerning the work of this Chair, I must take example from the artist in Don Quixote, who being asked what he was painting, answered modestly, 'That is as it may turn out.'" On the whole things 'turned out' pretty well. The numbers of students taking the Part II English papers after the War doubled, and had redoubled by the mid-1920s. In 1929 there was a full degree course in the subject.

'Q' had unparalleled good fortune in his colleagues. 1912 also saw the

appointment of Henry Chadwick to the Chair of Anglo-Saxon, Norse and Celtic, and the 22-year-old Mansfield Forbes to a Fellowship at Clare. With I.A. Richards, this group of men effectively shaped everything that made Cambridge English distinctive. The first ‘English’ papers set in 1919 had questions on Walt Whitman, on the contributions to literature made by the War, and an invitation to identify and give a critical account of “the three chief living English poets.” This was a study of the modern world. Among the men to sit those papers were Basil Willey and F.R. Leavis. Yet ‘Q’ still had to defend his subject against the old misgivings. *Granta* for March 1923 has a canny spoof interview of himself as Professor confronting a wilfully obtuse Respondent. The Professor is driven to protest against tutorial misconceptions that still saw English as a soft option: in both Oxford and Cambridge, he insisted, its standards were as hard as for any other subject, “with the disputable exception of Greats.” He adds (and is the note one of triumph or irony?): “already the work of several of our few first-class men — work in criticism especially — is being eagerly taken by London Editors.” We have that hint of tension between academic scholarship and the lure of the metropolitan press still with us today.

Lord Rothermere was once thought to be the third richest man in England. Biographers show little interest in his support of education, but apart from a major grant to the Middle Temple, he founded Chairs at both Oxford and Cambridge in memory of the two sons he lost in the 1914-18 War, and, in 1928, in memory of his even wealthier brother, the Northcliffe Chair of English Literature at University College, London. His gift of the King Edward VII Chair to Cambridge has had the least public recognition, but it has proved perhaps the most distinguished of his benefactions.

Jean Gooder

KING EDWARD VII PROFESSORS

Arthur Woollgar Verrall (1911)
 Arthur Thomas Quiller-Couch (1912-1944)
 Basil Willey (1946)
 Lionel Charles Knights (1965)
 John Frank Kermod (1974)
 Christopher Bruce Ricks (1982)
 Marilyn Butler (1986)
 Gillian Patricia Kempster Beer (1994)
 David Trotter (2002)

Topsy in the Senate House

Cambridge graduation ceremonies in the 1850s were accompanied by rowdy commentary from undergraduates in the gallery, especially groans and cheers for local and national figures. In January 1853, the University Registry, Joseph Romilly, made his usual diary comment on proceedings: ‘The Senate house was crowded & the youngsters didn’t make more than average noise’. But they did cheer someone he called “Topsy”.

This would have been a freshly topical reference to Harriet Beecher Stowe’s antislavery novel, *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, first published in Britain in the summer of 1852, and already selling by the thousand in numerous editions. One publisher’s note boasted ‘A Hundred and Fifty Thousand Copies of this Work are already in the hands of the public, while still the weekly returns of sale show no decline’. Topsy has since probably become the most famous character in the novel, transformed into a figure for unprompted or remarkable growth, although the phrase ‘Jes’ grow’d’ came from a stage version. What Stowe actually makes her character say is more awful than amusing:

“Never was born,”
 reiterated the creature, more emphatically; “never had no father nor mother, nor nothin’.
 I was raised by a speculator,
 with lots of others”.

Even if Stowe makes Topsy’s ignorance poignant, however, the fictional child does still epitomise what the real former slave Frederick Douglass called the system’s ‘mental darkness’. So why were the Cambridge undergraduates of 1853 calling someone in the Senate House “Topsy”?

There is another account of the same ceremony — much less reliable, because written much later and to eulogise E.W. Benson, then a student and subsequently Archbishop of Canterbury. But this account gives us a name and a College, and it also suggests a more ambiguous incident, redolent of spite as well as bonhomie:

A boisterous individual in the gallery called out, ‘Three groans for the Queens’ nigger.’

