

Shakespeare for Snowflakes?

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Heaven is all Goodbyes

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The Public Life of Letters

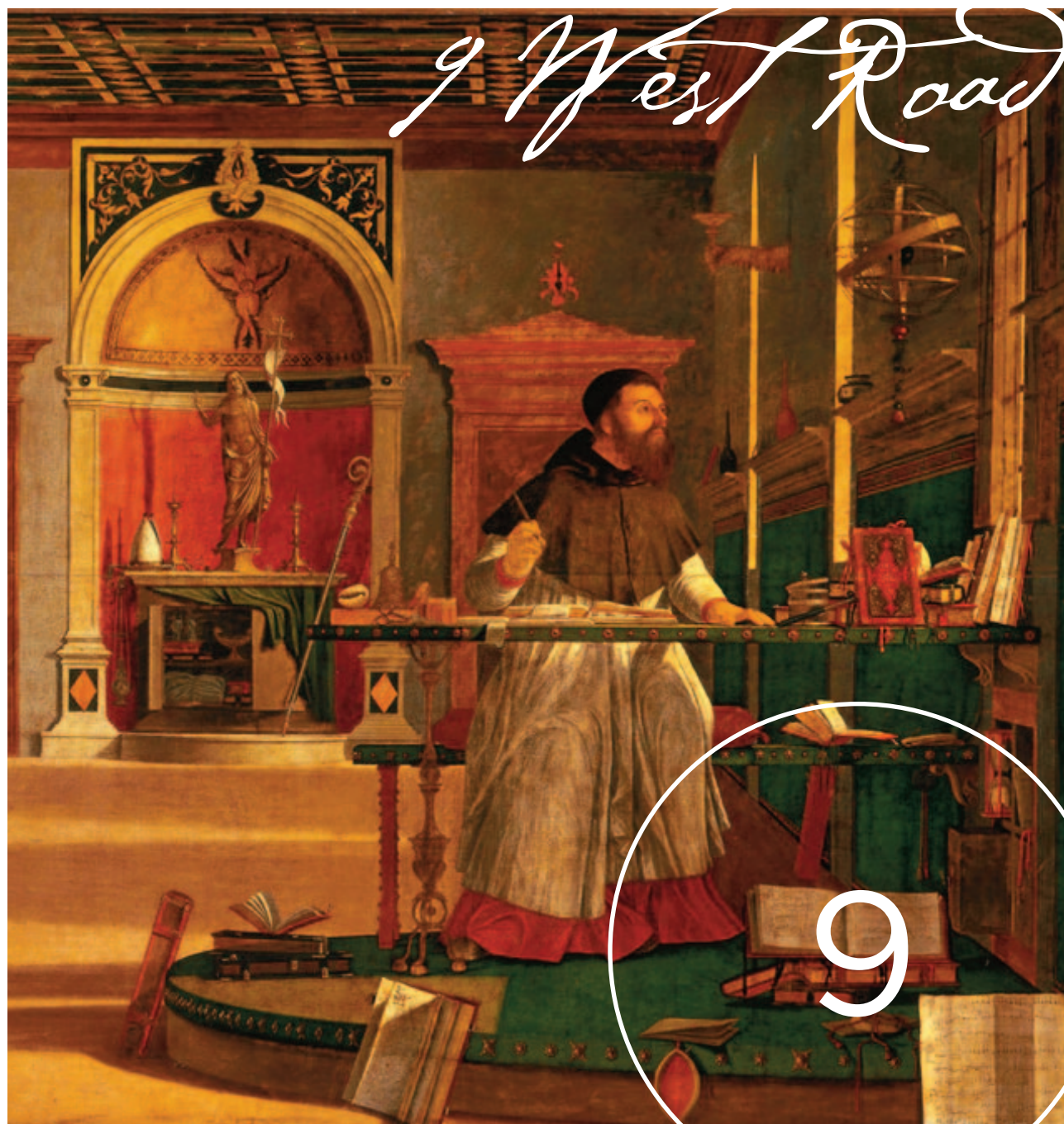
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Mariah Whelan

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News from the Faculty of English, Cambridge

9 WEST ROAD



THINGS GO ON...



This has been a very difficult year to be Chair of the Faculty. I have witnessed at first hand the extreme challenges faced by both students and staff due to the pandemic. We are all coping with varying degrees of isolation, fear and concern for others around us.

Many are supporting others, home schooling, and caring for those who need to shield. In the University we are coping with the shift to distanced or online teaching, learning and assessment; there have been steep learning curves, huge workloads, a burden of administration and great uncertainty. University study is demanding at the best of times, and right now (early January) I know that for many of our students it is in many cases incredibly stressful and

lonely. At the same time, I must say how grateful I am to have been working both with them and the Faculty staff, so many of whom have shown the most amazing resourcefulness, strength and resilience. I have been humbled and cheered by the ways that people have worked together and done their best to support each other. We are not done yet. But there may be ways in which the pandemic has given us a few new skills, opened up some opportunities for reform – and reminded us that we are involved in a shared endeavour.

In what remains of this piece, I want to look forwards. Last year, several alumnae/i asked me how Faculty teaching was evolving, whether in response to changes in the discipline or in the world. And so, I thought I would review a few of the important developments that are taking place here (along with one or two striking ways in which we remain connected with the very distinctive early history of the Faculty).

Certainly some things appear not to have changed much. In the undergraduate Tripos, for instance, several of our most capacious, enabling and popular papers have survived a startlingly long time – if not in critical and theoretical content, then in name. In Part I, the Shakespeare Paper is still studied in the Easter term of the first year; in Part II, the Tragedy Paper, with its compulsory Greeks and Shakespeare, is still studied in the Michaelmas term; 'Practical Criticism/Critical Practice' remains at the centre of the degree. However, in 1891, there was already a Shakespeare paper; in 1917, tragedy was a 'special subject' (reflecting the dominance of Classics in the University), and in 1926, the year when a complete English Literature degree was finally established, Tragedy became a full Part II paper;¹ it goes without

saying that the Cambridge emphasis on criticism and close reading goes back to the early twentieth century. The year 1926 also saw the establishment of the flagship philosophical paper 'English Moralists', a pet project of 'Q' (Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch, Edward VII Professor, whose name can still be seen over his door in the Old Divinity School, now part of St John's College). This paper too thrives, though in 2018 it was finally renamed 'The Ethical Imagination'. What the continued existence of these large and dynamic papers reveals is not lack of change, however, but its contrary: how every generation has been able to reinvent these papers in response to new critical and intellectual circumstances.

This year, we have introduced a new two-tier Part I (1a and 1b). As a result of this, Shakespeare and Practical Criticism will now be assessed in the first year. Although we are now moving towards a 'cumulative degree', we are also keen to preserve the relatively unpressured, formative nature of the first year, and so first year results in English still include feedback and will not be part of any Finals result. We continue to think hard about how better to organise our teaching in terms of incremental, 'scaffolded' learning, to ensure that all students, whatever their educational background, can find their feet and develop according to their individual critical skills and intellectual interests.

The Faculty's interest in literary history is still exemplified in 'period papers' – whose emphasis on the culture, politics and thought of the period also has a long pedigree back to the 1890s. What I remember as the always popular but massively oversize '1830 to the present day' paper, however, has now been divided into two overlapping papers, between which students choose. All these period papers also have the virtue of being amazingly unprescriptive in relation to the texts can be studied and the critical approaches adopted in them.

Perhaps the most significant change here, however, is one whose ramifications will play out for many years to come: that these papers all now include Anglophone literature from anywhere in the world. This is just one aspect of the decolonisation of the Tripos, a process that is not just about the diversification of the objects of study, but also requires us to question and rethink the nature, assumptions and purposes of all that we do. Issues of race and empire, works by non-white/non-Eurocentric voices, global and world literatures, are actively taught and increasingly studied across the Faculty. Recent and current Faculty appointments have been in World Literature, Postcolonial Literature, and Post-1900 Literature and Culture. This year, Japanese literature in translation joins many long-standing borrowable papers in literature in other languages. We hope that changes of this sort – along with greater diversity among our teaching staff – will encourage more students from non-traditional backgrounds to apply to study with us, enabling them to feel confident and able to participate when they arrive.

Our MPhils, which developed piecemeal over a number of years, are also changing. We think that it makes sense to bring them together within one over-arching degree structure. Although MPhil students will still be able to take a specialist 'period' MPhil degree, this will make it easier for some students to create pathways not limited by historical specialisation. Theoretically-oriented courses will be co-taught, something that we hope will encourage cross-period and interdisciplinary dialogue amongst ourselves. In a major new initiative, the Faculty expects in 2022 to be home to a new MPhil in Digital Humanities.

I can only gesture towards the many live and innovative areas of our teaching and shared research, whether at undergraduate, MPhil or PhD level. Some of them build on recognisable and longstanding traditions of study and scholarship, while some of them reflect new preoccupations more overtly. They include literary and cultural history; critical theory and practice; poetics and the languages of prose; song and performance; race and empire; world literature; environment and the anthropocene; gender, sexuality and queer studies; manuscripts and the material text; theology and philosophy; digital humanities; sound technology, visual culture and film. Something of this can be seen in this issue of 9 West Road. Over a hundred years ago in 1917 the Faculty of English emerged out of the Faculty of Medieval and Modern Languages, where English had previously been studied. We have never cut our ties with MMLL (as it is now called).² However, I am struck by the fact that English at Cambridge seems to be looking outwards across the world more intently than ever. If many of our activities have been temporarily checked by the pandemic, I remain optimistic about the future.

Nicolette Zeeman

Professor of Medieval and Renaissance English

Chair of the Faculty of English

Fellow of King's College

¹ Although the Faculty was established in 1917, at this time English Literature was only 'Part A' of the undergraduate degree, studied alongside either an English 'Part B' in medieval languages, or a Part from another tripos, such as Classics. These exciting early years are documented by E.M.W. Tillyard in *The Muse Unchained* (London: Bowes & Bowes, 1958), though Tillyard thought that by the mid-1930s critical work in the Faculty had already passed its best!

² Linguistics has recently moved from English to what was then MML. It is also true that, due to the pressure of work on students (but to the regret of many), in 2015 the Faculty gave up its own non-English language paper, something else that dated back to 1926; languages are now studied in borrowed papers.





MODERNIST INVENTION

In what sense should a radio broadcast operate like a printed verse anthology? Is a telephone call a sound model for poetic conversation? Could the groove of a vinyl disc accommodate a sonnet?

My purpose in *Modernist Invention* is to show that these are not frivolous or hollow analogies, but ones that may enable us to elucidate and engage modernism's technological affinities. The media ecology of the early twentieth century has usually been considered narrative territory, its networks of pleasure and communication the rightful domain of prose fiction. My research, by contrast, reveals that novelists and short-story writers were by no means the only witnesses to a new sonic age, and that lyric poets were as well (and sometimes better) equipped to articulate its implications for popular attitudes to bodily presence, regime change, and identity politics. In the years following the First World War, telephones, radio-sets, phonographs, and talking pictures found their way into the spaces and channels of daily life, with the result that the meaning of 'voice' – so long the privilege and preserve of imaginative writing – could no longer be taken for granted. So I propose a return in *Modernist Invention* to the sources of modernity's acousmatic voices – voices that would seem to know no origins – with a view to evaluating for the first time the contribution of American lyric poets to the process of writing, and making, sound history.

What might it have meant for a lyric poet in the 1930s to have felt compelled to intervene in the history of mediated sound? That many a poet did, I suggest, prompted such writers to assume a hybrid role in the expanding soundscape of

North America, which involved a kind of imaginative troubleshooting, a will to think laterally about the ways lyric verse might accommodate, or re-mediate, everyday technologies with a view to testing their capacity in public life. I track the evolving techniques of four poets in *Modernist Invention* – Robert Frost, Wallace Stevens, Marianne Moore, and Langston Hughes – in parallel with the development of particular brands of sound gadgetry. Each chapter draws considerably on unpublished archival material – scripts, rehearsal notes, and studio recordings – and in doing so makes the case for returning afresh to a series of publications that remains central to genealogies of anglophone modernism: Frost's *Mountain Interval* (1916), Stevens's *Harmonium* (1923), Moore's *Nevertheless* (1944), and Hughes's *Montage of a Dream Deferred* (1951). But I hope *Modernist Invention* will be of interest to readers of poetry in general, and to anyone who's found themselves wondering about the place or reach of lyric, from snowed-in farmhouses to rubber plantations, sickbeds to antebellum watering holes.



