

centre for material texts

annual report 2016-17

introduction

The Cambridge Centre for Material Texts was established by the English Faculty Board in July 2009 to push forward critical, theoretical, editorial and bibliographical work in a lively field of humanities research. Addressing a huge range of textual phenomena and traversing disciplinary boundaries that are rarely breached by day-to-day teaching and research, the Centre fosters the development of new perspectives, practices and technologies that will transform our understanding of the way that texts of many kinds have been embodied and circulated. This report summarizes the activities of the Centre in its eighth year.

The Centre continued to go from strength to strength in 2016-17. In particular, we were delighted that the English Faculty incorporated a material texts element into another of its appointments, with the result that we will be welcoming **Jessica Berenbeim**, a medievalist who works at the intersection between visual and documentary culture, to Cambridge in October 2017. The **History of Material Texts Seminar** turned experimental in 2016-17, offering a series of workshops and site visits in addition to the usual seminar format; these allowed us to take account of some wonderful exhibitions, including *Colour: The Art and Science of Illuminated Manuscripts*, lead-curated by **Stella Panayotova** at the Fitzwilliam Museum, and *Curious Objects* at the University Library, lead-curated by **Jill Whitelock**. And there was a string of extraordinary conferences and colloquia taking on numerous aspects of textual embodiment. Among the most notable were ‘**The Children’s Book as Material Object**’, held at the Faculty of Education, and the CMT’s conference ‘**Newes from Nowhere: On the Workes of John Taylor, The Water-Poet**’. Accounts of these and other events are included in the present report.



2016-17 saw another stream of inventive small exhibitions in the English Faculty display cabinets, originally acquired by the Centre as part of **Abigail Brundin**’s AHRC-funded project on the Grand Tour, a collaboration with the National Trust. The cases have now been joined by a touchscreen display that allows additional dimensions of sound and vision to be built into the exhibitions. Among the shows staged as part of a programme

overseen by **Hester Lees-Jeffries** were displays relating to the Black Arts Movement, Jane Austen’s *Sanditon*, Jeremy Prynne at 80, and twentieth-century avant-garde magazines.

I committee

The Centre is run by a Director (currently **Jason Scott-Warren**) and a Steering Committee. In 2016-17 the committee comprised: **Anne Alexander** (Digital Humanities Network), **Nicolas Bell** (Trinity), **Abigail Brundin** (MML), **Sarah Cain** (English), **Stefano Castelvechi** (Music), **Orietta da Rold** (English), **Mina Gorji** (English), **Alison Knight** (CRASSH), **Hester Lees-Jeffries** (English), **Stella Panayotova** (Fitzwilliam Museum), **Suzanne Paul** (University Library), **Paul Russell** (ASNC), **Anne Toner** (English), **Tessa Webber** (History), and **Andrew Zurcher** (English). During the year, **Anne McLaughlin** (Parker Library), **Laura Moretti** (AMES) and **Mark Purcell** (University Library) agreed to join the committee. The committee met twice this year, in November 2016 and April 2017.

An Advisory Committee oversees the Centre's activities. Current members are: **Mary Beard** (Classics), **Simon Franklin** (Slavonic Studies), **Robert Gordon** (Italian), **David McKitterick** (History/Wren Library), **Rosamond McKitterick** (History), **John Rink** (Music), **Jim Secord** (History and Philosophy of Science), **Nicholas Thomas** (Anthropology), **John Thompson** (Sociology), **David Trotter** (English), **Mark Turin** (Anthropology), and **Alexandra Walsham** (History).

II website

The website sets out the aims of the Centre, reports back on conferences and colloquia, advertises news and events, and publicizes the research interests and activities of its members.

In 2016-17, one new item was added to the 'Gallery' space on the website. This was entitled 'Reclaiming the Legends: Myth and the Black Arts Movement', and coincided with an exhibition in the CMT exhibition space.

The **blog** received 13 new contributions across the academic year, on subjects including artists' books at the Venice Biennale; the Cairo Genizah; book-covers and authorial embarrassment; early modern masque programmes; and the science of illuminated manuscripts. Members of the CMT who wish to blog should contact Jason Scott-Warren (jes1003).

The CMT **Facebook page**, which provides broader publicity for the website, has now broken a crucial barrier and garnered more than 1000 'like's. The CMT's **Twitterfeed** has 424 followers and has issued 748 tweets. Twitter and Facebook feeds on the website continue to make these social media engagements visible to members and visitors.