[...] a pale slim undergraduate, very youthful-looking, in the front of the gallery ... became scarlet with indignation, and shouted in a voice which re-echoed through the building, “Shame, shame! Three groans for you Sir!” and immediately afterwards “Three cheers for Crummell!” This was taken up in all directions, and [...] the original offender had to hide himself from the storm of groans and hisses that broke out all around him.”

This more uneasy story identifies ‘Topsy’ as Alexander Crummell, a Queens’ student who graduated in the ceremony of January 1853. Crummell was an unconventional undergraduate, a black New Yorker, already an ordained minister in the Episcopal Church when he arrived in Cambridge, 29 years old, with a wife and three children. He is a significant figure in African American history, part of a dynamic generation born to newly emancipated parents in New York, subsequently a minister and college lecturer in Liberia, and an important commentator on race and segregation in the United States after the Civil War. He also has a small place in literary history: one chapter of W.E.B. DuBois’s 1903 meditation on race, *The Souls of Black Folk*, is devoted to Crummell.

Although Crummell’s Cambridge degree has generally been recognised as among his achievements, and as having enabled his subsequent work, there has not been much examination of what his time at Cambridge represented to his peers, either those in the United States or those in the Senate House in 1853.

Crummell’s mother Charity was free-born, but his father Boston was a self-emancipated slave, originally from what is now Sierra Leone, and he worked as an oysterman. Neither had much education, but Crummell attended a primary school set up by abolitionists in New York in the wake of emancipation. Many of his classmates became distinguished, as ministers of various denominations, or antislavery lecturers. One, James McCune Smith, qualified as a doctor at Glasgow. But these acquirements took persistence. One high school in New

Hampshire that took Crummell and two friends was broken up by the local community: the boys were driven out of town and the schoolhouse dragged into a swamp. Crummell was turned away from one seminary, allowed only to audit classes at another, and he caused a public controversy when he applied for ordination.

So when Crummell came to Britain in 1848 to collect funds for a new church, and found British society much freer and more welcoming than his own, it is perhaps not surprising that the hope of a higher education was revived. Evangelical Anglican well-wishers, who had strong connections with American abolitionists, collected funds and organised a place for him at Queens'.

Crummell himself had long revered Cambridge for its connection with the British abolitionist movement (through William Wilberforce and Thomas Clarkson), and for its part in the development of English Protestantism (Latimer, Cranmer, Ridley). He also hoped that taking his degree here would 'have a lively and startling influence among the prejudiced and the proslavery at home, especially in our [church],' and that he would then be able to help raise 'the standard of learning among the African race, in America.' Crummell's hopes seem to have been very widely shared. In the year before he began at Cambridge, Crummell had given antislavery lectures, or sermons in aid of his church, all over the country, and had become something of a celebrity. Newspapers all over Britain began to hope that Crummell's 'English university education' would 'be a reproach on the spirit of exclusiveness which keeps men of his colour out of the American colleges' (*Derby Mercury*). Sympathetic papers in the United States echoed them, the *New York Sabbath Recorder* noting that the man who had been refused admission to New York's Episcopal Theological Seminary was 'capped and gowned at the University at Cambridge.' Again and again, Crummell's studies were adduced as 'an unanswerable argument against the notion that the negro race are incapable of high intellectual cultivation and attainments' (*Birmingham Gazette*).

In reality, Crummell's academic progress was low-key: he took the Classical rather than the Mathematical route, and like many Queens' men he took the Ordinary (rather than the Honours) degree. He also had to retake his final

exam. Given that the best prepared of his contemporaries were the well-drilled products of public schools, he had much more ground to cover than some.

The second account of the graduation incident also casts some doubt on the contrast Crummell often made between racial attitudes in Britain and the United States. Like many African Americans who made antislavery speeches in Britain in the 1840s and 1850s, Crummell claimed that he was struck by the absence of prejudice from the moment of his landing at Liverpool. Yet we know (also from Romilly's diary), that Crummell's wife was cursed by a servant she had cause to dismiss: "You are a black devil: you are a slave & your heart is as black as your face!!!" And even if the better sort of undergraduate championed Crummell in the Senate House, there is still the testimony to the viciousness of the call for 'groans', and that 'Topsy' nickname, whether Romilly's or the students.' It may have been intended ironically, making an arch contrast between Stowe's slave-girl and the New York minister and *paterfamilias*, but it seems rather a barbed reference.