Edward Allen
Christ's College

Modernist Invention: Media Technology and American Poetry (Cambridge University Press, 2020)



THE BEER PRIZE: Keats and Dante

Congratulations to Zoe Crane (Selwyn) from Ann Arbor, Michigan, on winning the 2019-20 Gillian and John Beer Prize for the best Part II dissertation on a literary topic 1780-1930. Zoe describes her topic:

‘You say I must study Dante—well the only Books I have with me are those three little Volumes’, Keats wrote to his friend Benjamin Bailey in July 1818. Keats’s pocket-sized edition of Cary’s translation of the *Commedia* was indeed the only book Keats took with him on his walking tour of the Lake District that summer. Keats’s annotations in these ‘little Volumes’ survive today in Yale’s Beinecke Library.

In his 'study' of Dante, Keats paid particular attention to the theme and figure of stasis, which I take as the focus of my dissertation. Dante presents the sinners in the *Inferno* as perpetually trapped in an extreme state of arrest. In *Hyperion*, Keats, having observed the metaphorical, psychological implications of the relationship between torturous place and tortured sinner in the *Inferno*, explores, refigures, and to some extent collapses the Tuscan poet's depiction of the relationship between the physical and psychological aspects of stasis. These aspects are almost indistinguishable, for instance, in the poet-narrator's description in *The Fall of Hyperion* of attempting to ascend the staircase of Moneta's temple:

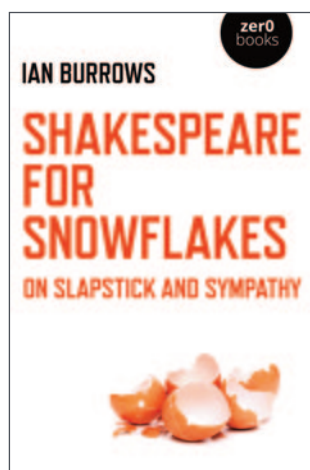
suddenly a palsied chill
 Struck from the paved level up my limbs,

the cold
 Grew stifling, suffocating, at the heart;
 And when I clasp'd my hands I felt them not.
 (l.122-123, 129-131)

Both Dante and Keats see the escape from stasis as essential to one's human and poetic development. Dante-pilgrim's journey in the *Commedia* models a confessional, salvific release from emotional petrification. As Keats studied Dante's spiritual journey and wrestled with the *Hyperion* poems, he developed a conception of arrest as an essential phase in the process of soul-making. For both poets, the revelation of the universe's incredible diversity brings about a mystical transformation – a thawing into life – somehow beyond verbalization. Dante and Keats find God and meaning not in unshakable, abstract credos but in vivid, evanescent, sensory imagery of life and love in our world, accepting the pain of loss and the struggle against arrest as part of our existence.

Zoe Crane
Selwyn College

Thanks to Cambridge University Press for supporting the Gillian and John Beer Prize for several years, and to Literature Cambridge for supporting it now.



Back in 2017 it was reported that some lectures that I'd given for the Tragedy paper had been advertised to students with warnings about the material to be discussed. A lot of commentators professed themselves to be highly irked. Goaded on by such headlines as 'Cambridge students warned Shakespeare plays may distress them',

'Cambridge University slammed over Shakespeare "trigger warnings"', and 'FAMOUS PLAYS COME WITH TRIGGER WARNINGS AT CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY', several opinion columnists harrumphed about how easily the youth of the day got upset. In his column for the Observer, the actor and comedian David Mitchell tut-tutted that 'students nowadays [...] want to be able to curate their experience of the world to exclude

elements they'd rather didn't exist'. Shakespeare himself declined to comment on the whole affair, but being told off by the man who played him in the BBC sitcom *Upstart Crow* seemed to demand that I think more about what I was doing with the Great Man's work.

That the stories were more complicated than the headlines suggested is, perhaps, a given – the lectures about 'sex and violence in Shakespeare and Greek tragedy' were, to be picky about it, discussions of sexual violence: in relation to Shakespeare, yes, to Greek tragedy, yes, but also as encountered in Sarah Kane's concertedly distressing plays, and in real-life accounts of rape. Angry comment-thread avatars alleged often that the warnings were a form of censorship, despite the fact that I had gone so far as to write a lecture series, and deliver it, on this subject matter. At the time it seemed to me that these warnings were the opposite of censorship: for students unaffected by these issues, the warnings were easily ignored; for any students who were, perhaps, dealing with the trauma of (say) sexual violence, the warnings

would (hopefully) help them better prepare for, and thus better participate in, these discussions.

I read through these comment-threads for some weeks, mostly muttering darkly to myself about how I was being described by the username community (“woolly minded”, am I? ‘Stupid’, is it? ‘Overpaid’, say you?). These weeks of reading online comments – though at first a straightforwardly obsessive and narcissistic exercise – led me to note that a series of dramas was playing out which closely resembled the scenarios I’d first examined in the course of the offending lecture series, which I’d titled, grandly, ‘The Limits of Slapstick’. Now, in online comment threads, I saw similar descriptive techniques to those I’d shown in Shakespeare, Sophocles and Kane: the comments from the likes of ‘sayitlikeitis’, ‘Veritas1701’, ‘TrustNobody’ (and the rest) frequently generalised and stereotyped, but – more specifically – many sought to transform the bodies of the students they imagined into ridiculous, slapstick entities. Publications which were more obviously composed than these online comments – columns in the Spectator or on Breitbart, popular academic books with titles like *The Coddling of the American Mind* – often performed the same perceptual sleight of hand: arguing against any use for ‘trigger warnings’ by presenting the hypothesised traumatised individual as humanoid rather than human, as an alien figure whose actions were arbitrary and meaningless, as not only undeserving of our sympathy but incapable of it.

When David Mitchell first grumbled about the warnings appended to my lectures, he believed that undergraduates were ‘being protected from the knowledge of, among other things, what one of Shakespeare’s plays is about, in case it upsets them’. The troubling aspect of my lectures was not really to do with what Shakespeare’s plays were about: the issue was what the plays did, and how I’d be discussing that. When a writer takes a traumatised figure and turns it into a slapstick entity, the writer denies that figure dignity. This constitutes, in itself, I suppose, an attack on that figure, trivialising the trauma that has afflicted it. But it also serves to alienate the traumatised figure from the community of onlookers: this, the writer says, is a body that behaves differently to ours. Scrutinising that figure serves to abstract it further, dislocating it from the proclaimed common experience.

In the end, the governing irony of much commentary on the lectures’ warnings was to be found in the definition and defence of ‘the real world’. Comment after comment wondered what ‘upset’, ‘distressed’, ‘snowflake’ students would do when they left the lecture hall for the ‘real world’. Such arguments insisted, by implication, that rape and post-traumatic

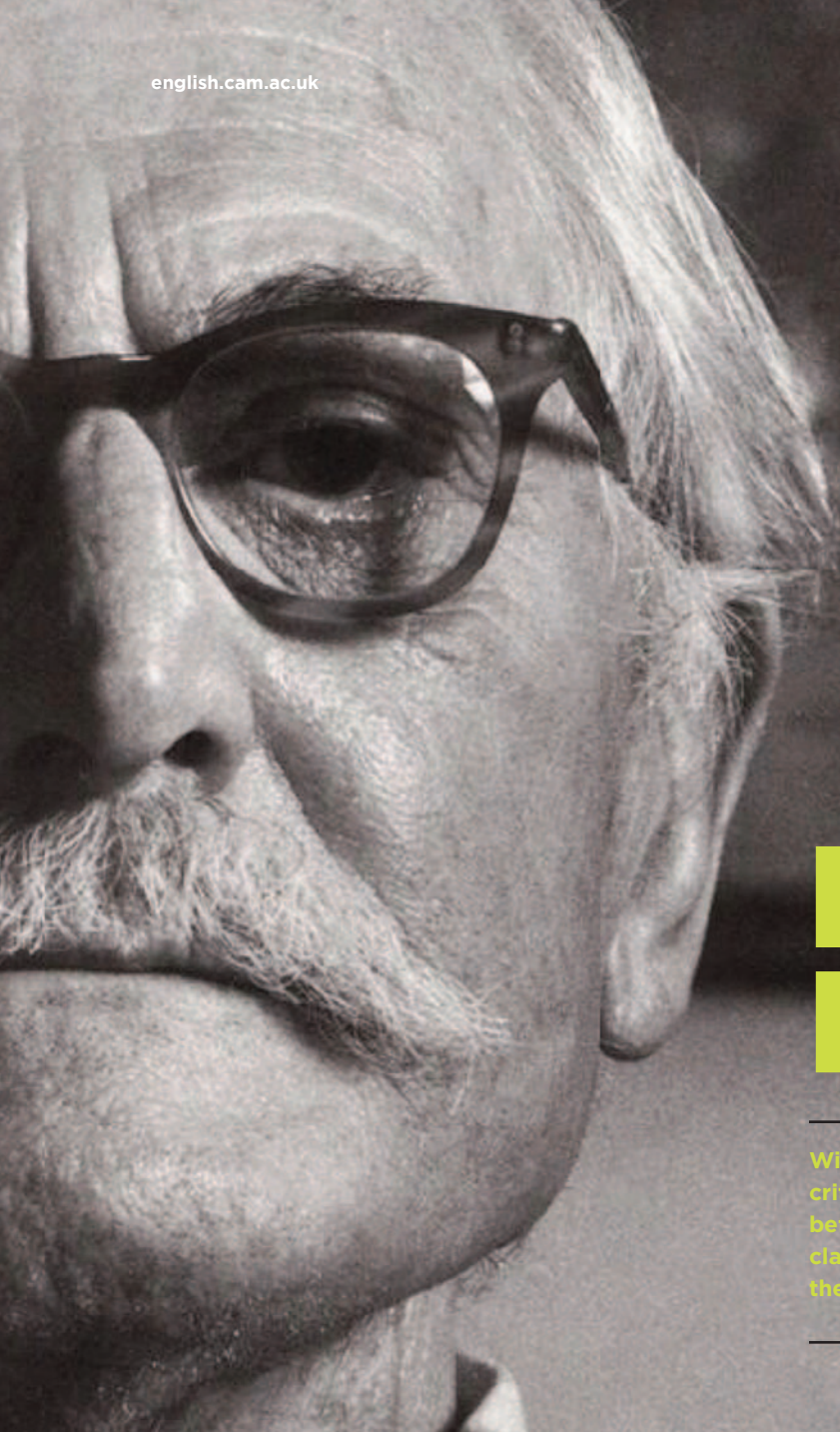
stress disorder were not part of that real world. The world sketched out in these commentaries could not, in fact, accommodate anybody whose behaviour might claim the contrary: to maintain such a world, behaviours that might be evidence of traumatic episodes and post-traumatic response were easiest dismissed as bogus, or described as baffling, alien, and comical. It may be that David Mitchell spoke for many when he lamented that ‘students nowadays [...] want to be able to curate their experience of the world’ – but it can just as well be countered that it’s such statements as his which seek to curate the world, insisting on the unreality of the traumatised individual’s experience, and excluding the newly ludicrous figure from the ‘real world’ that he, and commentators like him, would prefer to occupy.



Ian Burrows
Clare College

Shakespeare for Snowflakes: On Slapstick and Sympathy (Zero Books, 2020)





EDITING EMPSON

William Empson is, arguably, the most brilliant literary critic to have studied English at Cambridge, but before we, in a surge of possessive pride, start to claim him for the Faculty, we should recognise that the lines of filiation are somewhat tangled.

After all, he had come up to Magdalene (from Winchester) as a mathematician and over the next three years he took both parts of the Mathematical Tripos. As an undergraduate, he increasingly moved in literary circles, publishing deft reviews in *Granta* (of which he was literary editor for a year) and some formally compact and astonishingly mature poems, so it was not altogether surprising that he stayed for a fourth year to read for Part II of the English Tripos in 1928-9. During that year he was supervised by the Fellow in English at his college, I. A. Richards. According to the oft-told tale, Empson wrote an essay for a supervision in which, drawing on an analysis by Robert Graves and Laura Riding, he showed how an abundance of multiple meanings could be identified in Shakespeare's Sonnet 129, 'The expense of spirit in a waste of shame', concluding in a somewhat lordly way that 'You could do that with any poetry, couldn't you?'

