

The Alumnus Interview: Andrew Hill



Andrew Hill, the New York Bureau Chief of the *Financial Times*, always had a knack for journalism. At age 10, he founded a student newspaper called *The Griffin* at his Cheshire prep school, and continued scribbling later at Shrewsbury. So, by the time he came up to Cambridge to read English in 1984, he had a fair idea that journalism might well be his *métier* — to the mild chagrin of one of his supervisors.

‘I have a strong memory at interview for Trinity of Eric Griffiths pointing out that English literature and journalism were mutually exclusive’, Hill wryly recalls from his corner office with a grand view south along Sixth Avenue in midtown Manhattan. Amidst the dozens of business books and stacks of paper — court filings, annual reports, proofs of tomorrow’s edition — the postcard of Wordsworth he has pinned near his computer does, in fact, look rather lonely.

At Cambridge, Hill worked hard to have it both ways. He signed up for *Stop Press with Varsity*, as *Varsity* was then known, writing news and reviewing plays and, in his second year, editing the features section. Working at the paper was ‘quite a real experience’, with competitive assignments and a working hierarchy. ‘It’s still a thrill to see what you write appear in ink on paper the next morning’, he says, fondly recalling the late Thursday nights in the newsroom behind the Cambridge Union building. He had the chance to apply for the editorship, but declined — to have time for his second great passion: writing for the theatre.

He wrote a play called *Work* — a tragic love story — inspired by the painting of Ford Madox Brown. Though he confesses that he’d be ‘embarrassed to see it unearthed at this stage’, the play won an award and had the standard Cambridge success: a run at the ADC and a tour at the Edinburgh Fringe. Andrew also acted and directed most terms, thought not, he recalls, with the intensity of his Oscar-winning contemporary Sam Mendes, who was involved with one or two plays every term and was already considered a rising star.

While balancing student journalism with the amateur theatre, Hill still always turned in his weekly essays. In fact he remembers, with a smile, one of his Trinity supervisors — either Dr. Griffiths or Adrian Poole — telling him that his essays came ‘too easily’ to him, with the warning that he was sometimes ‘doing the writing bit without the thinking bit’. To this day, Hill is occasionally struck by a ‘fear of facility’ and thinks of those cautionary words when the copy is flowing too quickly.

Never having believed the rumor that the study of literature ruins it, Hill enjoyed the routines of Cambridge English. The weekly essays taught him the ‘discipline of

deadlines’ and the emphasis on Practical Criticism taught him the ‘discipline of accuracy in reading and writing’ — lessons which still inform his pursuit of a ‘purity of journalistic writing’.

They also served him rather well in exams: he won a Tripos prize in Part I. As for Part II, he recalls watching ‘It’s a Celebrity Knockout’ with his girlfriend in Whewell’s Court when Dr. Griffiths walked in and announced his result, saying something sarky like ‘if you didn’t watch such tripe you’d have gotten a prize’ — though of course he had a high first in any case.

Upon graduation, Hill decided to go into journalism rather than playwriting: ‘Both are difficult to get into, but journalism is slightly easier’, he remembers thinking to himself at the time. He figured he could still write creatively, which he soon discovered to be a ‘vain hope’ as his shining career at the FT took him from the UK companies desk to Brussels (as the FT’s youngest ever foreign correspondent at the time) and then to Milan. In 1996 he returned to London as Foreign News Editor; in September 1998 he moved to the New York bureau, where he oversees some twenty reporters.

In New York, he’s covered the stock market bubble, the Enron crash, and Sept. 11. He recently returned from a roadtrip to interview Jack Welch only to fly off to see Warren Buffett. ‘The last two and a half years have been more incredible than the previous six’. Not that his other assignments weren’t interesting: in Brussels he covered the introduction of the European single market; in Milan, the ructions caused by the first Berlusconi government; as foreign news editor, the Kosovo crisis, the death of Deng (which, he recalls, happened just before the FT’s

9 West Rd: *The Real Thing!*

It's really happening! After years of projects, setbacks, plans, and thought, the new Faculty Building is about to become a reality. At present we are in the grip of that first ruthless stage of any major transformation—voiding and destruction! We have just moved out of 9 West Road and demolition is scheduled to begin in late June. Then there will be two years while the building is going up and we expect to be in by Michaelmas Term, 2004. Despite the inevitable difficulties of this transitional period there is tremendous anticipation and excitement about the new opportunities that the building will bring to the life of the Faculty. Let me thank all of you who have contributed so generously to the construction of the building. The model is now on our website and it is possible to begin to get an idea of how the whole will look from the images provided by the architects, Allies and Morrison. The building will for the first time bring the activities of the Faculty, students and teachers, into one place. The library, the study and seminar rooms, the IT resources, the drama studio, the social meeting spaces, the courtyard: all will encourage study, conversation and interaction.