Crummell himself, like many African Americans in Britain after Stowe's novel, found himself required to explain his people in terms of her best-selling fiction. A month after his graduation he was in Hull, talking to a church literary society. Here, he 'read and commented on several extracts from *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, and related several anecdotes illustrative of the truthfulness of that work, in the various characters drawn and incidents related therein'. It is perhaps significant that the report of his talk does not stress the deprivation inflicted by slavery, but the still unfulfilled capacity of his race. Crummell seems not to have alluded to Topsy, but to Stowe's Christian martyr Tom, who submits to horrific treatment with fortitude rather than harm another. Tom also opposes mental darkness, by learning to read the Bible. During his talk, Crummell seems to have drawn on Stowe's belief that 'the African race' was by nature intensely spiritual, and that Christianity would reach its apotheosis in Africa. Crummell said that 'he believed the negro race would occupy a prominent position in the world's future history, and especially in exhibiting a new phase of Christianity.'

Crummell's interest in Africa's spiritual destiny predated *Uncle Tom's Cabin*,

so Stowe's novel is unlikely to have suggested his plan to move to Liberia after graduation, rather than return to New York. He also hoped that West Africa would be healthier for his family than the feverish Fens. But perhaps the ubiquity in Britain of Stowe's images of American slavery had some bearing, too. They may have served to remind Crummell of the mountain he would still have to climb at home, or, by providing Britons with a new racial vocabulary, they may have lessened the difference Crummell initially felt between American and British attitudes. At any rate, 'Topsy' was in one respect a better nickname for Crummell than 'Uncle Tom' would have been. Whereas Stowe's hero stayed put and suffered, at the end of the novel, the rescued, educated Topsy grew up to be a missionary in Africa.

Sarah Meer

Cambridge English and China

Anyone who has been through the doors of 9 West Road to teach or study will have an idea of what 'Cambridge English' means — to them at least. For some this is a grand line through history populated by prestigious names; for others it's something more precariously present. For many, of course, there's a kind of truce between the two. Nobody feels easy affiliation to every single one of the looming figures of the past, and sometimes it seems least parochial to be quite ambivalent about I.A. Richards, William Empson, F.R. Leavis, Raymond Williams and others.

Nonetheless these are often the kinds of figures who are evoked by the concept of Cambridge English in the wider world, and they attract attention from scholars worldwide as well as in the UK. The study of English in China in particular is booming, and in July 2011 the Faculty building was the venue for an event organised by *The Cambridge Quarterly* (and given financial and logistical support by the Faculty), in which scholars from China, the UK and elsewhere considered the works and legacies of the aforementioned quartet of Cambridge critics.

The Cambridge Quarterly is a journal of literary criticism with a number of

connections to the Faculty and its history, but less formal connection than the name and the shared interests might suggest. It was founded here in 1965 by H.A. Mason, with an evaluative critical agenda that remains an important part of its purpose today. It still gives a prize for the best dissertation in Part II each year (and publishes the winner). It also includes members of the Faculty among its past and present editors and contributors. At present I am the only currently-serving editor working in the Faculty, but Richard Gooder and Freya Johnston, both of whom were colleagues until quite recently, are also editors of the *Quarterly*.

The immediate motivation for the event was an essay submitted to *The Quarterly* by Cao Li (a former research student in the Faculty, now Professor of English Literature at Tsinghua University), which encouraged the editors to attempt something which, by their standards, was very ambitious. Cao Li's essay revealed that the story of Cambridge English in China was a varied and continuing one, and worthy of substantial reconsideration. Richards and Empson had worked in China, made an impact there, and been affected in turn; Leavis and Williams, with their very different ideas of the value of literature, had been rethought and rethought again in China (as here) as society changed; contemporary scholars continued to reflect on how two histories of criticism intersected and informed one another.