Richards urged him to go away and try. Two weeks later Empson returned with a badly-typed wad of some 15,000 words, which was to be the core of the book he published a year later (when he was 24), the now-celebrated *Seven Types of Ambiguity*.

The episode may seem to set quite a daunting standard for the weekly supervision essay, but Empson's path to scholarly fame was not a smooth one, and herein lies another reason for being cautious about claiming him for Cambridge English. On the basis of having obtained a starred first in the Tripos, and with Richards's enthusiastic support, he was elected to a bye-fellowship at Magdalene, which entitled him to rooms in college. However, in his first term a member of the college staff found condoms in Empson's room. Faced with the likelihood of a public scandal, the college's Governing Body reacted sharply:

he was deprived of his bye-fellowship and ordered to leave Cambridge. Perhaps, therefore, we should mute our claims upon him as the Faculty's most distinguished scion, and simply say that William Empson is, arguably, the most brilliant literary critic to be expelled from Cambridge.

Having published *Seven Types* in 1930, Empson spent the next decade partly doing freelance journalistic work in London, partly teaching in Japan and China. During this time, he continued to write dazzling literary criticism, publishing *Some Versions of Pastoral* in 1935. By this point he had become closely involved in Richards's current work on multiple meanings and the problems of translation, but he was far from being a docile imbibor of his former supervisor's ideas. In particular, he rejected Richards's classification of many utterances, including most poetry, as 'merely emotive' uses of language, trying instead to tease out the underlying meanings. This, as he convincingly showed, often depended on the way in which a particular relation between the senses within a word had the effect of conveying an implicit statement or claim. In the mid and late 1930s, he wrote several articles on the theme, most of them exploring the role of an individual word in a particular work of literature.

This writing was interrupted by the Second World War: Empson came back to England and worked for the BBC's overseas service from 1940 to 1946, mostly producing programmes to be broadcast to China. After the war, he returned to China, to a post at Peking University, and resumed his work on the book which he had initially called 'Intraverbal Meaning'. This involved much new writing as well as the revision of his earlier articles. The book, now entitled *The Structure of Complex Words* was effectively finished in the late 1940s, and after many delays was published in July 1951. It is much the longest of Empson's books and in many ways the least inviting. Later critics have referred to it with great respect, and have made use of individual chapters such as 'Fool in *Lear*' and 'Honest in *Othello*', but the work as a whole has remained somewhat forbidding. Its lack of the usual pleasantries of an introductory chapter can be discouraging. Also, Empson's somewhat slapdash scholarly habits have not helped: he provided no sources for his quotations and allusions and sometimes quoted from memory. The in-house editor at Chatto reported that, when they checked the final typescript, 80% of the quotations were found to be inaccurate.

Some years ago, Oxford University Press decided to commission full scholarly editions of Empson's four major books, and Helen Thaventhiran and I were contracted to edit *The Structure of Complex Words* (Deborah Bowman, Fellow in English at Caius, is editing *Seven Types*). Both Helen and I had written about

Empson before, but we neither of us had much experience of this type of work, and at times in the next few years we seemed to be taking a course in Teach Yourself Textual Editing.

Following a fairly standard practice, we took the last edition to appear in Empson's life-time, the third edition of 1977, as our copy-text. One task was to identify textual variants among the three editions of SCW, which are, preliminary matter aside, identical in pagination and even lineation: only tiny corrections were made that did not disturb the rest of the page, some consisting of no more than a single letter or mark of punctuation. Finding these minute needles in this vast haystack was a daunting prospect. Fortunately, we had some clues. Errors in the first edition pointed out by reviewers led us to a few of the changes; Empson's correspondence with his publishers, now held in the Chatto archives at the University of Reading, enabled us to catch a few more. It was an exciting moment when one of us came across a letter from Empson saying that he was enclosing a list of corrections to be made for the next edition. This looked like the answer to the editors' prayers: a complete list of the variants between the two editions. Alas, although the letter has survived, the enclosure has not. Even enquiries to the modern successors of the firm which printed the book failed to locate it, so we were faced with the task of, in effect, carefully proof-reading two editions side by side in an attempt to spot any small changes.

Fortunately, the English Faculty boasts several seasoned textual editors, often specialists in the early-modern period, and one, Gavin Alexander, recommended that we consider using a McLeod Collator. This ingenious device enables one person to look at two versions of a text simultaneously, one with each eye. Where the two texts are identical, as they almost entirely are in the case of SCW, the brain simply registers a single image, but where they differ it is unable to resolve the discordant images, producing a tell-tale blur. With the willing assistance of the staff in the University Library, this contraption was set up in the Rare Books Room. One of the intrepid editors set out to detect all textual variants by using it, only to discover that the same defect in his eyesight that had dashed his boyhood dreams of being a fighter-pilot now imperilled his late-middle-age prospects of being a textual editor. Fortunately, the other editor suffers no such disability, and she was triumphantly able to track down the remaining variants, albeit at the price of a bad headache.

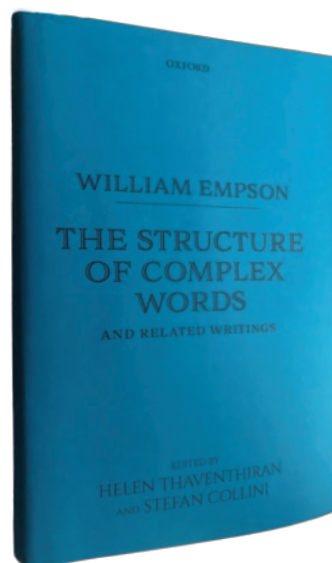
Apart from writing a substantial Introduction, a large part of the editorial labour involved annotating Empson's text, identifying (and sometimes correcting) the quotations, glossing names and titles, and

providing other material that supplements or illuminates the text. We employed two research assistants to check the accuracy of our citations, and we also made use of the Empson papers, now in the Houghton Library at Harvard, which include a corrected typescript of the book. Very early in the planning of the Oxford editions, it was decided that each volume would include, in addition to its main text, some related writings, such as earlier articles, letters, responses to reviews, and so on. These, too, required annotating, and in some cases we laid out details of the way an earlier article had been revised when it appeared as a chapter of the book. Among the later pieces, two particularly interesting items are Empson's reviews of books by two other luminaries of the English Faculty, C. S. Lewis's *Studies in Words* and Raymond Williams's *Keywords*.

The projected date for completion of the edition came and went; life, taking its usual toll, had slowed us down after an enthusiastic start, one editor finding himself distracted by the state of British universities, the other by the arrival of two children. As we finally neared our goal we had several helpful discussions with the series editor, Professor Seamus Perry of Balliol, and the staff at Oxford University Press about matters of presentation and layout (it's a safe bet that no one will complain that the font that was finally adopted is too large). Even then, the finishing line seemed frustratingly out of reach. The processes of copy-editing and proof-correction are particularly arduous with a large scholarly edition, not least because of the number of internal cross-references and the high incidence of names, titles, page numbers and the like. But, at last, on the 5th of November 2020 the large, handsome, blue-jacketed volume was published, an event gratifyingly celebrated with fireworks all over the country.

Empson himself could be gruffly dismissive of what he termed 'the show of scientific accuracy about literary quotations', not a failing of which he could be accused. Our edition is positively stuffed with ancillary material striving to provide the right kind of accuracy, and it's not hard to imagine the picture of Empson that adorns a wall in the Faculty building wrinkling its nose in disgust at this egregious display of scholarly overkill. But we hope that our edition may in time help more readers to discover this extraordinarily rich and rewarding, if difficult, book for themselves, though it may be a step too far to say that now William Empson is, arguably, the most brilliant literary critic to have been edited at Cambridge.

Stefan Collini
Clare Hall



William Empson, *The Structure of Complex Words and Related Writings*, edited by Helen Thaventhiran and Stefan Collini (Oxford University Press, 2020), 978 0 19871343 2.

PAPER

in Medieval England

Why paper? I ask, and why medieval paper? I add. Paper has now become invisible, and yet it is everywhere. It is so common in our everyday life that we barely notice it.



Paper is available in all sort of shapes, quality and colour. We rely on paper for the quotidian and the extraordinary. It is a tool as well as an idea. We think with paper, we write with paper, we create with paper, we imagine with paper and we feel through paper. The digital revolution which was predicted to swipe

paper from the face of earth, turned out to be a technological evolution, and society discovered, or perhaps is still discovering, that these two technologies achieve their very best potential by working together, accommodating one another, rather than competing against each other. Paper is a success story, ubiquitously present in post-modern times. The age of paper starts in the pre-modern period, before the arrival of the printing press at a time when there was a great expansion in writing needs. Paper was one of those great technological innovations which were introduced to Western Europe during the medieval period, including the mechanical clock, perspective in art and spectacles. Dark ages? Obviously not. But paper is not just a technology. It is also a material and an object, and it tells stories of cultural significance still to be fully appreciated.

When I started to dream up my book *Paper in Medieval England: From Pulp to Fictions*, I wanted to find out why medieval people were interested in paper and how paper became a success story in pre-modern times. Scholarship on paper use in medieval handwritten culture was very much focused on 'revolution', 'paucity' and 'status'. Paper was assumed to be a cheap and ephemeral material, used to save on cost of books and constantly in competition with another writing material, parchment, animal skin. Yet, the evidence

that I discovered in this journey into medieval paper unfolded a far richer narrative of affordances, invention, acceptance and transnational interactions.

By the end of the fourteenth century, evidence of paper in England can be found in importation accounts, household uses and charms. The chromaticity, porosity, plasticity and tensility of paper enabled medieval people to be creative with how they thought about paper, and they used it for a wide range of purposes. If paper started to be adopted as a writing material, as a useful tool to record the economic growth of medieval Europe and in diplomatic exchanges, it soon became the means through which people communicated knowledge of all kinds. By a process of slow and continuous interactions, paper started to be used in epistolary culture, then in book production, and then in medical recipes to dress wounds and whiten teeth. And yet, paper also sparked the literary imagination of medieval authors. For Dante, paper represents the eternal circle of God's punishment; for Chaucer, it is white and luxurious, worthy of a queen; for the Gawain Poet, it denotes form and enables the shaping of reality. Thus paper transcends its materiality, playing with shared experiences as a source of inspiration for interesting literary conceits. Thus the very intrinsic characteristic of paper, its understanding as a technology, object and material created an enduring legacy which is still felt today. As I conclude: 'Why paper? Because of its affordances, not its affordability'.

Orietta Da Rold
St John's College

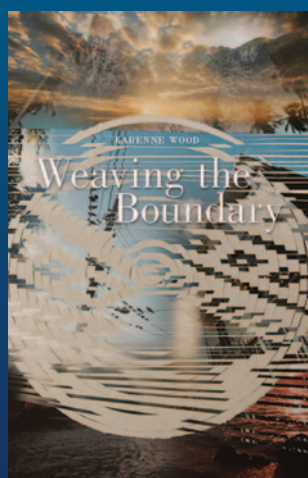
Orietta Da Rold, *Paper in Medieval England: From Pulp to Fictions* (Cambridge University Press, 2020)

9

INDIGENOUS NORTH AMERICAN POETRY READING

Although Covid has quieted activities within the faculty building, Zoom has brought together performers and audiences across impossible distances, and opened some lighted windows where doors have been closed.

On 3 November, the Judith E. Wilson Centre for Poetics hosted an online Celebration of North American Indigenous poetry and language. About forty people gathered online to listen to three guest speakers: Michelle Sylliboy in Nova Scotia, Margaret Noodin in Wisconsin and Adrienne Brown in Virginia. Adrienne was reading poetry by her mother, Karenne Wood, who died in 2019. The event was open to all and joined two continents and four time-zones. Poetry was shared in English, Ojibwe and the Mi'kmaq hieroglyphic language Komqwejiwi'kasikl. The work of Noodin, Sylliboy and Wood explores indigenous identity in many different ways, from song and meditative lyric, to found poetry, protest poetry, to luminous combinations of text and graphic art.