The building will also make it possible for us to expand our outreach and access programmes. We already participate in the Sutton Trust summer schools which bring school students who might otherwise not consider higher education to work in a stimulating intellectual environment for a period during the summer. We hope to do more such work since our students are our fundamental resource.

One of the pleasures of our fundraising campaign has proved to be the series of events that alumni have generously offered. It has certainly enriched the life not only of the Faculty but of the University and the wider community to have over the past year work from David Hare, John Barton, A. S. Byatt and Philip Hensher, Jonathan Miller (the only one not actually an English graduate, just a renaissance man!), Jeremy Paxman and Jon Barton. Most recently the singer Sally Bradshaw collaborated with Adrian Poole to give us a glorious evening of songs concerned



with Greek myths of tragic women: as one student commented, it was the most enjoyable way of revising for the Tragedy paper yet discovered. We plan to continue this programme, though at a somewhat slower pace while we have no fixed place of abode. We are delighted that so many alumni have been able to attend the events.

Our alumni have contributed £50,000 so far and we shall need to ask for your help over the next two years in order to furnish and equip the new building. The library, the drama studio, the social spaces, the board room and all the seminar and study spaces have to be furnished. As we have never had a central teaching place before, we don't have furniture to take with us! This new phase of our campaign has been given a

splendid start by a personal gift from Sir Martin Sorrell, Chair of the Friends of Cambridge English, of £25,000. We are very grateful to Sir Martin. The gift was announced at a party to celebrate the completion of the first phase of the appeal, most generously given to us by Lord Browne of Madingley at his Cambridge home. We need altogether around six hundred and fifty thousand pounds to equip the building: still a large sum, but one where now even the most modest of donations will count. I hope that you will feel able to make a contribution and that you will come and visit the faculty once we are installed in the building that will allow Cambridge English to flourish and make fresh strides in the coming years. ♡

Professor Dame Gillian Beer

Alumnæ/i Achievements

The circulation of 9 West Rd is about 6,500. The first issue contained a flyer asking alumnæ/i to let the Faculty know what they were doing. The response was tremendous: more than 400 people replied. Encouraged not to be shy, some replied, no doubt shyly, along the lines of 'sadly, shyness is my only option!'. Others, happily, were more forthcoming. The list below is, needless to say, very partial. It's not quite random, since we decided for this issue to concentrate on teachers, writers and artists. For purely arbitrary reasons of space, it is weighted massively towards the beginning of the alphabet. Many more to come in the next issue.

James Simpson, Editor

Will Adams (Fitz, 71-74), Freelance puzzle and quiz compiler and non-fiction book editor. (With wife Tricia) *London: a nostalgic look at the capital since 1945* (1997).

Robert Alexander (Kings, 56-59), Life Peer (1988); QC, Chairman of the Royal Shakespeare Company; *Voice of the People* (1997). Chairman of Royal Shakespeare Company Foundation Board; Chancellor of Exeter University; Trustee of National Gallery (87-94).

Hephzibah Anderson (New Hall, 94-97), Writer/Journalist; *Encyclopedia of Jewish Writers*.

John Arkell (Selwyn, 60-63), Headmaster of Gresham's School.

Vincent Leo Armishaw (Jesus, 49-52), Parish Priest; 24 years teaching 'O' and 'A' level English.

Norman Arnold (Emmanuel, 47-50), Head of Humanities Dept., Chelsea College, Univ. of London (57-84).

Andrew Bannerman (Selwyn, 61-64), Writer/Actor; TV script nominated for BAFTA.

Clifford Bartlett (Magdalene, 57-61), Music Publisher; hundreds of editions of baroque music for own firm, King's Music, and a few for OUP. Edits (& writes much of) *Early Music Review*.