In collaboration with Cao Li and Lu Jiande (also with a Cambridge PhD, now at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences), the editors of *The Cambridge Quarterly* set up a colloquium. The last piece of the jigsaw was the contribution made by Jeremy Prynne, another Cambridge scholar with great experience of China, to the event. His poems have just been translated into Chinese for the first time by a group including Li Zhi-min, who also spoke at the event. The Colloquium, in itself, demonstrated in the most practical way the continuing interaction between the literary and academic cultures of the two countries.

The event featured papers on the pioneering travel writer Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson; I.A. Richards's work on and perhaps with the Chinese scholar Wu Mi, his Basic English project, and his work on the Confucian philosopher Mencius; the influence of China on Empson; the problems and opportunities of reading across cultures; the importance of critical thinking in Chinese education;

Leavis on the self, and the Chinese reception of his views; the influence of Raymond Williams; translation between English and Chinese and the challenge of difficult poetry; and the translation of J.H. Prynne in particular. Exhibitions of archive materials relating to the key figures were organised at Magdalene and King's, and the whole event was rounded off by an afternoon of readings and performance (which included a new musical setting by Robin Holloway of Xu Zhimo's famous 'Farewell to Cambridge'), to celebrate the publication of J.H. Prynne in Chinese translation.

The papers and discussion were fascinating. The event was friendly and informal, with former supervisors of those present dropping in and contributing to constructive conversation. It wasn't without urgency, though. In China and in the UK there are challenges for literary criticism, and reasons (many in common) why close reading and critical thinking need to be encouraged and defended. And it wasn't without a bit of disagreement either. In retrospect I am most struck by a couple of moments of particular tension. A lively discussion focused on whether Empson (and there were similar points raised about Richards) had really gained anything in particular from his Chinese experience, and whether he had been open enough to it to be changed by it. For me, it hinged a little on tricky issues of tone: did the way an anecdote was expressed necessarily capture the depth and consequences of the experience? But it also revealed the interesting dynamics of the Cambridge-China conversation, how different it must have felt then in comparison to now. There was also definitely a *frisson* when certain delegates remembered the foibles of some of the writers being discussed. How Raymond Williams struck people in person, and how he is received in China (and indeed in the UK) as a part of the history of twentieth-century criticism, are very different things.

The immediate future for this collaboration is a special issue of *The Cambridge Quarterly*, where versions of most papers from the conference will be published early in 2012. It would be a shame if this were to be the end of the Cambridge-China story, for the Faculty or *The Quarterly*.

The speakers at the Colloquium were:

Dr Deborah Bowman (Cambridge),
Dr John Constable (Renewable Energy

Foundation), Prof Li Hao (Toronto),
Dr Jason Harding (Durham), Prof Yuan
Heh-Hsiang (Soochow), Dr Lu Jiande
(Chinese Academy of Social Sciences),
Prof Cao Li (Tsinghua), Prof Xie Ming
(Toronto), Mr J.H. Prynne (Cambridge),
Prof Yin Qiping (Hangzhou Normal),
Prof Wang Songlin (Ningbo), Dr Helen
Thaventhiran (Cambridge), Prof Li Zhi-
min (Guangzhou University).

Raphael Lyne

The special issue of The Cambridge Quarterly will be published early in 2012 by Oxford University Press, and will be available online via the Oxford Journals website.

Appointments 2011

Dr Denis Casey was appointed to a Teaching Associateship from 1 October 2011.

Professor John Kinsella was appointed to a Judith E. Wilson Poetry Fellowship from 5 September 2011.

Dr Pádraic Moran was appointed to a Research Associateship in the Department of Anglo-Saxon, Norse and Celtic from 1 October 2011.

Dr George Oppitz-Trotman was appointed to a British Academy Postdoctoral Fellowship from 1 September 2011.

Dr Anthony Ossa-Richardson was appointed to a Research Associateship with effect from 1 October 2011.

Dr Chloe Preedy was appointed to a Teaching Associateship with effect from 1 October 2011.

RETIREMENTS

Professor Mary Jacobus and **Dr Jean Chothia** retired from the Faculty on 30 September 2011.

RESIGNATIONS

Dr Claire Preston left to take up a Chair at the University of Birmingham.