In addition to a poetic vocation, all three writers share a commitment to indigenous language revitalisation. For Margaret Noodin, a professor of English and American Indian studies and Director of the Electa Quinney Institute for American Indian Education at the University of Wisconsin, English is useful because it enables her to bring

her poems to a wider audience, but her heart-language is Anishinaabe, the language spoken by the Odawa, Ojibwe and Potawatami people. In her collections, *Weweni* (2015) and *What the Chickadee Knows* (2020) both published by Wayne State University Press, Noodin publishes her Anishinaabe poems alongside English translations on the facing page. She encourages non-speakers 'to read out loud, and wrestle the consonant clusters' in order to 'help us all step away from the edge of forgetting.' Weaving relations between people, nature, through time and 'across this difficult present', Noodin's poems draw us into listening to birds, speaking to fish, and graciously acknowledging our place within an interconnected world. Hearing Noodin singing these poems was a powerful, inspiring, and, for many of us, an entirely new way of experiencing poetry:

Aanikoobijiganag aanikoobidoowaad
wiingashk wiindamawiyangidwa
gashkibijigeg gegashk-akiing

Gijigijigaaneshiinh ayaa gawaandag
noondaagozid noondenimiyangidwa
manidokeyaang manidoowiyaang

The ancestors tied and extended it
the sweetgrass, telling us
make bundles, the world is not yet ripe.

The marsh chickadee is there in the white pine
calling out and flirting with us
It's a ceremony, a way to be alive.

You can listen to this and many more of Margaret Noodin's poems on her website www.Ojibwe.net

Michelle Sylliboy

KOMQWEJWI'KASIKL 3

Sitelewey -
Old waterkisikasa'tuatoqsip -
you wiped cleanna'qi -
my fleshelasumul -
I honour you

Karenne Wood's relationship to her ancestral language was complex. The last speakers of Tupelo, the closest linguistic relative of the Virginia Monacan language, died in the mid twentieth century in Canada. Wood wanted to establish a language revitalisation programme, and earned a doctorate in linguistic

anthropology from the University of Virginia investigating attitudes among the Monacan towards their 'language ghost'. Her conclusion was that the loss of the language resulted in a sense of being cut off, of missing the right words to address one's ancestors and the natural world. In her narrative poem 'Amonute, 1617', she retold the story of Pocahontas and her meeting with 'Chawnsmi': 'He and I traded words', 'That Anglo tongue, my undoing.' Wood weaves Powhatan words and phrases throughout the elegiac poem, leaving us with the broken fragments of another lost language strung across the page or revolving on the tongue: 'Crenepo, woman. Marowanchesso, boy. Sukahanna, water.' Her daughter Adrienne voiced Wood's poems in a moving tribute to her mother. The poems she chose illustrated Wood's flexibility as a poet who wrote revisionary historical monologues, lovesongs to the landscape, and wry satire. As Director of Indian Programs at the Virginia Foundation for the Humanities, Wood was engaged in an endless battle against popular stereotypes. In 'My Standard Response', she puts some of the myths to rest:

We did not live in tepees.
We did not braid our hair.
We did not fringe our shirts.
We did not wear war bonnets.
We did not chase the buffalo.
We did not carry shields.
We were never Plains Indians.
We tried to ride,
but we kept falling off of our dogs.

Karenne Wood's poems are collected in *Markings on Earth* (2001) and *Weaving the Boundary* (2016), published by the University of Arizona Press.



Our third speaker, Michelle Sylliboy, joined us from Cape Breton, with a view of the North Atlantic breakers through her window. Sylliboy is a multi-disciplinary artist, teacher and activist of Mi'kmaq or L'nu heritage. She is pursuing a doctoral project at Simon Fraser University on the reclamation of Komqwejiwi'kasikl, her ancestral

graphic language. She is Assistant Professor of Education at St Francis Xavier University. Sylliboy incorporates L'nuk language into her poetry, photography and sculpture. Her mixed-media work 'The Art of Reconciliation' <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9it3XoNS-88> and her collection, *Kiskajeyi - I Am Ready* (Rebel Mountain Press, 2019) combine stunning visuals with the hierglyphic language, choreographing the emergence of language from markings in bark, the shape of twigs, ripples and ice formations. Reclaiming this visual language is for Sylliboy a means of self-discovery and healing, a way of reconnecting herself to her past and to the elemental world.

For more of Michelle's work, see <https://msylliboy.wixsite.com/website>

If you would like to be added to a mailing list for any future Zoom poetry readings hosted by the Judith E. Wilson Centre for Poetics, please email: english@hermes.cam.ac.uk.

Amy Morris
Newnham College



HEAVEN IS ALL GOODBYES

A POETRY READING BY
TONGO EISEN-MARTIN



This year's Theory, Criticism, and Culture Seminar at the English Faculty was honoured to start with a reading by Tongo Eisen-Martin, who appeared over Zoom on 9 October to read from his collection *Heaven is All Goodbyes* (2017). He was speaking from the morning in

California, eight hours behind the Cambridge evening where his seventy or so listeners were tuned in.

Originally from San Francisco, Eisen-Martin is a poet, movement worker, and educator. He has been a faculty member at the Institute for Research in African American Studies at Columbia University and his curriculum on extrajudicial killing of Black people – 'We Charge Genocide Again!' – has been an indispensable educational and organising tool in contexts across the United States.

The reading was introduced by one of the seminar convenors, Louis Klee, who had invited Eisen-Martin in

the summer, first hearing his work in 2017, when Eisen-Martin made a lasting impression on a number of Australian poets who heard him read in San Francisco.

Klee cited Ben Lerner's description of Eisen-Martin's *Heaven Is All Goodbyes* as 'echo chambers of vernaculars and unofficial languages' that 'both registers the damage caused by systemic racism and evinces – and by his work extends – the rich modes of resistance that rise up to meet it.' Eisen-Martin's poems are often regarded as polyphonic, textured, jazzy tessellations and ventriloquisations of different registers of speech and, despite the poet's casual air in conversation, when he read from the poems he gained an oratorical, incantatory power, which was surprisingly transmissible over the medium of Zoom.

His poem 'Wave At The People Walking Upside Down' is characteristic of his style.

*"kitchens meant
more to the masses
back in the day"*

and before that?

"we had no enemy"

*somewhere in america
the prison bus is running on time*

*you are going to want
to lose that job
before the revolution hits*

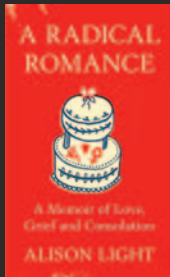
*I won't be home for breakfast.
Everyone out here now knows my name.
And I won't be turned against for at least four months.*

*-The cop in the picket line is a hard working rookie.
-The sign in my hand is getting more and more laughs
(something about a numb tumble).*

-The picket line got cops in it.

And so it proceeds like rhythmic dreamwork to the final line: "'there's an art to it," I will tell my closest friends one day'.

After the reading, Eisen-Martin fielded with dazzling aplomb a whole hour of questions from the audience, with the discussion ranging from dialectics to string theory. 'Well, if you thought my explanation of dialectics was incoherent,' Eisen-Martin said at one point, 'just wait until you hear my thoughts about string theory!'



ALISON LIGHT: A RADICAL ROMANCE

A Radical Romance is about my marriage to my first husband, Raphael Samuel, a socialist and historian, very involved in radical politics on the British Left. Born in 1934, Raphael was twenty years my senior, brought up a fanatical (his word) child Communist, in an internationalist Jewish family which I found both immensely appealing and quite alien. Our marriage, Raphael once suggested affectionately, would be, in Marxist terms, 'a dialectical unity of opposites': from two very different people, something new, a third entity – 'the marriage' – would evolve.

All marriages take place in history and domestic life is never purely private. Raphael's life had been exceptionally public, devoted to collective projects. I moved into Raphael's house in Spitalfields, London in 1986. Built in 1727, it was not designed at all for domesticity and was crowded with the past. While I lived there, the district went from being a little-known part of the East End, to being all but swallowed up by the mega-developments of global capitalism in the City. I also wanted to tell the story of living through those changes.

Writing my last book, *Common People*, I had a dearth of sources for the lives I was tracking. Now I had an embarrassment of riches. My diaries, letters, photographs; sixty years of Raphael's own ephemera and personal papers, his published work, other people's memories, and a house stuffed with all kinds of relic, but I felt the memoir needed to be a slim volume, carefully composed. No evidence of past lives can be taken at face-value (and least of all memories). The letters we wrote each other during our courtship, for instance, intensified and dramatized our love affair, making a story of it, as lovers will. Evidence, perhaps, of what Freud called 'ego-ideals', our fantasies of each other. The file kept by Raphael of every domestic note

we ever wrote was more humdrum but equally precious evidence – of what we ate; who did the shopping; whether the cat, Morgan, had been fed. I could see how the cat became an object for our lovers' language of affection and exasperation.

Writing memoir gave me room to reflect on earlier selves and on the on-going illusion of being a self. Memoir is often closer to reverie and dream, evoking the lyrical rhythms of poetry rather than prose. As it moves through different kinds of time and 'times out of time' – falling in love, illness, mourning – narrative or plot gives way to images and scenes. I had the sense of halting, even defeating time; that was consolation in itself.

Raphael died in 1996 when I was 41. I could not make his death the destination for my life or the end of the story. Mourning works like leaven in a life and goes on shaping it. The book closes with my establishing an archive of Raphael's work at the Bishopsgate Institute in London. Like memory, the archive is a repository but also a place where the past is recreated and restored. I called the last part of the memoir, 'Acts of Recovery'.



A Radical Romance: A Memoir of Love, Grief and Consolation is published by Penguin. It won the 2020 PEN Ackerley award for literary autobiography.

Alison Light read English at Churchill College, 1973-76.



Photo: George Thwaites

National Short Story Award

The University of Cambridge enjoyed its third year of collaboration with the BBC and First Story as part of the National Short Story Award (NSSA).

The Award, which was launched fifteen years ago, was won for the second time by Sarah Hall (photo above) for her short story, 'The Grotesques' about a young woman whose birthday party is disturbed by her encounter with a homeless man. All five shortlisted stories were broadcast on BBC Radio 4 and published in an anthology.

Although the pandemic meant that the awards ceremony, broadcast live on BBC Radio 4's Front Row in October, was smaller than usual, the University of Cambridge Centre for Creative Writing, based at the Institute of Continuing Education (ICE), made the most of the opportunity to share the work of the shortlisted authors.

Dr Lucy Durneen, a short story writer and Teaching Associate at ICE, chaired a well-attended webinar about the form a few days before the announcement of the winner. Shortlisted writers Jan Carson and Caleb Azumah Nelson discussed their work and influences with one of the NSSA judges, novelist and short story writer, Irenosen Okojie. Jan Carson, a writer based in East Belfast whose novel, *The Fire Starters*, won the EU Prize for Literature for Ireland in 2019, also spoke to ICE's Creative Writing Master's students about her practice as part of their fiction module.

As the partnership enters its fourth year, the Centre for Creative Writing held a well-attended webinar in February 2021 with Di Speirs, Books Editor, BBC Radio and one of the driving forces behind the Award. She was in conversation with Ingrid Persaud who won the competition in 2018 and whose novel, *Love after Love* won the Costa debut novel last year.

These events have gone some way to replace the Centre's annual short story festival which it was unable to hold due to the pandemic.

The University's involvement with the NSSA has helped to forge a close relationship with First Story, a charity which brings opportunities for creativity to students who may not otherwise have the chance. Its flagship programme places professional writers in secondary schools serving low-income communities, where they work with students to foster confidence, creativity and writing ability.

ICE has teamed up with First Story to offer five partial tuition fee bursaries for students on ICE's Postgraduate Certificate in Teaching Creative Writing. The programme, which is currently in its second year, is aimed at writers, teachers, healthcare professionals and those working in areas such as prisons and libraries who want to enhance their skills as teachers of creative writing and to understand the pedagogical theory behind the discipline.

The University of Cambridge also supported the BBC Young Writers' Award which was won by Lottie Mills, 19, from Hertfordshire, for 'The Changeling', a story inspired by 'otherhood' and her frustration with 'how difference, especially disability, is represented in fiction'. She was inspired by the experience of visiting Cambridge as a shortlisted writer for the 2018 Young Writers' Award to apply to apply to the University. She is now studying English Literature at Newnham College.

Midge Gillies

Academic Director, Creative Writing
Institute of Continuing Education

ON *VIRTUE*

I studied English at Pembroke College and, in what strikes me as some sort of failure (how sappy! how very not cool!) I seem only to have happy memories of those three years.