Jonathan Benthall (King's, 59-62), *Disasters, Relief and the Media* (1993).

G. R. Blackwell (60-63), Retired (July 2000) after 37 years teaching English at Sedbergh School.

Robin Blake (Jesus, 67-70, 71-72), Full-time writer. *Mind over Medicine* (1986); *Fat Man's Shadow* (1990); *The Gwalio* (1992); *Anthony Van Dyck: A Life* (1999); *The Life of George Stubbs* (in progress).

S. F. Bolt (38-40, 46-47), *Poetry of the 1920's* (1967); *A Preface to Joyce* (1981, 1992).

Paul Bond (Queens', 64-67), Freelance: short courses for actors; theatre skills for business; university teaching; director; playwright.

Martin Booth (Corpus, 81), writer, including: *Adrift in the Oceans of Mercy* (1996); *The Industry of Souls* (1998); FRSL, Booker Prize short list.

David Bowen (34-37), editing a revised English language edition of *Ningau Kakumei* ('The Human Revolution') by Dzisehu Iheda; seven (of twelve) volumes so far published.

John Bowen (Trinity Hall, 77-80), Senior Lecturer, Dept. of English, Keele University; *Other Dickens: Pickwick to Chuzzlewit* (OUP, 2000).

Jacqueline Anne Bradshaw (King's, 80-83), Deputy Editor of Debates, House of Lords.

Michael Bradshaw (Pembroke, 85-88), University Lecturer, Manchester Metropolitan University; *Thomas Lovell Beddoes, Selected Poetry* (co-ed); *Resurrection Songs: The Poetry of Thomas Lovell Beddoes*.

Dennis Brailsford (Peterhouse, 44, 47-49), *Sport and Society: Elizabeth to Anne* (1969), *A Taste for Diversions: Sport in Georgian England* (1999).

David Brauner (Pembroke, 87-90), Lecturer in English, University of Reading; *Post-War Jewish Fiction: Ambivalence, Self-Explanation, Transatlantic Connections* (2001).

Peter Broad (Sidney Sussex, 72-75), Teacher and House Master, Eton College; Penguin Passnote on *The Woman in White*; actor with Cheek by Jowl; Best Actor Prize at Edinburgh Festival from BBC Radio.

Michael Brockett (77-78), Head Teacher, and Visiting Lecturer at Surrey University.

Sheelagh M. Brooks (Girton, 40-42, 46-47), retired from teaching. *The Tithe Place – Names of Little Bromley, Essex* (1999), (with H.Brooks) *The Tithe Place Names of Mistley* (2000).

Hugh Brooks (Emmanuel, 38-40, 46-47), see above.

D. H. Bullock (Queens', 49-53), *Words in Use* (1963), reprinted 63, 64, 66, 71, 75, 78, 79.

Arthur Burnham (Cat's, 63-66), Creative perfumer; publications: 'threatening one'.

Helen Byrne (Churchill, 87-90), Head of English, St Richard Gwyn High School.

Peter S. D. Carpenter (Pembroke, 76-79), Head of English, Tonbridge School (92-01); Literary Editor of William Hayward; founder and Co-Director of Worple Press.

John Charlesworth (Downing, 51-55), *olim* Head of English at Spalding Grammar School. *The Living Language* (1965).

Simon Claxton (Queens', 62-65), Head of English, Knighton House School, Dorset.

John Keate Coleridge (King's, 48-52), 2 hardback centenary golf books.

Helen Cooper (New Hall, 65-68 (B.A.), 68-71 (PhD)), Titular Professor in English, University of Oxford; *Pastoral: Medieval into Renaissance* (1977); *The Structure of the Canterbury Tales* (1983); Oxford Guides to Chaucer: *The Canterbury Tales* (1991); President, New Chaucer Society 2000-02; Honorary D.Litt from Washington and Lee University, 2001.

Jane Cordell (St John's, 84-87), Editor, University of London's External Programme; *Cambridge Business English Activities* (2000).

T. W. Craik (Christ's, 45-58), Prof. Emeritus, University of Durham; many publications, including (ed.), *King Henry V* (Arden Shakespeare, 1995).

John Daniel (Pembroke, 55-58), Former Head of English, University of Plymouth; 23 *British Poets* (Swallow); *Faber Introduction One* (Faber). Winner of Exeter Poetry Prize, 1995.