Dr Daniel Wakelin left to take up a Chair at the University of Oxford.

Trick or Treat? Electronic Resources

There is something both pleasurable and annoying about electronic resources. Anyone who has followed the enticing trail of an electronic 'something' to be foiled at the last moment with the words "you do not have access to this article" will probably understand this. What often follows this statement is a further suggestion that you might like to recommend this item to your academic librarian for purchase. Librarians do not often get deluged with queries that stem from this research activity, but we see enough of them to get a flavour of the frustrations that many feel, precisely because the information is so tantalisingly close, and looks to be so perfectly in tune with the current research, and yet is irritatingly out of reach.

In a research environment where the availability and use of e-resources has escalated over the last five years, it is useful to consider what the situation was like just a decade ago. In a study conducted in 2001, Shaw¹ concluded that electronic scholarly activities used by academics working in the area of English Literature were largely restricted

to email and word processing. In the words of an academic questioned during the study she conducted: "the future for English is much as it always was — as long as there is the book." A few years later Ellis and Oldman found there to be a number of changes, although still a reluctance on the part of academics to jump on the open access bandwagon, or to self-publish. Proposals for large-scale digitizing of resources were viewed with a degree of suspicion, many finding the tactile nature of the physical resource preferable. However, there was a clear recognition that digitizing materials increased accessibility which was thought to be a 'good thing'. Electronic media such as CD-ROMS were beginning to make an impact on research, and overall the confidence, and therefore use, of e-resources had increased². Jump forward to 2011, and a quick trawl of my Facebook page this morning reveals that the British Library (BL) are inviting me to "Check out our latest series of eBook Treasures for the iPad — Sacred texts: the Luttrell Psalter, Tyndale Bible and Sultan Baybars' Qur'an. www.bl.uk/ebooktreasures"³; my Librarianship monthly journal advertises 'Alice through the interactive looking-glass', another BL ebook which I now have on my iPad, along with the Faber edition of T.S. Eliot's *The Wasteland*⁴; our Library website⁵ is bulging at the seams with both subscribed and open access e-resource links, and we might very well wonder what other delights and electronic goodies there could possibly

be available in another five years. Of particular use to undergraduates here at Cambridge are such sites as OED Online, Literature Online (LION) and a very new subscription to ARTstor, to name but a few.

This apparent cornucopia of digital resources disturbs me a little. They do, of course, lead to versatility, flexibility and increased speed in accessing information, but placed alongside the need of English Literature students to engage with thorough reading of texts, I wonder whether there are some inherent weaknesses in e-resources? I can think of four main areas where 'trick or treat' might be applied to the world of electronic resources for those working in the field of English Literature:

1. It's there, but is it at a cost to the research process?

There are many electronic resources currently in use by students and researchers worldwide. Clearly, accessibility to resources has vastly improved, and digitisation brings about both increased accessibility and improved currency. No longer does a researcher need to wait for the print issue of a journal. Journal tables of content can come to you electronically if you wish, and it is quite likely that the electronic content is paid for by the University and is therefore available to be downloaded to your desktop. Searching online content can be very quick and easy. On the downside, there are skills that a researcher needs that may not naturally develop through using electronic resources. Careful analysis of text is not a natural feature of e-resource use. Serendipitous browsing of physical collections becomes less frequent, replaced by online serendipitous browsing, a different beast. Making optimal use of the resource interface to locate the best possible set of information can be problematic, and Librarians continually try and improve online interfaces to encourage better results. Those conducting research activities need to be more versatile than in the past — there is so much scholars now need to know: how to deal with manuscripts, printed monographs and bibliographies, and yet how to conduct a good search on an online database or resource as well.