III events and activities

Seminars



The Seminar in the History of Material Texts, convened by **Dunstan Roberts**, **Jason Scott-Warren** and **Andrew Zurcher**, held the following meetings:

- 19th October** **Matthew Symonds (UCL/CELL)** introduces the Archaeology of Reading in Early Modern Europe Project and the Digital Bookwheel (<http://www.bookwheel.org/viewer/>) (Board Room, Faculty of English)
- 30 November** Guided tour of the Fitzwilliam Museum exhibition 'Colour: The Art and Science of Illuminated Manuscripts', in the company of curator **Stella Panayotova**.
- 30 January** Guided tour of the Cambridge University Library exhibition 'Curious Objects', in the company of lead curator **Jill Whitelock**, followed by discussion.
- 6 March** **Sarah Bull (HPS)**, 'The Medical Book in the Nineteenth Century: From MS Casebooks to Mass Plagiarism' (Milstein Seminar Room, University Library)
- 5 May** **Austen Saunders and Julia Smith (Oxford)**, 'Collating early modern printed texts: the Traherne Digital Collator' (Milstein Seminar Room, University Library)
- 5 June** **Sophie Seita (Queens', Cambridge)**, 'A Century of Avant-Garde Little Magazines: An Introduction' (Board Room, Faculty of English)

Cambridge Medieval Palaeography Workshop

Convenors: Teresa Webber, Orietta Da Rold, Suzanne Paul, Sean Curran and David Ganz.

The Cambridge Medieval Palaeography Workshop is a forum for informal discussion on medieval script and scribal practices, and on the presentation, circulation and reception of texts in their manuscript contexts. Each workshop focuses upon a particular issue, usually explored through one or more informal presentations and general discussion.

This year the workshop held three meetings:

Friday 28 April 2017, 2-4pm, Faculty of English SR24

Analyzing scribal technique: the perspective of a practitioner

An informal workshop on scribal techniques in the writing of the formal book-script, *littera textualis*, in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries, led by the scribe **Paul Antonio**, focusing upon examples from the composite music manuscript, the Montpellier Codex (Montpellier, Bibliothèque de Médecine, H 196).

Friday 5 May 2017, 2-4pm Faculty of English SR24

Late-medieval manuscript dissemination

Phil Knox (Faculty of English) 'Tracking manuscripts of the *Roman de la rose* in late-medieval Britain: approaches and problems'

Friday 12 May 2017, 2-4pm Cambridge University Library (Milstein Seminar Room)

Analyzing parchment and binding structures: the perspective of a conservator

This was an informal workshop on parchment and binding structures of medieval manuscripts in the University Library, led by **Edward Cheese**, informed by his observations while working on these manuscripts as a conservator.

Wednesday 16th November, day symposium

‘Scribal Ingenuity in Early Modern Europe’ (Trinity Hall/Magdalene)

Convenors: Dr Alexander Marr and Professor Sachiko Kusakawa

A workshop organised by project members from *Genius Before Romanticism: Ingenuity in Early Modern Art and Science* and *Making Visible: The visual and graphic practices of the early Royal Society*.

9.15-10.30 Session 1

Chair Richard Serjeantson

Angus Vine, ‘Filing, Ingenuity and the Scribal Organization of Knowledge’

Jonathan Gibson, ‘Ingenuity and Italic in Elizabethan Signatures’

11.00-13.00 Session 2

Chair Alex Marr

Jan Loop, ‘Ingenious Interpreters. Early Modern Struggles with Arabic Scripts’

Andrew Zurcher, ‘Penning Parcels: Managing Early Modern Manuscripts’

Matthew Collins, ‘Seeing the Animal in the Parchment, and the Parchment on the Animal’

14.00-15.45 ‘Calligraphic Ingenuity’: demonstration of letter-forms by professional scribe **Paul Antonio**

16.15 to 17.00 Viewing of Pepys’ collection of calligraphy manuals as well as early manuscript specimens with Humfrey Wanley’s comments.

Pepys Library, Magdalene College (**Jane Hughes and Catherine Sutherland**)

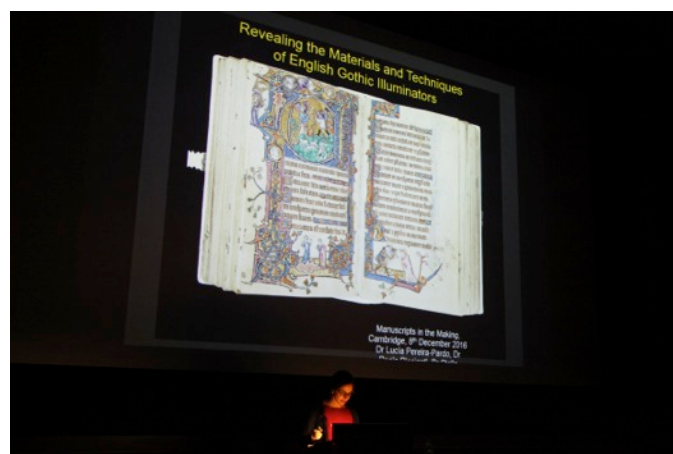


Manuscripts in the Making: Art and Science (8-10 December 2016)