Anne Day (Homerton, 72-76), KS2 Teacher.

Roger Day (Emmanuel, 64-67), retired University Lecturer (Open University). Many OU publications, *Larkin* (1987).

K. B. Daynes (Selwyn, 48-51), retired after 40 years teaching; OBE (1990).

Margaret Diggle (Girton, 23-28), runs Poetry Circle for local U3A.

F. Dobson (Cat's, 41/42, 46-47), retired, Dept of Education, Loughborough University.

L. J. Douglass (née Crook) (Girton, 52-55), retired teacher.

Nick Drake (Magdalene, 80-83), *The Man in the White Suit* (1999). Forward Prize for best first collection, 1999.

Suzanne Edward (Lucy Cavendish, 73-76), M.A., F.S.A., F.R.Hist.S., A.L.A. Librarian and Keeper of the Muniments, Salisbury Cathedral; *Catalogue of Gloucester Cathedral Library; No Fine But a Glass of Wine. Cathedral Life at Gloucester in Stuart Times*.

H. L. Elvin (Trinity Hall, 24-28), *olim* Director, Institute of Education. London University; 5 books, one on the study of poetry.

Richard Fleming (Pembroke, 81-84), Head of English, St Edmund's School, Oxford.

A. T. Gray (d. 2000) (Caius, 37-40), Fellow of the Royal College of Music for 30 years; played horn with major London symphony & chamber orchestras for many years (BBC, LPO, LSO).

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From Leavis to Linguistics: English in the Schools

known as the ‘Crisis in English’, the late twentieth century debate about the content and theoretical nature of the subject English, and the values enshrined in literary study. Emerging from Cambridge in the mid-1980’s, and going directly into teaching in the state school system, I soon found that the ghost of Leavis had plenty to be distressed about.

The unchallenged role of a Leavisite approach to the classics of English Literature in school English teaching has, to put it bluntly, taken a bit of a bashing — and from many directions — in the years following McCabe’s attack. The burgeoning disciplines of Linguistics, Cultural Studies, Media Studies and Post-Colonialism, with their powerful alternative visions of the subject’s content and philosophy, have all pressed their claims on the curriculum makers in the last few decades. In addition, the massive growth in the range and quantity of texts devoured in private by children — in children’s literature, television and information technology, for instance — has made young people into confident cultural consumers in an increasingly liberal cultural landscape, reflecting radical socio-cultural changes brought to our attention by such literary commentators as Raymond Williams and Stuart Hall.

Literature in school has found itself part of something much broader. In the Sixth Form, students of English are increasingly opting for A Level English Language, in which, for instance, they

will learn about the social functions and corresponding linguistic features of different types of language — including literary language. In GCSE English, students may learn basic semiotics as part of their study of image and representation in the media: they will certainly do so if they opt for the challenging A Level Media Studies. On the other hand, many would argue that the values underlying A Level English Literature have barely changed since the 1950s, despite the enormous shifts that have taken place since then in socio-linguistic and socio-cultural understanding, and in the nation’s cultural landscape.

The English curriculum in schools maintains a difficult balance between traditional and progressive forces, and nowhere is the balance more difficult than in the realm of literature. Even here, however, there are interesting changes happening. A Level may still occupy its traditional ground, but in the National Curriculum, a new post-colonial and multicultural emphasis takes students beyond their (still compulsory) study of Shakespeare and the ‘English literary heritage’— perhaps to learn why Ngugi, locked away in his African cell because he dared to write the truth in an African language, might have seen English Literature as a ‘cultural bomb’. ☹

Gary Snapper (Cat’s, 83-6) was Head of English at Impington Village College, Cambridge, 1994-2001, and is currently a postgraduate student at the Institute of Education of the University of London.

In 1979, the Nobel Prize-winning writer Ngugi Wa Thiong’o was released from prison in Kenya. His crime had been writing a play critical of Daniel Arap Moi’s neo-colonial regime, in an African language which made the whole thing accessible to ordinary Africans. Two years later, he began *Decolonising the Mind* —his seminal study of literature in post-colonial Africa — in which he wrote of the ‘cultural bomb’ of English Literature. In the same year (1981), Colin McCabe created his own explosion, over two thousand miles away in Cambridge, whence, arguably, English Literature was originally exported.