2. It's there, but is it scholarly?

Electronic resources come in all shapes and sizes. There are significant factors contributing to this. Firstly, technology

The screenshot shows the Cambridge University Library website interface. At the top, there are navigation tabs for different eras: Home, Medieval, Renaissance, 1688-1847, 1830+, Language, Drama, American, Criticism, Visual Culture, and Post-Colonial. Below the tabs is a search bar with the text "Search:" and a "Search" button. The main content area is divided into several sections:

- Faculty Reading Lists:** A list of reading lists including "Part 1 Paper 4 (1830-Present)", "Part 1 Paper 8 (Language for Literature, 1300-present)", "Part 2 Paper 6", "Part 2 Paper 7b (Literature, Culture and Crisis 1631-1671)", "Part 2 Paper 7c (Lyric)", "Part 2 Paper 7d (Modernism and the Short Story)", and "Part 2 Paper 12c (Contemporary Writing in English)".
- Electronic resources:** A section titled "A selection of key resources that you might find helpful:" containing links to "ODNB - Oxford Dictionary of National Biography", "The Illustrated London News Historical Archive", "Twentieth-Century English Poetry", "Intute", "Helpful Bibliographies: ABELL", "MLA International Bibliography", and "Bibliographic database of Primary sources for the Nineteenth Century: The Nineteenth-Century Short Title Catalogue".
- Library Staff:** A profile for Librarian: Libby Tilley, including a photo and contact information like "Send Email", "Website / Blog", and "Profile & Guides".
- Library Search:** A section titled "Library Search" with a search bar and options for "English Library only ebooks" and "All libraries".
- Faculty Resources:** A section titled "Faculty Resources" with links to "Nineteenth-Century Studies Hub", "Cambridge Authors", and "Find useful information on:" followed by names like AS Byatt, EM Forster, Ted Hughes, Sylvia Plath, and Zadie Smith.
- Recently added to the Library:** A section titled "Recently added to the Library" with a link to "Milton and the English revolution / by Christopher Hill".
- ebooks for 1830+ Secondary Criticism:** A section titled "ebooks for 1830+ Secondary Criticism".
- Resource Guides:** A section titled "Resource Guides".

has changed so rapidly that, for example, dissemination of the type of material contained in the ebook for iPad version of T.S. Eliot's *The Wasteland* mentioned above, might soon be considered the norm, opening up many other possibilities for presentation of scholarly material. Secondly, self-publishing and self-archiving of research has increased and world-wide communication via alternative publishing models has expanded; where once a blog post would have been treated with suspicion, it may not now be something to avoid. However one of the key issues that students face when moving from school to university is the need to evaluate their sources carefully. With more and more online resources for scholarly information and more varied technology allowing its dissemination in ways not previously anticipated, it becomes harder to address the problem of ensuring that students not only judge online material carefully, but also do not forget that print materials need assessing too. Just because something is in print does not make it more scholarly than an online resource; both need to be evaluated carefully.

3. It's there, but is it a productive use of time?

E-resources can be a great distraction and I have been heard to use the word 'procrastination' when teaching student groups. Not only are the interesting links in a webpage hard to ignore, but there is somehow (at least for me) that sneaky suspicion that I have missed the perfect information, or data, or argument, or idea and that by trying a search just once more, in just one other place, I will stumble upon the perfect solution. Of course, that is possible, and there is an assumption that while I'm still there searching, I'm making good use of my time! However, put this potential for distraction against the ability to find such a wealth of electronic material literally whilst still in your pyjamas eating your cornflakes, or at 2.00 am, and the value of it is apparent. Not only this, but the methods that can be used to find specific information quickly and easily via an online resource, which are just not feasible in the same way in print, make e-resources invaluable.

4. It's there, but it costs too much

Often the really good stuff — the stuff a researcher most wants to see — costs money and in this constrained economic climate, it is just not possible to buy everything. Enticing though the pots of



gold are, the reality is that we don't have the money for it all. In fact it is more likely that researchers hear the word 'cancellations' more frequently than they would like. Whilst it is sensible to be careful with e-resource purchases, and to make sure that they match needs, it is this economic climate that influences the serendipitous nature of research. Fringe print publications are cancelled in favour of electronic resources; premium online collections are cancelled because usage is too low and this, together with other practices, actually curtails scholarly practice. E-resources that are based on subscription financing can become an elusive 'treat'.

So — are e-resources 'trick' or 'treat'? Although I have tried to give a fair view of both aspects above, I think that overwhelmingly they are a treat. There is such a wealth of information that is now available quickly and easily, that it would be foolish to wish to be without it. The 'trick' is to make sure that what we have is used productively; and to find ways to overcome the barriers, such as the cost of subscriptions, to ensure that digital resources are accessible to all.