Maybe this is just how memory works — whatever predominates comes to occlude everything else. I all too easily remember, however, what it felt like to be young, gauche, uncertain, abject with ambition and riddled with self-consciousness. These were states of being I brought to my first novel,

Neon in Daylight, which was published in 2018. My second novel, *Virtue*, will be published in Summer 2021 and is narrated from the vantage of eleven years by a man recalling being young (and all these things above) in the year 2017. My publisher, Penguin Random House, describes it like this:

A powerful novel of youth, aspiration, and moral conflict, as a young man is seduced by the mirage of glamour – at a terrible cost. Arriving in New York City for an internship at an elite but fading magazine, Luca feels like a fraud: smart but not worldly, privileged but broke, and uncertain how to navigate a new era of social change. Among his peers is Zara, a young Black woman whose sharp wit and frank views on injustice create tensions in the office. Yet Luca is equally drawn to an attractive and wealthy white couple – a prominent artist and her filmmaker husband – whose lifestyle he finds both alien and alluring. As summer arrives, Luca is swept up in the fever dream of their marriage, joining them at their beach house, nurturing an infatuation both frustrating and dangerous. Only after he learns of a spectacular tragedy in the city he has left behind does he begin to realise the moral consequences of his allegiances. In vivid and moving language,



Hermione Hoby ('a writer of extreme intelligence, insight, style and beauty' – Ann Patchett) offers a clear-eyed, unsettling novel of the dangers of privilege and the costs of complacency.

Hermione Hoby
Pembroke, 2004-07

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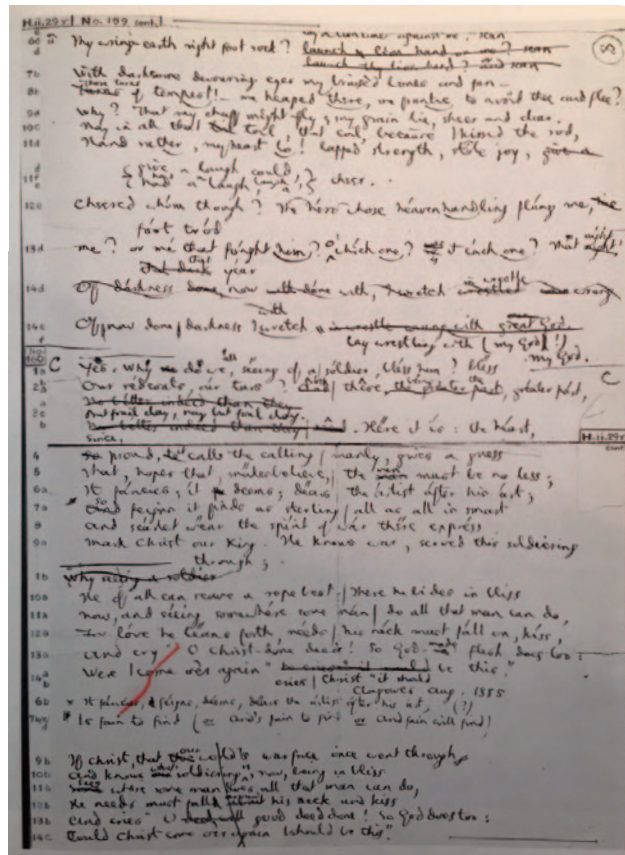
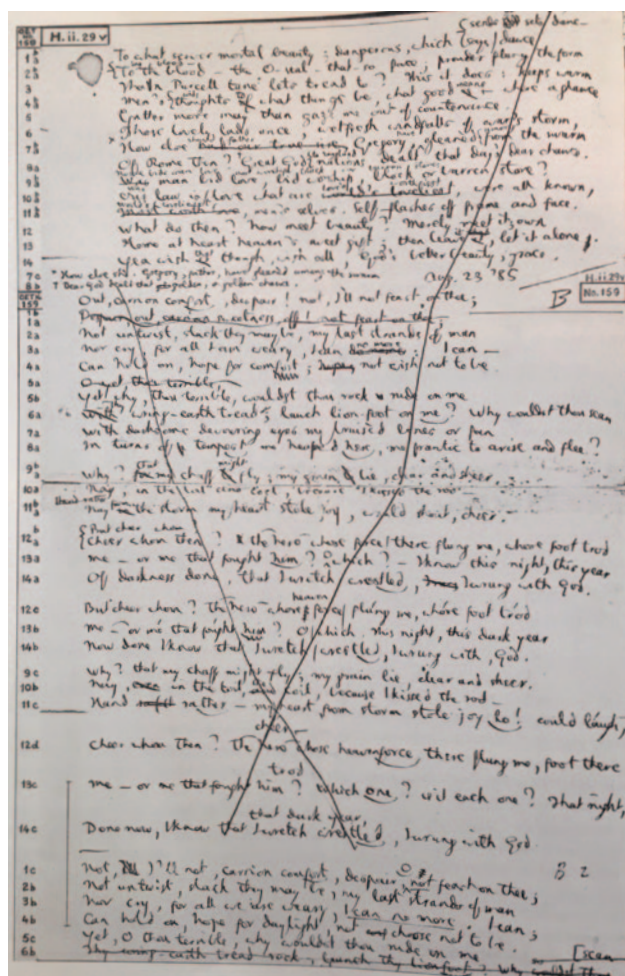
MICHAEL HURLEY:

GERARD
MANLEY
HOPKINS

Dr Michael D. Hurley, Reader in Literature and Theology, has been elected to a Visiting Fellowship at All Souls College, Oxford, for Trinity term 2021. Dr Hurley will undertake archival research on the Victorian poet Gerard Manley Hopkins (1844-1889), most of whose papers are kept at the Bodleian Library, and at Campion Hall.

Although Hopkins's poems were not published until almost thirty years after his death, he is today regarded as amongst the finest writers of his age, or any age. He also lived a fascinating life, as a Catholic convert and Jesuit priest with a brilliant mind that swung between ecstasies of transcendent joy and bouts of suicidal depression. Where Hopkins's readers have typically approached his verse as if it merely replayed his psychological and emotional life on paper, however, Dr Hurley is working on a new literary biography of the poet showing how the act of composition actually encouraged him to think and feel in radically new ways.

Choice words, metaphors, and even entire phrases, shuttle back and forth between Hopkins's poems and his letters, journals, essays, and sermons. But there is something different in kind about the poems; language undergoes unexpected and sometimes shocking changes as it becomes (to use Hopkins's own term) 'heightened' into verse. Dr Hurley's Visiting Fellowship at All Souls will allow him to spend time with Hopkins's drafts, to examine the curious imaginative process of false starts, revisions and inspired leaps, through which the poems ultimately find their own voices, and speak back to the poet.



EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY LITERARY AFFECTIONS



Over the past few decades, particularly since feminist and queer studies have focussed our attention more squarely on the body, scholars from across the disciplines have been seeking better to understand the emotions. 'Affect Studies' is now an established field that brings together work from within a number of disciplines, including

Literary Studies, Philosophy and History, with its own ever-growing canon. In the last decade, interest in the emotions, particularly in literary studies, has been refocused on the project of heightening the visibility of a previously obscure conceptual category, 'affect', resulting in a scholarly phenomenon that some have termed 'the affective turn'. In this tradition, 'affect' has come to denote the body's awareness of itself; it is the mental aspect of a bodily event.

My second book, *Eighteenth-Century Literary Affections*, published by Palgrave in 2020, traces the linguistic residues of an earlier affective category, the category of the 'affections'. In eighteenth-century taxonomies of the emotions, 'affection' is a structure of feeling that occurs at the fault-line between reason and passion. In eighteenth-century writing, the term 'affection' is used to denote emotions that are calm, orderly and permanent, as opposed to emotions that are violent, disorderly and fleeting ('passions'). Like reason, affections are deliberately chosen and therefore resemble thoughts, but like passions, they take intentional objects and are therefore conceived as emotions. Engaging thought and emotion at once, they provide an imaginative reconciliation between passion and reason.

Eighteenth-Century Affections explores how the category of the affections, which is invested with

utopian potential in eighteenth-century theological, moral philosophical, political and critical works, posed new opportunities for literary writers to re-conceive how literature might speak to and about the emotions. At the end of the eighteenth century, certain literary writers, including Mary Hays, William Godwin, Helen Maria Williams and William Wordsworth, shared an interest in the capacity for literature to refine, and not merely to replicate, the emotions of its readers, and to present emotions as they might be, and not as we already find them. These writers experimented with the possibilities inherent in the category of the affections to reorganise literature's negotiations between the didactic and the expressive, the ideal and the real, the abstract and the particular, the general and the individual, the objective and the subjective, the feminine and the masculine, the conservative and the radical, and even the British and the foreign.

By concentrating on a category of meaning that is etymologically intertwined with twenty-first century affect, and yet is emphatically not reducible to it, the book aims to remind us of the historicity and the conceptual distinctiveness – perhaps even the oddness – of the notion of affect. It calls attention to the recentness of this concept that exists outside of, or laterally to, subjectivity. In so doing, it implicitly asks – or asks again, since it is a question to which all those who work on the emotions frequently return – whether our concepts of emotion can exist independently of the conceptual vocabulary that we use to designate them.

Louise Joy
Homerton College

DIGITIZING DAVID JONES' LETTERS TO JIM EDE

AT KETTLE'S YARD, CAMBRIDGE AS PART OF THE DAVID JONES DIGITAL ARCHIVE

In June 2021 a collaboration between the David Jones Research Center and the Faculty of English in the University of Cambridge, Cambridge University Library, Kettle's Yard Gallery and Cambridge Digital Humanities Learning Programme will begin work to digitize and create an open-access digital edition of the letters of the poet, artist and First World War veteran David Jones (1895-1974) to his patron Jim Ede, founder of the Kettle's Yard Museum.



THE RIME OF THE ANCIENT MARINER

[1]

An ancient
Mariner meeteth
three gallants
bidden to a
wedding-feast,
and detaineth
one.

*It is an ancient Mariner,
And he stoppeth one of three.
'By thy long grey beard and glittering eye,
Now wherefore stopp'st thou me?*

KETTLE'S YARD
CAMBRIDGE

The project is being funded by the Cambridge Humanities Research Grant Scheme and the U.S.-based David Jones Research Center. Building on the growing interest in Jones as an undiscovered Modernist, and the increasing need for researchers to be digital-aware, we will open this project to the larger Cambridge University research community by hosting an intensive, catered, five-day workshop. Participants from across the Humanities can apply to gain expertise in encoding manuscript letters in the TEI (Text Encoding Initiative) in exchange for work on the mark-up of five pages of manuscript material (about one-to-two letters), which will be displayed in the open-access Cambridge Digital Library.



David Jones

The friendship of the artist and writer David Jones and Harold Stanley ('Jim') Ede (1895–1990) is a unique example of the relationship between artist and patron in the Modernist period. In addition to financial support, Ede helped many artists elucidate the ideas underlying their work – an effort recorded in his extensive correspondence with and criticism of artists.

However, the correspondence of Ede and Jones records a special affinity: both painters, Ede and Jones both served in the First World War, shared connections with Wales, and had a profound thirst to understand the role that art plays in spiritual life. In addition to featuring Jones' most candid discussions of his artistic philosophy and its underlying spiritual vision, the letters (spanning the years 1927–1971 and contained in their entirety in the archive at Kettle's Yard museum) are crucial to our understanding of Jones' place in the network of Modernist artists and writers. In addition, they offer unique insights in the place of artistic practice in response to trauma; nationalism between the wars; and the role of art to bring about fulfilment in a secular world.

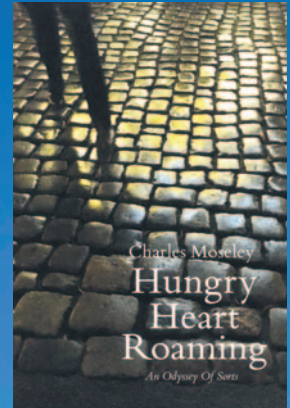
As with all Jones' letters, a significant obstacle to their publication has been a practical one: the letters have a strong visual dimension which resists transcription in a traditional print format. Not only does Jones adorn and interlace his letters with

colorful pictures and lettering, he constantly inserts, annotates, colour-codes, wraps and marks his texts, augmenting his letters in a way which resists easy transcription. While facsimile can capture some of this intricacy, Jones' texts seem destined for digital editing methods.