Two years after that, I arrived in Cambridge to read English, unaware of its potentially incendiary nature. The only crisis I was generally aware of was that pertaining to the (usually overnight) completion of my weekly essay. It wasn’t until later that I realised that this weekly crisis (‘what is the nature of what I have to write, what is the value of writing it, and what do I actually have to say?’) was in some way related to what has become

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Peter Happé (Queens’, 52-56), Principal, Rutland Sixth Form College (72-80); & Barton Peveril Sixth Form College (80-89); many publications on medieval and early modern drama.

Roland Xavier Hindmarsh (St Cats, 45-46, 48-50), OBE (1982). Founding Chairman, Cambridge Jungian Circle. Published in ESL and EFL field.

Kevin Loader (Christ’s, 76-79), producer, film version of *Captain Correlli’s Mandolin*, directed by John Madden (alumnus). Currently working with Roger Michell (alumnus) on 5 films in development, and a film about Cromwell and Fairfax.

W. H. Mellers (Downing, 33-38), published 18 fairly substantial books about music.

Siegbert S. Praver (Jesus, 44-47; Scholar, Christ’s, 47-48), Emeritus Professor, Oxford University. 3 books on aspects of the writings and drawings of Thackeray

David Punter (Fitz, 67-73), Professor of English, University of Bristol. 20 books of criticism and poetry, including *Writing the Passions* (2000) and *Postcolonial Imaginings: Fictions of a New World Order* (2000).

A. G. Reynolds (Queens’, 32-35), CVO (2000); OBE (1984); FBA (1993); Keeper of the Dept of Prints & Drawings, V&A; Hon.

Keeper of Portrait Miniatures, Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge (94 to date); many publications on art, including *Seventeenth Century Miniatures in the Collection of Her Majesty the Queen* (1999).

Micheline Wandor (Newnham, 59-62), Writer/Musician. Many awards and nominations, including nomination for Best Dramatisation, Writers’ Guild Award, 1996 – *The Piano* (dramatization of the novel of the film).

Chris Whitby (Sidney Sussex, 71-74), Managing Director of Graphic Design company. *John Dee’s Actions with Spritis, 22 Dec 1581 to 23 May 1583* (1985). ☹



Titian, Venus & Cupid with a Lute Player; reproduced by kind permission of the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge

Tripas Extensions: Visual Culture et al.

Part II of the English Tripas, with its thirty three possible papers, can seem like a street-market of intellectual opportunities. Among the Optional Papers, old upright citizens like the English Moralists (Plato, St Paul, Nietzsche) will be jostled each year by parvenu papers: now 'Commonwealth and International International Literature in English', and now — most recently — 'Literature and Visual Culture'.

The first part of the Visual Culture paper is open and general. It considers the ways we inflect vision with meaning, in the light of key texts by historians and theorists. There may be discussion of gender issues, like those raised by the clothed man and bare woman in Titian's 'Venus and Cupid with a lute-player', in the Fitzwilliam Museum here. Students nowadays are wary of too-easy arguments about the male gaze, and bare women's bodies commodified by art, and may be more interested in the ambiguities of the Titian. What *is* this artist's 'take' on the startled man and wistful goddess: Venus herself being a

musician here, though she does not play her flute?

The second half of the paper has a more particular topic, which may change from time to time. The current subject is The Grand Tour 1750-1900. Many questions in the politics of culture, art and letters are raised by the different quests which combined in the Tour. In the eighteenth century, young architects and painters studied villas in the Campagna, preparing to transform British landscape and the painting of it. Dawdling milords with learned tutors accosted beauties while pursuing Beauty, in an uneasy alliance of Pleasure with Taste. And connoisseurs hunted sculptures to bring back to England, in that lust for the antique which fed the great divisions of thought at the time, about Ancient versus Modern and Classic versus Romantic.

As the nineteenth century develops, the milords and connoisseurs are increasingly outnumbered by the travelling big families Victorian novelists describe — more like tourists in the modern sense — out to enjoy other

countries but often looking down on them. Fine Art becomes focussed in the aestheticism of Pater, burning with his gemlike flame before the perfect beauty of a Botticelli canvas. By the end of the century, the tour in literature has begun to grow sinister, as lesser aesthetes, loving beauty coldly, linger in curtained dim villas in Florence to ensnare with Art the idealistic travelling young women in Henry James's novels.