Elizabeth Tilley, Librarian

1. Wendy Shaw, 'The use of the Internet by academics in the discipline of English literature: a quantitative and qualitative approach' *Information Research*, Vol. 6 No. 2, January 2001. Accessed online 12 November 2011: <<http://informationr.net/ir/6-2/ws8.html>>
2. David Ellis & Hanna Oldman, 'The English literature researcher in the age of the Internet', *Journal of Information Sciences*, 2005, 31(1) 29-36.
3. www.facebook.com/britishlibrary
4. www.faber.co.uk/article/2011/6/waste-land-ipad-press-release
5. www.english.cam.ac.uk/efllib

Alumnae/i News

We were pleased to receive the following reports of news and achievements, from alumnae/i across the world. Information for inclusion in next year's edition would be very welcome, and should be addressed to The Editor, Faculty of English, 9 West Road, Cambridge CB3 9DP.

Rosemary Andreae (Newnham 1967) has published, under the name Rosemary Baird, two books including *Mistress of the House: Great Ladies and Grand Houses 1670-1830* (2003), and a number of articles, some in *Country Life*.

Holly Aylett (Newnham 1978) became Director of the UK Coalition for Cultural Diversity in 2007, and a member of the UNESCO Cultural Committee for the UK in 2009. She has written numerous publications on cinema and culture, and has made films on the work of Gabriel García Márquez, Javier Mariscal, the predicament facing Afghan women, New Latin American film movement, the role of writers in East Germany before 1991.

Justin Barnard (Magdalene 1982) sent us a 43-minute DVD on his travels in India and Nepal in 2009 and reported on a play, *Genes Behaving Badly*, performed at UEA and the Edinburgh Science Festival in 1998.

Alison Billington (Emmanuel 1979) reports that she has published several works and translations, and is currently tutoring on the French novel.

Continued overleaf...

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Sandra Billington (Lucy Cavendish 1972) wrote an essay for *Folklore*, 2008, on the midsummer solstice, and a memoir, *Coming Up for the Third Time* (Holly Books, 2011).

D.M. Brannan (Magdalene 1996) gained an M Sc from Oxford in 2006, and has recently been working on a BA in literature.

Laurence Fleming (St Catharine's 1949) has published numerous books since 1959, such as *Old English Villages* (1986), *The English Garden* (1979), *Last Children of the Raj* (2004), and *The Will of Lady Catherine* (2010).

Isla Forbes (Girton 1944) published a book entitled *The Lambrook Legacy* in 1997.

Catherine Hall (Emmanuel 1992) published *Dams of Grace* (2009) and *The Proof of Love* (2011).

Alexander Hamdon (Peterhouse 1984) edited, with Edward Leigh, a collection of essays by twelve authors on aspects of Britain's secularization, *The Nation that Forgot God* (2009).

Carl Heap (Trinity Hall 1975) produced five seventy-minute Shakespeare adaptations for the National Theatre Discover, published by NT/Oberon Books (2010). He also directed the Marlowe Society production of *Much Ado about Nothing*.

Nicolas Herbert, Lord Hemingford (Clare 1983) published *Successive Journeys: A Family in Four Continents*, and won prizes in general non-fiction and self-publishing.

Christine Hodgson (Hughes Hall 1964) gained a PhD in February of this year.

Clifford Hughes (King's 1956) was recently awarded the first service-user Honorary Fellowship of the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists, for "outstanding service...to people with communication disabilities".

Chris Hunt (Jesus 1973) has won over fifty awards for his television directing and producing, including four Emmy and two BAFTA awards. He now chairs the video internet platform for the performing arts, while also producing feature films and running a large UK investment fund.

Christopher Isherwood (Christ's 1964) became ENA Mitchell Professor of Singing at the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama in July 2010.

Kate Charlton-Jones (New Hall 1978) received a PhD on the work of Richard Yates from the University of Essex in May 2010, and has published on Yates in the *Journal of American Literature*.