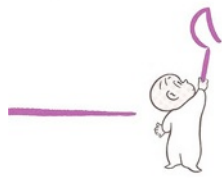
Supported by AMARC and the Samuel H. Kress Foundation, this international conference was organised by the Fitzwilliam Museum's Department of Manuscripts and Printed Books (www.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk/colour/conference). It accompanied the Museum's bicentenary exhibition COLOUR: The Art and Science of Illuminated Manuscripts (30 July 2016-2 January 2017), extending its disciplinary, thematic, chronological and geographical span. Over the three days, forty-two papers were presented within thirteen sessions by sixty-two speakers, many collaborating within cross-disciplinary teams. In addition to Western illumination, the sessions included papers on Byzantine, Islamic and Mesoamerican manuscripts as well as panel paintings, frescos, textiles, ceramics and architecture. Many papers combined recent art-historical and scientific discoveries with insights offered by historical research on the production and trade of materials, the development of medieval optics or the social and economic circumstances in which the original works were created.

The two biggest lecture theatres of Cambridge University's Chemistry Department welcomed over 230 delegates, including leading experts in a wide range of fields and a large number of students. The conference created a forum for the exchange of ideas, the questioning of methodologies and the exploration of innovative approaches to cross-disciplinary research as well as opportunities to forge new collaborations. The posters session allowed students and young scholars to present their work-in-progress and engage in discussions. The overwhelmingly positive feedback reflects the considerable value of new encounters between experts in vastly different fields. The conference is described as 'a triumph of collaboration between the hard and soft sciences' and 'a true trail-blazer in cross-disciplinary research.'

The papers are now being edited by **Stella Panayotova** and **Paola Ricciardi** for publication in two volumes by Harvey Miller/Brepols, due to appear in November 2017 and February 2018. Many of the posters will be published in the open-access journal *Heritage Science* by the end of 2017. These publications will supplement the exhibition catalogue (*COLOUR: The Art and Science of Illuminated Manuscripts*, ed. S. Panayotova [Harvey Miller/Brepols, 2016]), whose original print run and reprint sold out during the exhibition.



The Children's Book as Material Object



There wasn't any moon, and Harold needed a moon for a walk in the moonlight.

On 10 May 2017, a beautiful sunny day, a large group of diehards shut itself up in a couple of rooms in Cambridge's Faculty of Education to discuss 'The Children's Book as Material Object'. Events were initiated by a richly detailed keynote from **Philip Nel**, who took on Crockett Johnson's *Harold and the Purple Crayon*, which he read as a development of Paul Klee's ideas about taking a line for a walk. Exploring every conceivable context including the history of crayons, the development of TV shows that encouraged children to write on the screen (using their 'winky dink kits'), and the demands of offset chromolithography, he revealed how intricate was the construction of *Harold*. He also disinterred a subtle racial politics from Harold's 10% brown skin, which some readers read as white and some as black. This ambiguity perhaps tied up with Johnson's activities in the civil rights movement, for which he was under FBI investigation at the time that he was writing his book.

After this, the conference moved into parallel sessions. The one I attended took on the theme of play and interaction. **Jacqueline Reid-Walsh** delved into the history of playable media, showing some wonderful [seventeenth- and eighteenth-century lift-the-flap books](#) that allowed children to turn Adam into Eve, and Eve into a mermaid. **Sandra Williams** took us into the world of the *-ology* series (*Pirateology*, *Dragonology* etc), bejewelled books that include all kinds of games that (in practice) lure their young readers into digressive play. The investigation of the responses of real schoolkids was also a feature of the final paper in the panel, in which **Anne Neely** and **Noelle Yoo** reported back on responses to their dinky 3D-printed posable figures of *Elephant and Piggie*, from the popular series by Mo Willems. If the book starts off as a self-contained reading experience, it has an afterlife in play, during which new stories are set loose.