The Tripas results, in the first two years, suggest that candidates for the paper have both been stretched, and found it exciting. As to the future, there are plans at the graduate level for an MPhil in Culture and Criticism which we hope may include a course on Text and Image, in which English Faculty members may join Historians of Art, in classes both in Sidgwick and in the Fitzwilliam Museum, studying pictures in books from closely rich medieval illuminated manuscripts to the extraordinary *mise-en-page* — spaced words and warships — of Ian Hamilton Finlay. 🍷

John Harvey

Who's Who

All members of the Faculty were deeply saddened in December 2001 by the death of **Professor John Stevens**, formerly Professor of Medieval and Renaissance English.

Professor David Trotter (University College London) was appointed to replace **Professor Dame Gillian Beer** as King Edward VII Professor from October 2002 when Professor Beer retires. **Mr John Kerrigan** was appointed to the Professorship of English 2000.

Dr Barry Windeatt was promoted to a personal professorship.

Dr Maud Ellmann, **Dr Oliver Padel** and **Dr Kathy Wheeler** were promoted to personal readerships.

A rare event this year: a new academic post was created. The post has been filled

by **Dr Amy Robinson** (undergraduate and graduate at Newnham) who has been appointed as an Assistant Lecturer in American Literature. Others appointed by the Faculty in the past year include: **Dr David Hillman** (Harvard) as Assistant Lecturer in Shakespeare and Renaissance Drama; **Dr Anne Fernihough** (Girton) as Lecturer in 19th and 20th century literature; **Dr Raphael Lyne** (New Hall) Lecturer in Early Modern literature.

Following the appointment of **Dr Adrian Poole** to a British Academy Research Readership for 2002-2004, **Dr Jennifer Wallace** (Peterhouse) was appointed to a temporary lectureship, to replace Dr Poole.

Appointments to College posts include: **Dr Chirico** (temporary College Lectureship

at Jesus College); **Dr Connell** (College Lectureship at Selwyn College); **Dr Henry** (College Lectureship at Trinity College); **Dr Johnston** (College Lectureship at Christ's College); **Dr Mukherji** (College Lectureship at Fitzwilliam College); **Dr Tilmouth** (College Lectureship at Corpus Christi College).

The Faculty is very sorry to be losing **Dr Paul Giles**, Lecturer in American Literature, to a Readership in American Literature at Oxford, and **Dr Robert Douglas-Fairhurst** to a CUF Tutorial Fellowship at Magdalen College, Oxford.

The retirements of **Professor Dame Gillian Beer** and **Professor Ian Donaldson** will also take place this year, but it is certain that they will continue to be active members of the Faculty community. 🍷

Events 2001 – 2002

The Cambridge English Events Programme continued in 2001-2002 with the same high standards and variety as in previous years.

In October 2001 **David Hare** gave a reading, at the ADC, of his monologue *Via Dolorosa*, a moving and insightful commentary on the situation in the Middle East. Although written some years ago, it continues to have great resonance.

In March 2002 **John Barton** kindly agreed to return to run a full day

workshop at the ADC on speaking and acting Shakespeare. It was a rare opportunity for students involved in drama at Cambridge to listen and learn from so distinguished a Shakespearean.

In May 2002, opera singer and English alumna **Sally Bradshaw** performed a programme of songs on the theme of women and tragedy, with accompanist **David Harrod**. The performance was complemented by a commentary from **Adrian Poole** on the literary background to the songs.

The setting for excellent music-making and commentary was the chapel of Jesus College.

The Faculty also contributed to the Alumni Weekend and was particularly grateful to **Professor Lisa Jardine** (alumna and now Professor at Queen Mary College) for agreeing at the last minute to deliver a lecture on being a public figure, in place of BBC World Affairs Editor (and alumnus) **John Simpson** who was, of course, 'holed up' in Afghanistan. 🍷

David Clifford

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London deadline and 'required a scramble to alert sleeping Beijing and Shanghai correspondents'), and the Russian and Asian financial crises — among many other stories.

Around the office, Hill is known for two things: writing fast and having a hilariously dry wit. (At Cambridge, he won the Trinity Light Verse prize and shared the stage with Prince Edward in productions of the Cambridge Light Entertainment Society.) One American reporter who expected English reserve has found Hill 'surprisingly loose and funny'.