Building on the growing interest in Jones as an undiscovered Modernist, and the increasing need for researchers to be digital-aware, we will open this project to the larger Cambridge University research community by hosting an intensive five-day workshop in collaboration with the CDH Learning Programme (<https://www.cdh.cam.ac.uk/learning--> Cambridge University Members may be interested in their introductory to TEI course taking place in January 2021). Participants from across the Humanities can apply to gain expertise in encoding manuscript letters in the TEI (Text Encoding Initiative) in exchange for work on the mark-up of five pages of manuscript material (about one-to-two letters), which will be displayed in the open-access Cambridge Digital Library. They will in turn receive due credit for their work as 'assistant editors' in the larger *David Jones Digital Archive* (DJDA). Supported by lectures from Jones scholars Anna Svendsen (The David Jones Research Center) and Thomas Berenato (University of Virginia) and beginning with an archive-visit coordinated by grant-leader Laura McCormick Kilbride, the workshop will be led by Huw Jones from the Digital Library Unit at Cambridge University Library, and supported by the Cambridge Digital Humanities and the Judith E. Wilson Centre for Poetics.

To hear more about the project, or to register your interest in our workshop, please contact Dr Laura McCormick Kilbride at lgmbk2@cam.ac.uk

HUNGRY HEART ROAMING



It's always tricky to try to describe a book you have sweated over for a long time, which you care about, and which goes right off your usual academic and (one hopes) judicious path.



Hungry Heart Roaming: An Odyssey of Sorts has in it a lot of memories of journeys long ago and more recently, but they all added up to one thing: a journey to the heart of what I think it means to be European. I don't mean that in a narrow pro- or anti-Brexit sense: what I am getting at is that, to slightly misapply Tennyson, being 'heir of all the ages' had a burden of guilt as well as glory, and imposes constraints on our freedom of choice about what we can be and do that our forebears escaped. And I do mean forebears: for everyone of European descent descends from one of seven women, six of whom were here in the hunter-gatherer period, the seventh arriving in the Neolithic.

The book is indeed about roaming: in space, time and books. It starts with a boy on a western beach in the morning of his world; then, a shadow in a dark Berlin on wet cobbles in a street untouched by the bombs of 1945; lovers on a lonely summer shore in Crete; a man and a woman hand in hand where Iona's cliffs outface the storms of the autumn Atlantic – and that same couple drawn, sunset after sunset, to awed witness of the murmurings of the winter starlings against the Fenland sunset. So many birds, each moving independently, yet together as one changing form, changing direction, mysterious, purposeful... This

yearly wonder became the ruling metaphor of this book, for I could not escape that memory: an apparently independent journey through life, from one shore, one place of departure, to another shore with an old man waiting for the tide to turn – but all the time utterly entwined with the lives of others, close and distant, with then and now; a journey shaped by ideas, beliefs, by politics, by customs, but overriding all these, by the great events in the past of our race, in our own lifetimes, and now, as we move towards an inevitably, increasingly, uncertain future. Powerless? Helped? Helpless? Where do we fit into the swirling patterns? Thus my heart was hungry to seek, to find, and not to yield, to roam, to look for my own place within those patterns, patterns often too big to see. I am a part of all that I have met.

Charles Moseley

Hughes Hall

Hungry Heart Roaming: An Odyssey of Sorts
(London: Eyewear, 2021)

The paperback is available in bookshops:
<https://blackspringpressgroup.com/products/hungry-heart-roaming-an-odyssey-of-sorts>

RENAISSANCE SPACES OF KNOWING: Privacy and Performance

This year saw the launch of a digital exhibition created by the Crossroads of Knowledge project (2014-2019), led by Subha Mukherji and funded by the European Research Council. Curated by Subha Mukherji, Carla Suthren and Elizabeth Swann, with advice from Jane Partner and gorgeous early music from Francis Knights, this exhibition is one of the main fruits of the Crossroads project.



It offers an immersive encounter with the knowledge culture of early modern Europe, mapping it across a spatial geography straddling public and private, conventional and unexpected, performative and secretive, gendered and mingled. *Renaissance Spaces of Knowing* comes out of the conviction that the process of knowing was inextricable from the physical spaces where knowledge was produced or disseminated, discovered or concealed; and from the material tools of its production, generation and performance. It aims to bring to life for a wide audience the exhilarations, risks and anxieties that attended knowing in this period through the reconstruction of the physical environments in which knowledge was created, evoking the ways in which these spaces would have been experienced by individuals.

Our project was largely conceptual – a radically interdisciplinary enquiry into the methods, motives and psychology of knowing in early modern England, and the ways in which literary forms intervened in a conversation about it that was ongoing across disciplines that were more obviously epistemic: natural philosophy, theology, early economics and law. But we wanted to end our explorations by looking at the material, physical circumstances, means and artefacts of knowing, and the relation between the cultures of image-making and knowledge-making. That is what this exhibition has enabled us to do. It also allowed us to look beyond England to the wider European context.

It is divided into ten sections, each representing a space of knowing, moving from open, public places towards increasingly private, even intimate, locations. Hosted by the Fitzwilliam Museum, it displays some of the rich holdings in their collections, as well as images and texts from other repositories in Cambridge and beyond. The homepage is visualised as a maze: to enter a space, you have to click on a red dot. Zoom in on an image by clicking the magnifying glass in the top left-hand corner. There are detailed exhibition guidelines for those wanting to explore in depth. But for those passing by and curious, the 'Lucky Dip' is a fun place to start.



Vittore Carpaccio, *St. Augustine in his Study*. Italy, 1502-7.

Here is a taster:

This painting presents a scholar at his desk – St Augustine, as it happens – strewn with objects of study. He is in a room radiant with warm light, and filled with tokens of humanist culture and learning. In the closet in the far left corner, with a table and more books and instruments, we glimpse a still more private space for study. Together, the items recreate a space of knowing at once vividly real and full of symbolic suggestion.

But the image also presents a drama of knowledge. Augustine looks, startled, towards the invisible window through which the light streams in. There, beyond our gaze, is St Jerome, appearing in a vision and interrupting Augustine's letter-writing – a letter addressed to Jerome himself. Jerome, in an apparition, brings him the knowledge that he is about to leave this world, with all its learning and richness, and ascend to heaven. The little dog follows the direction of Augustine's gaze and seems to look at the vision too. Or does he just look at his master? What alternative knowledges does the shaft of light bring or embody, and how does it relate to the material artefacts of knowledge in the study of the scholar-saint?

While the relation between Augustine and his dog, and between Jerome and Augustine, are poignantly

evoked, the humanist study itself is an unmistakably male space, recalling Montaigne's famous passage on the *arrière-boutique* ('On Solitude') – literally a room at the back of a shop (and by extension, a closet) – where the introspective Renaissance man retreats from worldly affairs into solitude and thought. It is interesting to contrast the female space in the final image of this section – Sor Juana's study, from the end of the seventeenth century:



Juan de Miranda [?], *Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz*. Spanish, c. 1680-1714. Palacio de Bellas Artes, CC BY-SA 3.0.

Sor Juana was a Mexican intellectual – poet, philosopher and composer – who was born in 1648 and died in 1695. The portrait takes the conventions of the 'scholar in his study' genre, but centres Sor Juana as the commanding intellectual presence, hand poised in the act of writing, with three of her own works stacked by the inkwell, and her library on the shelves behind including texts by Aristotle, Natale Conti, and St Augustine.

If the study is an obvious space of knowing, the bedroom was less so. But it was a domestic space associated with the most intimate and carnal kinds of



Heinrich Wirrch, *Satire on Chastity Belts*. German, 1575-1600. © The Trustees of the British Museum, CC BY-NC-SA 4.0.

knowledge. With its multiple and sometimes contrary associations, the bedroom could be a space of both concealment and revelation, pleasure and possession, tenderness and control. This satirical print depicting a woman handing over the keys to her chastity belt to her richly dressed husband, with other figures placed suggestively around the bed, may give you a sense of the bedroom as a space of surprising epistemic transactions.

In another key, the drama of knowledges in a bedroom setting is captured by depictions of the biblical moment of the Annunciation - when the angel Gabriel announces the news of the virginal conception to Mary.



Jan Sadeler I, *The Annunciation*. Flemish, c. 1587. FM: 23.I.2-404 © Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge.

These images present a contrast between intimate knowledge and bookish knowledge, at the threshold between the enclosed bedroom and the outer space from which the angel steps in. Yet, while celebrating the magnitude of the moment, they also suggest a delicate irony: it is the news of bodily conception that



Marcantonio Raimondi, *The Annunciation*. Italian, c. 1515-1530. FM: P.5192-R © Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge.

seems to make a forceful, masculine entry into a moment of meditative reading, presumably of the Bible, that seems intimate and feminine.

What is the relation between the book, the pillow and the divine message? What is the status of each of these participants of the scene as knowing objects? The light of God and the Dove's piercing rays in the Flemish work (left) are invaders into a quiet, gendered space, distracting Mary from her reading of her book, presumably the Bible. Gabriel's finger points to the dove of God which is penetrating Mary's womb at the very moment she hears the angelic news. In Raimondi's sparser canvas (above), the presence of the bed evokes serenity, which is disrupted by Gabriel's outstretched, pointed finger and sturdy wing, as Mary turns aside from her book, hand on chest, poised between startlement and acceptance.

The bedroom setting is used repeatedly by artists to convey the eruption of mighty divine knowledge - which is also an agent of impregnation - into shady afternoon scenes of knitting and reading, which are associated with gentle, female and domestic activities. It is also, curiously, a scene of unknowing. How is a mortal woman to make sense of the news that coincides with conception in the divine drama of knowledge? The bedroom becomes the site where knowledge and incomprehension meet.

And here is another space of knowing: the interior of the body, opening itself up at this point in history to incision, dissection and discovery; analysis, demystification and wonder.

This group portrait vividly depicts the Dutch anatomist Nicholaes Tulp lifting up and exposing, with his intact hands, the tendons and muscles of the dead man's forearm and hand. The seven impeccably dressed



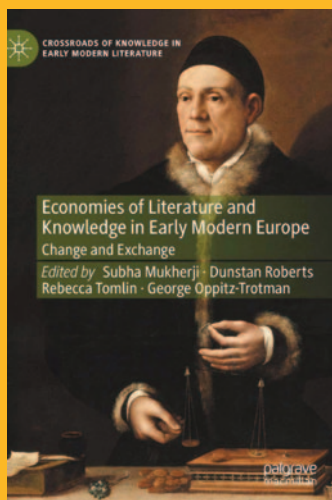
Rembrandt, *The Anatomy Lesson of Dr. Nicolaes Tulp*. Amsterdam, 1632. Reproduced by kind permission of the Mauritshuis, The Hague.

surgeons (whose names are listed in the scroll held by the man at the back) look on in rapt attention, as the story of the mechanics of the body unfolds. It is an image full of drama and suspense, communicating vividly the renewed interest in the human anatomy in the Renaissance, and the excitement about the knowledge to be found in its interior. It is also suggestive of the methods of knowing in the period, which combined objective demonstration, pictorial and verbal representations, and scientific theories – some of the men focus on the corpse, one on the lecturer's face and others on the book which presumably offers diagrams and descriptions of the relevant physiology. Tulp was Reader of the Guild of Surgeons. There was one public autopsy conducted by the Guild every winter, and the occasion recreated here can be dated precisely to 31st January 1632. The body belonged to an executed criminal, Adriaen het Kint, who had been hanged earlier on the same day, according to the custom of using criminal corpses for study. But the dead male body in the period's painting, with the light focusing it as the object of gaze, was usually that of Christ. In this work by Rembrandt, art shows science stepping into the spotlight and almost taking the place of religion.

Curious? Go here and make your mazy way through Cosmos, Marketplace, Church and Law-Court, into Playhouse, Garden, School-room and Study, and then into the intriguing recesses of Bedroom and Anatomy Theatre: <https://crossroads-spacesofknowing.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk>

Subha Mukherji
Fitzwilliam College

ECONOMIES OF LITERATURE IN EARLY MODERN EUROPE



Autumn 2020 saw the publication of *Economies of Literature in Early Modern Europe: Change and Exchange*, an output of the ERC-funded Crossroads of Knowledge project, led by Subha Mukherji from 2014 to 2019. Edited by Subha Mukherji, Dunstan Roberts, Rebecca Tomlin and George Oppitz-Trotman, this book is part of a project-dedicated, interdisciplinary mini-series with Palgrave Macmillan, Crossroads of Knowledge in Early Modern England. Placing literature at the centre of Renaissance economic knowledge, this book offers a distinct intervention in the history of early modern epistemology.