Judy Kendall (Caius 1979) reports on poetry published since 2007, *Poetry: The Drier the Brighter* and *Joy Change*. She also edited the letters and poems of Edward Thomas for Carcanet Press in 2007.

Christine Baker Kline (Selwyn 1988) has published several books of non-fiction as well as novels, including *Bird in Hand*, *Sweet Water*, and *Desire Lines*. She is writer-in-residence at Fordham University.

Margaret Ludlow (King's 1978) received an Advanced Diploma in Counselling (2010), and is a practitioner with a number of certificates including one in hypnotherapy.

David Marusza (Corpus 2003) is a pupil barrister in London, specializing in family law.

Richard Pearson (Clare 1948) wrote to us about book chapters and articles in medical journals and that he made some major changes in health care in West Virginia, along with other international work in medicine.

Stephen Richardson (St Catharine's 1969) is Vice-President of Mitsubishi UFJ Securities International.

Anna Robinson-Pont (Newnham 1980) reports on the publication of two books, *Women, Literacy and Development* (Routledge, 2004) and *Cross-cultural Perspectives on Educational Research* (Open University Press, 2005). She received the BMW Group Award for Intercultural Learning, 2007, and the UNESCO International Award for Literacy Research in 1998.

Lorrie Sheehy (St Edmund's 1997) made her directorial debut in Cambridge with her film, the thriller, *Sweet Sister*.

Jonathan Steffen (King's 1978) has published extensively, including poetry, translations from French and German and numerous short stories, the latter published in *The London Magazine*, *New Edinburgh Review*, *Signals*, *New Statesman*, and others.

Edward Stourton (Trinity 1970s) chaired a new literary prize, the Desmond Elliott First Novel Award, worth £10,000. This year it went to Anjali Joseph, who read English at Trinity in the 1990s, for his novel *Saraswati Park*.

Patrick Thomas (St Catharine's 1970) has published numerous books, including work on Katherine Philips, as well as *Sensuous Glory* (2000), *Celtic Earth*, *Celtic Heaven* (2008), and *Brechfa and Beyond* (2009). He is Canon Librarian and Chancellor of St David's Cathedral.

Derek Williams (Corpus 1952) sent us a letter describing his particular admiration for the English Tripos paper, "The Age of Samuel Johnson", from which he learnt much about writing elegant prose. He also outlined his subsequent career, writing and directing thirty-seven films in fifty countries. His "Shadow of Progress", perhaps the first environmental protest documentary, was translated into fifteen languages and he reports many awards including four nominations in the short films category of the Oscars. In the 1990s he published a series of books on the Roman Empire.

Isabel Wolff (Trinity Hall 1979) has published her ninth novel, *The Very Picture of You* (Harper Collins, 2011).

Events 2011/12

14 th -19 th March 2011	5 th annual Miscellaneous Theatre Festival (Drama Studio)
19 th -28 th October 2011	Festival of Ideas: How to Read Poems
20 th October 2011	Festival of Ideas: Alexander Crummell, the abolitionist by Dr Sarah Meer
20 th October 2011	Judith E. Wilson Poetry Lecture by Rae Armantrout (Little Hall)
20 th October 2011	Ordinary Guy performance poetry by Malik Al Nasir (Drama Studio)
22 nd October 2011	Festival of Ideas: Literary Responses to the French Revolution by Dr Joseph Crawford
25 th October 2011	Festival of Ideas: Reading Lyrics (Drama Studio)
26 th October 2011	Festival of Ideas: Re-reading Children's Classic by Dr Louise Joy
27 th October 2011	Festival of Ideas: The Difference Engine by Dr Zoe Svendsen
29 th October 2011	Festival of Ideas: To Rhyme or Not to Rhyme? By Dr Drew Milne
29 th October 2011	Cambridge New Writers (Drama Studio)
25 th November 2011	Mario Petrucci Poetry Reading (Drama Studio)
20 th February 2012	Graham Storey Lecture by Alan Hollinghurst (Lady Mitchell Hall, 5pm)
13 th March 2012	Micheal O'Siadhail Poetry Reading (Runcie Room, Faculty of Divinity)
5 th -6 th July 2012	Open Days