Amidst it all he's made sure to keep up with the literary life as best he can. He has a list 'the length of my arm' of books to read, both fiction and non-fiction. Perhaps that's why the postcard of Wordsworth is there: as a gentle reminder. 🍷

Stop press: since the composition of this article, Andrew Hill has been promoted to US Business Editor.

Ien Cheng (St John's, 1998)

Ien Cheng gained a B.S. (1997) and M.Eng. (1998) in Computer Science from M.I.T. He then read English in Cambridge, graduating in 2000 with the top first. While in Cambridge he founded *The Cambridge Student*. He then worked in London helping to launch a TV company for Pearson, the British media firm, for a year, before moving to New York in September to work for *The Financial Times*.

The English Faculty Playing: Tom Hollander reports

‘Oxbridge runs things’, my father would say. I found his complacent endorsement of elitist hierarchy deeply offensive. Until I got in. Then I began to quite like the idea. Unfortunately, though, many people from Oxbridge do end up running things. The only thing your average actor is likely to run is his own bath, unless he is extremely successful, in which case someone else runs it for him. Only after I left was to learn quite how helpless actors are. But I had a very good time at Cambridge.

Socially, I was immediately comfortable since, having grown up in Oxford, the environment was familiar to me. Indeed many of the people I had known at home went to Cambridge at the same time, including my sister Julia. In my first term, a time when many people are cowering in their rooms bewildered and confused, I was cycling around under blue skies greeting and waving at people I had known all my life. We had all been transported to a new city even more beautiful than the one in which we’d grown up. The first time I saw my sister she was cycling down King’s Parade with a huge bunch of dried orange flowers in her basket. Arriving in heaven should feel something like that. I sound overly sentimental. I had a teacher at school who talked of his time at Oxford as the happiest in his life. I felt sorry for him for it, and hoped I would never do the same.

In my first term I auditioned for nine plays and got nine parts. I did the two that were leading roles. One was called *Gotcha* by Barry Keefe, and was about a working class rebel let down and alienated by the failures of the comprehensive school system. We did it in the Playroom, Ted’s Passage. It was directed by Sam Mendes (Peterhouse 1988) and designed by Tom Piper (Trinity, 1984). They were from Oxford as well, and between us we knew about as much about the world of the play as we did about deep sea welding. We were a smash.

I felt like a real actor. I wore second hand suits, brightly coloured waistcoats

and a brown trilby that had belonged to my grandfather, along with his old brown brogues from the 1920s and long second-hand coats. I posed. I was extremely confident. I was a young Peter Cook ... John Cleese ... James Mason ... Stephen Fry. They hovered around my shoulders as I swaggered about.

In my final year I was President of the Marlowe Society. Since the Marlowe only produced one show a year this was quite easy. It provided maximum status for minimal effort. It involved appointing a committee, which then selected a professional director. We chose Sam Mendes (who had graduated the year before and therefore sounded professional) to direct *Cyrano de Bergerac*. In an act of charming reciprocity he chose me to play the title

role, at which point I offloaded my burdensome Presidential Responsibilities to Pippa Harris. I grew a full beard for the role. A review commented that, although the prosthetic nose was extremely effective, it was rather let down by an implausible stick-on beard.

I am currently playing George the Fifth for a film written and directed by Stephen Poliakoff (*King’s*, 1971), called *The Lost Prince*. The film is being made by a company called Talkback, founded by Griff Rhys Jones (*Emmanuel*, 1972). The producer is Jon Chapman (*St Catherine’s*, 1974). The executive producer for Talkback is Peter Fincham (*Churchill*, 1974). The film was commissioned for the BBC by Pippa Harris (*Robinson*, 1986).