Premised on the belief that early modern practices of change and exchange produced a range of epistemic shifts and crises which, nonetheless, lacked a systematic vocabulary, the essays in this volume collectively tap into the imaginative kernel at the core of economic experience to grasp and give expression to some of its more elusive experiential dimensions. They probe the early modern interface between imaginative and mercantile knowledge, between technologies of change in the field of commerce and transactions in the sphere of cultural production, and between forms of transaction and representation. In the process, the conversation embodied by the book goes beyond the specific interrelation of economic life and literary work to bring back into view the thresholds between economics on

the one hand, and religious, legal and natural philosophical epistemologies on the other. Contributors, ranging across cognate interdisciplines, include Ceri Sullivan, Vera Keller, Valerie Hayaert, Adam Zucker, Lisa Lajous, Rebecca Tomlin, Bradley Ryner, Torrance Kirby, Ayesha Mukherjee, Paul Yachnin and Valerie Forman.

Among the book's unique features are its demonstration that literary interventions in emergent and shifting economic knowledge in the early modern period offer insights otherwise unavailable; its original and provocative study of the impact of economic processes on early modern epistemology; and its meditation on the entanglement of expressive form, change and exchange through wide-ranging essays by outstanding scholars.

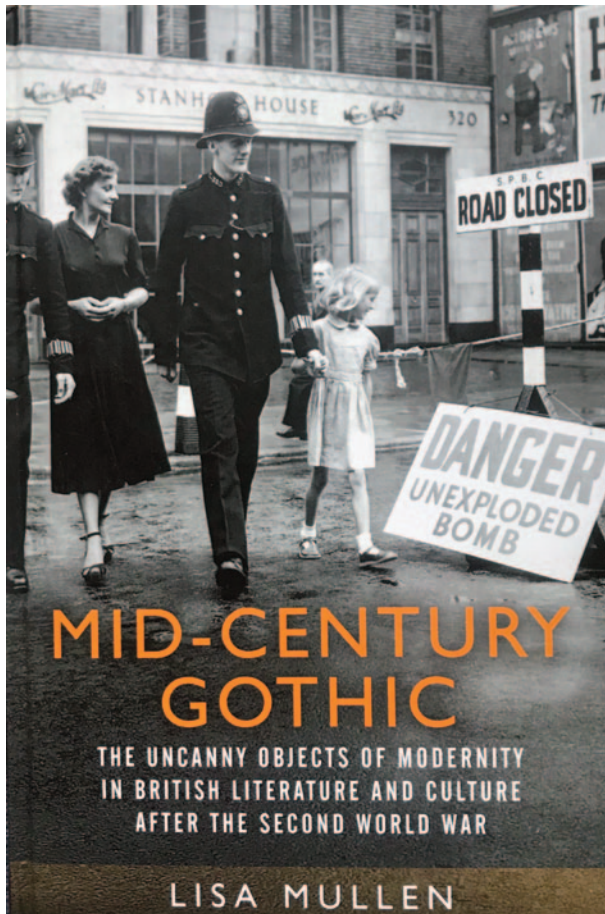
The cover-image to this volume, a portrait variously attributed to Lorenzo Lotto (c. 1480-1557) and Dosso Dossi (1489-1542), is widely believed to show the influential Renaissance merchant-banker Jacob Fugger of Augsburg (1459-1525).



Dunstan Roberts
Fitzwilliam College



Subha Mukherji
Fitzwilliam College



MID-CENTURY GOTHIC

THE RECALCITRANT AGENCY AND UNCANNY INTIMACY OF MID-TWENTIETH-CENTURY THINGS

My research is concerned with literature, cinema and culture which arise at moments of social invigoration and discursive rupture, emerging in narratives of aesthetic or semantic unease which probe and challenge the structures of power. This was the impetus behind my first book, *Mid-Century Gothic: The Uncanny Objects of Modernity*, which defines a distinct post-war literary and cultural moment in Britain: a tipping-point of discursive and socio-political possibility. I argue that the restless, dislocated culture of the post-WWII decade arose alongside an emergent critique of the consumerist ideology which was increasingly promoted as the essence of modernity at this time. The book reconsiders post-war texts such as

Bowen's *The Heat of the Day* (1948), Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949), and Selvon's *The Lonely Londoners* (1956), alongside the films, technologies, and visual culture which defined this period as a moment of cultural awakening.

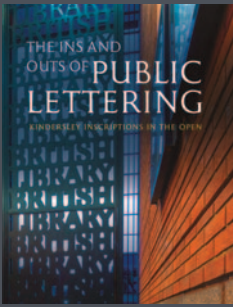
A key part of the book concerns the development of Black British identity in the 1950s. My chapter on Selvon traces the elements of post-colonial gothic which find their way into *The Lonely Londoners* and the short stories collected in *Ways of Sunlight* (1957), and puts these into dialogue with the nationalist discourse surrounding the excavation (in 1939) and exhibition (in 1946) of the Sutton Hoo hoard of Anglo-Saxon ship-burial artefacts. These objects were popularly framed as both exotic – since they belonged to a migrant from across the water – and, simultaneously, as definitively English. By analysing this apparent paradox in the light of the aesthetics of mid-century commodity culture, the chapter proposes that the missing body in this 'cenotaph of an ancient king' can be read as an ironic cypher for the reified physicality of the exploited factory labourers who populate Selvon's London, whether spectrally materialised within the spectacle of consumerism, or forced into hypervisibility as migrant workers of colour within the public spaces of post-war white culture.

The book opens with the Festival of Britain: a gothic space for a gothic time, visited by the sighing spectres of the Blitz, and the chain-rattling ghosts of modernism's promise of a brand new world. An anecdote recalled by the exhibition's Director of Design, Misha Black, summed up the way a spirit of resistance and liberation was invested in and expressed through the thing-world framed within this semantically super-saturated zone. Black describes a dinner laid on in the Dome of Discovery before it opened to the public, organised as a morale-booster for the disgruntled workers who were labouring in difficult conditions to complete the project of regeneration. In the cold, dark space, all attempts at rousing speeches were falling flat. Then, 'suddenly one man sent his paper plate (food eaten) whizzing across the void. In a moment a thousand plates were spinning, until the whole volume of the Dome was alive with white discs, as though invaded by flying fish.' These abstract white discs were harbingers of a different kind of future – bracingly modern space invaders which hailed a new and unruly agency in the people who threw them. Animated by repressed emotions and impulses, they were an image of liberated potential. Such objects, and such moments of uncanny transformation, inspired the book, and continue to inform my research.

Lisa Mullen
Downing College

A photograph of a stone walkway in a historic building, likely a university. The walkway is paved with large, light-colored stone tiles. In the center of the walkway, there is a large, circular floor plaque. The plaque is dark and features a stylized DNA double helix design. Inside the circle, the text "G A U C G U U U" is written in a semi-circle at the top, followed by "C T A G C A A A A G C C" in a semi-circle at the bottom. In the center of the circle, the name "Francis Crick" is written in a serif font, with "1916-2004" below it. The walkway leads towards a large, arched doorway in the background, which is framed by ornate stone columns. The doorway is labeled "BURSARY". The scene is brightly lit, suggesting a sunny day.

THE PUBLIC LIFE OF **LETTERS**



Among the academic disciplines, English is unusual (and attractive) for its capaciousness: my early work on William Morris ranged happily between literature, art history, political thought, historiography, and translation studies. Curiously, this capaciousness has not always been applied to the physical and design aspects of writing itself. This blind spot has been on my mind since attending a letter-cutting course on the Isle of Purbeck; and more recently, the historical printing course at the University Library. At Cambridge, there is a fine tradition of teaching palaeography, book history, and 'material texts'. But the focus is often historical and documentary. The ongoing life of letter forms – and their expression in public as memorial inscription, or simple signage – rarely appears within the purview of our subject.

I've begun entering this terrain with a new publication, born of a collaboration with Lida Lopes Cardozo Kinderley. Lida is the country's most eminent letter cutter, as well as a calligrapher and type designer. Her workshop on Cambridge's Victoria Road has cut inscriptions for the colleges, but also for institutions across the UK, including the British Library, the Wellcome Collection, St Paul's Cathedral, the Glasgow Gallery of Modern Art, and the John Rylands Library. I have long admired the Workshop, so Lida's suggestion that I write a short study of their public work was something of a dream commission. My delight only intensified as I looked through a folder of materials lent to me to peruse at home over Christmas: original photographs and designs of recent stones, but also images stretching back to the 1930s, when Lida's late husband, the alphabetician David Kinderley, started as an apprentice.

I especially enjoyed describing the annotation of a facing stone at the Victoria and Albert Museum, whose surface testifies to damage sustained during the Blitz, and to the redemptive 'damage' of inscribed letters. More recent examples include a stone cut for the re-discovered burial place of William Blake at Bunhill Fields, London; a flight of swifts diving in silhouette across the façade of a new development for Clare College; a serpentine double helix commemorating Francis Crick, set into the flagstones at Gonville & Caius; and a barn on the Isle of Colonsay, Argyll, whose green slate frieze invokes the bird life haunting its summer eaves. Thinking more broadly, the book provides an opportunity to ponder the meaning and function of 'public' letters, whether through monumental statement (in styles inherited from Trajan's Column), and civic expressions of the republica (literally, 'public thing'); or as admonitions,

recollections of duty, and memorial work. Interested readers can purchase a copy online from the website of the Cardozo Kinderley Workshop (<http://www.kindersleyworkshop.co.uk/shop/>). There is more to come: Lida and I are working on a dialogue book, which bridges practice and theory in following the life cycle of an inscription, from the point of a patron's initial approach to its final fixing and afterlife.

Marcus Waithe, Lida Lopes Cardozo Kinderley and Thomas Sherwood, *The Ins and Outs of Public Lettering: Kindersley Inscriptions in the Open* (Cambridge: Cardozo Kinderley, 2020)

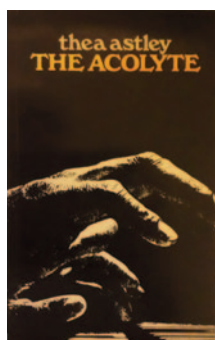
Marcus Waithe
Magdalene College



© Cardozo Kinderley Workshop



© Grant Smith



On 30 November 1976, the Australian novelist Thea Astley wrote to her colleague Professor Anthony Gibbs, the Head of the School of English and Linguistics at Macquarie University, to air some departmental dirty laundry. After declining his offer of seven additional lectures, she set about the business of hanging the school out to dry. '[I]t is now abundantly

clear to me,' she seethed, 'the oldest senior tutor in the Commonwealth if not in living memory, that the school has neither the wish to make me a lecturer nor the slightest intention of doing so'. Nor did her literary colleagues, whose 'critical theories' Astley curtly dismissed as 'another branch of fiction whose inane currents I have never ridden', escape her invective. The constraints the university imposed on her free time no doubt contributed to the longest dry spell in her prolific career, the five-year drought between her first historical novel *A Kindness Cup* (1974) and the first of her four forays into the interlinked short story form, *Hunting the Wild Pineapple* (1979).

Yet her fiction, particularly her novel of thankless servitude *The Acolyte* (1972), is also clearly informed by her time in this institutional setting. My doctoral dissertation asks what the university has meant to Australian novelists over the last half-century, since Colleges of Advanced Education began inviting established and aspiring writers onto campus to teach and learn in their newly established writing programmes. I examine how this American model for mass producing

creativity – a model Mark McGurl archly suggests is 'as American as baseball, apple pie, and homicide' – has made its way south, and how Australian novelists have made their way north to find their voices on American college campuses.

Recently this research has taken on a new timeliness, as Australia's creative and cultural industries and institutions have become the subject of a parliamentary inquiry. Many of the authors I work on have testified at public hearings. Writers such as Helen Garner, Kate Grenville, Peter Carey and Gail Jones have criticised a well-documented decline in institutional support for Australian letters: most obviously, total literature funding from the Australia Council has decreased by 44% over the past six years, from \$9 million in 2013-14 to \$5.1 million in 2018-19. Over the same decade that this vital source of funding has declined, Australia's major literary prizes have consistently been awarded to novels that were written to fulfil the requirements of dissertations in creative writing. The doctoral novels of Kim Scott, Josephine Wilson, Emily Bitto, Charlotte Wood and Anna Funder form merely the latest chapter in a longer literary history of celebrated books emerging from, and writing back to, the tertiary institutions that have directly supported their development. And there is little to suggest this will change in the foreseeable future: if anything, it seems likely that Australian universities will come to occupy an ever more central position in the literary field as key producers, arbiters, and consumers of fiction.