After lunch, a second parallel session kicked off with **Debbie Pullinger** and **Lisa Kirkham** thinking (with help from Heidegger) about the differences between the tactile text of the physical book and the uncontained realm of the ebook. **Naomi Hamer** took on the proliferation of museums based on children's books and children's authors, noting that their curatorial aesthetic (images framed on walls, no touching please!) was radically incompatible with books that beg to be touched. And **Tyler Shores** explored the (mostly unsatisfactory) effort to translate comics to the ereader screen; the process of adapting a complex graphic medium to a new platform is presenting severe teething difficulties. All three accounts raised important questions about remediation, and how well books survive when they are translated to new environments.



The last, plenary session of the day had four papers. **Sophie Defrance**, from the University Library, discussed the blurred lines between

children's books and children's toys and games in the library's collections. **Carl F. Miller** called attention to the extraordinary power of literary prizes in the children's book world, and noted that awards of comparable gravitas for ebooks have yet to emerge. **Jen Aggleton** reported on the responses of young readers to a set of illustrated novels, charting the process by which these 9/10-year-olds were awakened to the aesthetic pleasures of a well-crafted book. And **Zoe Jaques** took us deeper into the borderland between books and toys, where a variety of book-like 'scriptive things' create severe problems both of categorisation and of shelving.

Proceedings were wrapped up with a round-table, which offered an opportunity for broader reflection on the category of the scriptive thing and on the seeming self-containment of the book. For me, the day came neatly full circle, sending me back to the opening meditation on *Harold and the Purple Crayon*, which had revealed above all the extraordinary artfulness of the book's construction. Modern children's books, following *Harold*, are often triumphs of choreography, in which text and image work interact in very sophisticated ways. They are masterful in their handling of gaps and silences, teasing the child reader to make the necessary inferences (often with prompting from a nearby adult). And they constantly reinvent the book, offering new shapes and sizes and graphic conventions so as to pitch readers into weird and unpredictable worlds. It struck me that one of the reasons that we feel so nostalgic about children's books is because they are so literary. They offer an intense foretaste of grown-up poems, plays and novels, in which the rules of the game are often similarly unclear, the outcomes deliciously unpredictable.

Report by **Jason Scott-Warren**. The conference was organised by **Jen Aggleton** and **Jessica Lim**, and was part-funded by the CMT.



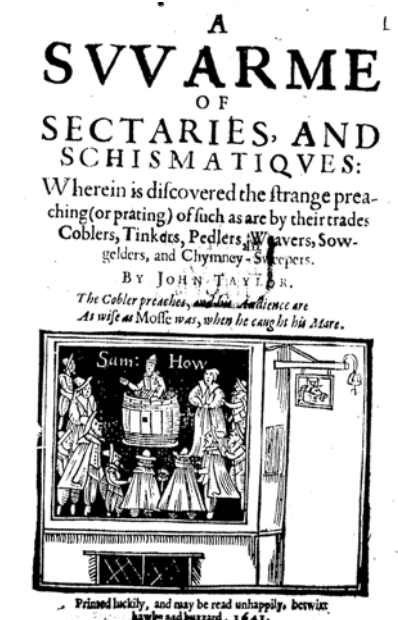
Newes from No Place: A Conference Upon the Works of John Taylor, the Water-Poet



On 14-15 September 2017, the CMT in association with the University of Southampton ran a conference entitled 'Newes from No Place', on the life and works of John Taylor, the Water-Poet (1578-1653). Held at Gonville and Caius College, it featured thirteen speakers who offered many different perspectives on Taylor's gargantuan oeuvre. We came together in the belief that Taylor, a self-professed amphibian who was at once a boatman on the river Thames (the equivalent of the London cab driver of today) and a hugely prolific writer, was an extraordinary figure in extraordinary times. Our aim was to set this incessant traveller in motion again, to see what he had to say to literary critics and cultural historians in the twenty-first century.