The full beard (see photo) is false. ☹

Tom Hollander (*Selwyn*, 1985)



Legenda

Justine Picardie (Selwyn, 1982) (Writer and author of 'If The Spirit Moves You' (2002))

I've recently re-discovered the novels of Rosamond Lehmann, a wonderful writer whom I first read as a student at Cambridge. At 18, I devoured her debut novel, *Dusty Answer*, with its beautiful account of childhood and student life at Girton. That novel was written in Lehmann's twenties, over 70 years ago, yet remains as vivid now as it was to its first generation of readers. Now, as an adult, I have returned to Lehmann's memoir, *The Swan In The Evening* — a new edition of which is about to be published by Virago — which describes, with gentle candour, the terrible loss of her daughter Sally, at the age of 24. It is an enduring testament to her powers as a writer, and the human capacity for both grief and love. 🍷

Rhian-Anwen Roberts (Fitzwilliam, 1986) (Headhunter, Chair, London Festival of Literature. Former Director, Welsh Millennium Arts)

While studying English at Cambridge, I came across a phrase used by Hannah Arendt: 'the otherness of evil'. I have recently begun to read about how we, as a society, try to cope with actions of what are termed 'evil' individuals. It is rather depressing — but earlier this year, I read Gitta Sereny's book on contemporary Germany which, amongst many other things, is a rather hopeful book about how young Germans are incredibly civic minded and exercise their right to vote in greater numbers than elsewhere. A few months ago I read an even more inspiring book about how society can confront and redeem itself after 'evil' — *Long Shadows* by Erna Paris. I haven't yet had the nerve to give it to a Serb friend who believes Milosevitch should not be brought to trial!

I am currently reading *From the Land of Green Ghosts* by Pascal Khoo Thwe, about a Burmese tribesman who came to Caius to read English. I thought Cambridge was another world when I arrived from Llangollen — but Pascal's experience must have been mind boggling! 🍷

Claire Tomalin (Newnham, 1951) (Author)

I've just been in Australia, and discovered the work of the writer David Malouf — shamefully late, since he's been published since the 1970s. He's the real thing — he conveys the people, history, landscape and atmosphere of Australia better than any writer I know. Not that he sticks wholly to his own country — his novella *Child's Play* is set in Italy, a *tour de force*, subtle and sophisticated. He springs many surprises, and has an intensity of response to the physical world that recalls Lawrence. He gets to the quick of his characters in a few lines, from the naïf artist in *Harland's Half Acre* to the tycoon in *The Great World*. He counterpoints the experiences of Australian life with the memories and nostalgias of immigrants, boldly shifting perspectives. He conjures up amazing moments: in one, swarming bees settle on a child and we experience both with her and with the terrified onlookers. He has a superb sense of history, and is particularly good on the years between the two world wars, when so many Australian men sank into squalor, jobless, homeless, taking to the road, their families dragged down with them. Men, women, adolescents, old and young, are exquisitely recognised and delineated. In short, he has the abundant imagination and authority of a great story-teller. 🍷

Chris Smith, MP (Pembroke, 1969) (Former Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport)

Every summer when I set off on holiday I take a George Eliot novel with me. This greatest of all novelists has such human discernment in her writing and her characters that it serves to remind me about some of the real reasons for living: something that a life of politics all too often makes us forget. But I also love the writing of Ian McEwan. He takes us by the hand and leads us through the excitement of dramatic events, or brings us right inside the mind of his characters so that we genuinely feel — and understand — the intensity of the moment. *Atonement* is his best novel yet. Who can forget the



Lawrence Alma-Tadema, Ninety-Four Degrees in the Shade; reproduced by kind permission of the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge

exploration we make, together with the author, of the tortuous fantasies of Briony's mind? This is real writing to match the very best of the past. 🍷

Dame Antonia Byatt (Newnham, 1954) (Novelist)

I've been reading and rereading the poems of Dorothy Nimmo, who died last year. She was, as Dudy Foulds, a shining and famous undergraduate in 1950s Cambridge. She was also a birthright Quaker — we were at the same Quaker school. She went on the stage, married and had children, and in her fifties began writing her extraordinary poems. They are sharp, black, dancing, profound and lyrical. They mix religious roots like Bunyan and George Fox with nursery-rhyme rhythms turned dangerous. They are tough and uncompromising — her world is bleak, and she records it with precise energy. It is also a world of difficult love, and the refusal of love, both mother-love, friendship and compassion. There is nothing quite like them. I was amazed to watch her find this late, sure voice. I was — in her own way — almost angry with her for dying so soon after she had found it. But she did find it, and there are several books in print — *The Wig Box* is a kind of pro-tem selected poems *Kill the Black Parrot* is my favourite. People who knew and admired Dudy Foulds will be surprised and even shocked to read Dorothy Nimmo. People who care about poetry will recognise her considerable achievement. 🍷