Joseph Steinberg
Corpus Christi College

A LABOUR OF LOVE

Academic books get written in various ways. Some, no doubt, start out from a research question, grounded in the secondary literature, and develop their argument in rigorous response. But sometimes a book comes together in a more scattered fashion, accidentally or (with luck) serendipitously.



One of the moments of origin for my book *On Declaring Love* was a summer school lecture-cum-entertainment that I scrambled together at short notice. What I came up with was a rapid tour of love-proposals (both decent and indecent), from the 'luf-talkynge' in *Gawain and the Green Knight* through to Jane Austen. Looking through Austen for the best passage to select, I noticed that all successful proposals are given, at least in part, indirectly. The narrator is needed, to intervene or to mediate. Exchanges in direct speech are those that go wrong. In particular, we never hear the woman say yes.

Something ticked away. Over forty years ago (is it possible?) I heard Jeremy Prynne give a mesmerizing lecture on Blake's lyric, 'Never seek to tell thy love', which lodged that poem permanently in my mind. Much more recently, I had put together an MPhil course which included Mary Hays's novel-memoir *Emma Courtney*: the more frankly Emma seeks to express her passion to the man who inspires it, the less she feels she is being heard. And finally (though this list of helpful encounters might be extended), one of my Tragedy students gave me, at just the right time, a quotation from Judith Butler: 'We're undone by each other. And if we're not, we're missing something.' Butler was talking there about grief in bereavement, but her insight seemed to me to apply also to the act of declaring love, when the words we offer to another throw our integrity into jeopardy.

Many undergraduates don't expect to enjoy the eighteenth century. One way in which I try to cheer them up is by recommending the period's literature as understanding with peculiar clarity how we are socially constituted beings, existing not trivially in the performance of ourselves toward others, and that language is the site of that social relation, and can scarcely be a means of pure unilateral self-expression. To find words for my experience is to discover that my

experience is not my own in any exclusively personal or private sense. This general emphasis seemed to chime with these more particular thoughts about the declaring of love, the hazardous attempt to give intimate feeling public form. To understand how much Austen was doing when, at the critical communication of passion, she spoke on behalf of her lovers, it seemed helpful to go back into that long-eighteenth-century context and its many variations on this theme. A curious miscellany of favourite works presented themselves as relevant – *The Misanthrope*, *Clarissa*, *Rameau's Nephew*, *She Stoops to Conquer*, Boswell's *London Journal* – and like an indulgent gate-keeper I let them in.

The outcome is a book that is half about Austen, and half about moments of courtship and seduction in eighteenth-century literature that destabilise the notion of a disengaged and independent inner self. It wasn't my initial intention, until quite late, to write a book in that form. But – as in more important matters – what I meant turned out largely to depend on what words had passed and could pass between myself and others.

Fred Parker
Clare College

On Declaring Love: Eighteenth-Century Literature and Jane Austen (Routledge, 2019)



MARIAH WHELAN

JACQUELINE BARDSLEY
POET-IN-RESIDENCE,
HOMERTON COLLEGE

The remit of the Jacqueline Bardsley Poet-in-Residence is simple: to put poetry at the heart of college life. The residency is named after Mrs Jacqueline Bardsley, an alumna who passionately believed in the power of poetry to foster self-expression and build strong communities. In service of this aim, I've organised my residency around three strands: writing and performing new poetry, teaching and interdisciplinary research.

In terms of my own writing, I've begun by using poetry to engage with the college's archives. My PhD research sought to translate the way that archives curate meaning as a mixture of material facts and 'silences' into poetic form. Extending this idea at Homerton, I've been working with physical materials to produce 'collage' pieces as well as novel poems.

Teaching wise, this term has seen the first few sessions of our poetry writing seminar series. Topics have included how to get started, working with figurative language, and how to edit our initial drafts. The marvellous poems produced by staff and students will be published on the college website and in an anthology next year.

On the interdisciplinary research front, I've been thinking about what poetry-writing methodologies can bring to other subjects. The College has a strong track record in Education and I've been collaborating with colleagues to think about how poetry might help us produce graduates with the dynamic skillset needed to address the ecological, geo-political and psychological questions of our time.

It has been a strange start to my time at Cambridge (teaching via Zoom and 'live-streaming' my writing via social media are certainly new to me!) but a positive one. I'm very grateful to Homerton and the wider University community for such a warm welcome and look forward to how the residency will develop.

For more information about Mariah and her work visit mariahwhelan.com or follow her on twitter: @MWhelanWriter

PRAYER

written during the Mental Health and Wellbeing Weeks at Homerton College

*I don't hurt myself anymore or not
as a rule, I don't go through the world
with a fingernail pressed into my palm,
worrying a rip in my cuticle, keeping it open
because to keep myself open and in pain
is the only way I know how to love the world.
I sit down at my desk every morning to write.
I want to get close to you. I think I might be you—
the way water spilling over rocks is a waterfall
but I don't know which of us is the water or friction
or stone. Some days you fall through me like soot
and I'm happy to have you stain me. Sometimes
I feel I'm fifteen again: I reach across my friends
to spin the bottle, catch up with my stomach
that arrived half a second before.*

*There are more cells inside my belly that aren't mine
than those that are. I wonder if that's like me and
you—
living on the lining of something so big
it doesn't seem alive but who I need absolutely,
who I pray needs me back.*

VIADUCT

*When I was little I spoke to the stones
in my aunt's garden: the cool, mille-feuille slate—*

*heavy-bottomed boulders who whispered back
about weight and patience, the folly of water.*

*I put my hands on the stone and listen to its breathing:
water vapour and rust, the cold coming into my palm*

*as if my hands might find and hold a knowledge
I can't anymore. I've seen photographs of its construction:*

*faces in half-light, sleeping shacks named for the bible
and Crimean victories, as if naming your roof Jericho*

*or Balaklava could undo some of the cold
coming out of the floor, from inside the rain.*

*I want to find the sore places, where its weaknesses are:
under the plastic information point with its history*

*written in imperial feet. Find what's underneath
the six-inch stud collars, the steel bones*

*and mathematics needed to hold train tracks,
signal lights, fully-automated levers overhead like*

*it was something utterly ordinary. I don't know
what kind of touch is needed for this kind of pain,*

*if I could reach inside and find names for all the broken ferns
and small sea-creatures, all the surfaces weighted into stone*

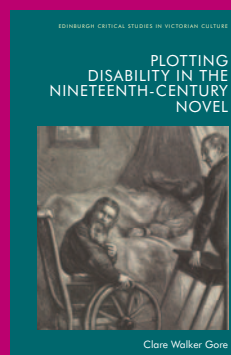
*I might start to understand how to knit together
the broken chimney pots, power lines, half-built estates*

*and ring-road into something I could hold for a moment
and understand. There is something I keep returning to*

*and keep missing—I put my hands on the stone and listen
to my own breathing: dribbling cold gravel over cold ground.*



PLOTTING DISABILITY IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY NOVEL



Wilkie Collins's 1875 sensational thriller *The Law and the Lady* is perhaps best known today for featuring one of the first female detectives in the genre, the enterprising Valeria Macallan, on a quest to clear her husband of the murder of his first wife.

More startling for the modern reader, however, are Valeria's interactions with the chief witness for the defence, the wheelchair-using Miserrimus Dexter, whose deft manipulations and subversions of Valeria's ideas about disability enable him to throw her off the scent of his guilt for much of the novel. Not just feminised by disability, but choosing to deck himself in pink silk and bracelets, not merely associated with the Gothic, but going so far as to kit out his incongruously suburban manor house with skeletons and the tanned skin of a French marquis, he

appears to Valeria first in an intimidating display of physical strength – ‘a fantastic and frightful apparition [...] half man, half chair’ – only to cast himself on their next meeting as pathetic, a ‘poor solitary creature, cursed with a frightful deformity. How pitiable! how dreadful! [...] Please pity me.’ Neither the monstrous nor the sentimental representation can really survive contact with the other, and Collins’s plotting ends up suggesting that neither is more than a red herring when it comes to understanding this utterly disruptive minor character, whose antics frequently threaten to steal the show altogether. Valeria’s ‘embarrassment’, perhaps mirrored in the reader’s, comes not so much from any break with novelistic conventions around disability on Miserrimus’s part, but rather from the fact that he deliberately draws upon them so outrageously, so variously, and so obviously to his own ends.

Miserrimus’s characterisation was seen as sufficiently subversive by the editor of the *Graphic* magazine, in which the novel was first serialised, for one scene to be censored without Collins’s consent (and to his all-too vocal dismay). Yet I would argue that we need to read it not as somehow ahead of its time, but as quintessentially of its time; it is only by recognising the disability plots which Collins invokes and subverts in his treatment of Miserrimus that we can interpret this character’s role. As I set about tracing these, I came to see that although disabled characters generally exist at the periphery of the Victorian novel, they perform vital narrative work from that position. It’s often been suggested that the Victorian novel reflected an increasingly democratic and capitalist age by throwing open the question of who might be worth writing a novel about; in my book, I argue that disabled characters act as test cases who push the limits of the

nineteenth-century novel’s inclusivity, and lay bare its organising structures. I found that while the attribution of the social identity of disability narratively disables characters from performing certain roles, it simultaneously – as in the case of Miserrimus Dexter – enables them to perform others. Plotting disabled characters across the field of nineteenth-century fiction, I came to the conclusion that in highly various ways, novels need disability in order to function, paradoxically depending on the supposed dysfunction of these characters to keep the wheels of the plot turning.

Clare Walker Gore is a Junior Research Fellow at Trinity College, Cambridge. You can hear her talking more about the book on Radio 3’s *Free Thinking* episode on ‘Defining Disability’, at: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/m000p02b>

Clare Walker Gore, *Plotting Disability in the Nineteenth Century Novel* (Edinburgh University Press, 2020)



On 11 December 1920, the South African writer, novelist and intellectual Olive Schreiner, aged 65, died in her sleep in the historic port city of Cape Town. Buried in the former mining town of Kimberley, Schreiner was later to be exhumed and buried atop Buffelskop Mountain near Cradock – where she wrote at least a significant part of her most widely known work of literary fiction, *The Story of an African Farm* (1883).

To commemorate a century since Schreiner's death, the English Faculty hosted a virtual roundtable workshop organised by PhD students Benjamin Klein and Joe Shaughnessy. The workshop reflected on the rich and complex legacy of Schreiner, and mapped horizons for future scholarship and interest. Attendees from several time zones were treated to a reading by Catilin Stobie (Leeds) of her poem 'Striking Rocks', inspired by her journey up Buffelskop. The roundtable, chaired by Christopher Warnes (Cambridge), invited discussion between Jade Munslow Ong (Salford), Elleke Boehmer (Oxford), and Carolyn Burdett (Birkbeck) to reflect on their varied engagements with Schreiner and her works. Munslow Ong spoke to Schreiner's critical legacy as a feminist, anti-imperialist, and radical thinker, whilst expanding on her own recent intervention to situate Schreiner as an inaugurating figure of modernism in southern Africa. Boehmer explored the salience of the Southness in Schreiner – the grounding of her writing in the far southern hemisphere – and drew these into a short reading of *The Story of an African Farm*. Burdett's

reflections took attendees through her archival work as part of a small editorial team producing new scholarly editions of Schreiner's works for Edinburgh University Press, and the light that Schreiner's archive sheds on her shifting personal and intellectual networks.

The workshop concluded with an open Q&A, in which audience members prompted further discussion on the



granularity of Schreiner's writings, her common reading as an interstitial figure both Victorian and profoundly modernist, and the explosion of recent scholarship recognising Schreiner as an illuminating writer for ecocritics and

environmental historians. We also paid attention to Schreiner's anti-racist writings, shaped and developed over the course of her life by her sustained engagement with radical politics. The workshop was a lively and enjoyable afternoon on one of southern Africa's most prolific literary voices. The organisers received much positive feedback.

Benjamin Klein, Fitzwilliam College and
Joe Shaughnessy, Jesus College

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9

9 West Road Magazine

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