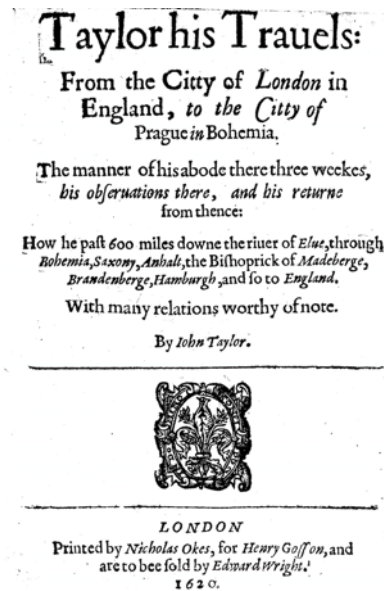
Proceedings were initiated by Bernard Capp (Warwick), author of a magisterial survey of Taylor's career, who reconsidered Taylor's output during the Civil War years of the 1640s. Driven out of London for his Royalist sympathies, by 1643 Taylor found himself in Oxford, defending the King's cause in pamphlets so numerous that the printing presses were unable to keep up with them. Analysing those pamphlets afresh, Capp concluded that they were not the kind of thing that might convince an adversary, but were intended to boost Royalist morale, at the same time as they settled scores with individual adversaries. One particularly resonant concern of Taylor's was 'fake news'; some of his pamphlets peddled their own spoof stories, while others attempted to set the record straight through first-hand reportage. After Capp had offered this wide-angle view, Abigail Shinn (Goldsmiths, University of London) homed in on one pamphlet, *The Conversion, Confession, Contrition, Coming to Himselfe, & Advice, of a Mis-led, Ill-bred, Rebellious Roundhead* (1643). Drawing on Andrew McRae's argument about the financial productivity of Taylor's journeying, Shinn read this satire on a convert to puritanism as an attack on unproductive travel—spinning in circles around a 'round head'. Parodying the puritan practice of 'sermon-gadding' to hear particular preachers, a staple element in spiritual life-writing of the period, Taylor's *Roundhead* displays an inordinate movement linked with madness and vagrancy. Shinn showed us how that movement registers in Taylor's style, which starts gadding wildly in imitation of its subject.

In her paper on 'John Taylor, playfulness and nationhood', Ros King (Southampton) celebrated Taylor's mobility, as a counterweight to any received picture of the early modern period as a time of stasis and social conservatism. In travelling, Taylor was finding out what it meant to be English (or British) in his day, but at the same time he was remaking social relations and experimenting with the more horizontal ties that could be created by urban life and the marketplace of print. His ability to celebrate the everyday and to overturn hierarchies (as when he got a pair of schoolboys, rather than aristocrats or men of letters, to supply the commendation for a book) points to a new vision of the social order. Challenging us to think counterfactually, King asked whether a more Taylorian Britain might not have had to endure the revolution of the 1640s. She was followed by Ariel Hessayon (Goldsmiths), who began by announcing that he was not going to give the paper he had intended to give, because he no longer believed that the work he had planned to discuss was written by Taylor. He went on to demonstrate that numerous works of the 1640s and 1650s have been ascribed to Taylor on the flimsiest foundations (by whom is not yet clear). Taylor's authorship has been inferred from the most tenuous evidence: a reused woodblock, some promising-looking initials ('J.T.' or 'T.J.') on the title-page, or the presence of Taylorian tricks of style that could have been borrowed by any able satirist. Invoking the spectre of the Ranter debates of the 1980s, in which historians speculated that a well-known Civil War splinter group was no more than the 'fake news' whipped up by the conservatives of the day, Hessayon asked whether we would prefer a maximal Taylor, who encompasses everything that has been pinned on him, however dubiously, or a minimal Taylor, who might have written none of 'his' works? Finding the golden mean between these extremes is going to take some time.



The first day was rounded off by three papers, the first by Anthony Ossa-Richardson (Southampton) on Taylor's learning. Drawing on Taylor's early poetic credo in *The Nipping and Snipping of Abuses* (1614), Ossa-Richardson noted his opposition to mimicry; Taylor thought that the poet should be a creator-figure who produces something from nothing, and not a mere copyist or translator. He went on to analyse Taylor's nonsense, showing how one batch of nonsense (in the 1651 *Nonsense Upon Sence*) creates its nonsensicality by cutting and pasting lines from an earlier, less nonsensical collection (the *Mad verse, sad verse, glad verse and bad verse cut out, and slenderly sticht together* of 1644). Taylor's habits of plagiarism and self-plagiarism thus raise important questions about his aesthetic. Adam Smyth (Oxford) took up the baton with a consideration of Taylor and error, noting his playful way with errata lists and linking it with his wider 'print-shop presence', his determination to be there ('an unsilenceable voice') in every aspect of his books. The idea of error is also linked with wandering, and with Taylor's identity as a traveller whose whole oeuvre is constitutively erroneous; Smyth drew attention to the strange miscellaneity of the 1630 folio *All the Workes*, its resistance to order or organization, and the sense that its binding together of so many miscellaneous

pamphlets is also a form of scattering and dispersal. Finally in this session, Jason Scott-Warren (Cambridge) proposed an 'Exuvial Taylor', drawing on the works of the anthropologist Alfred Gell to consider the writer in terms of the metaphorical 'skins' that he shed or re-inhabited during his lifetime. This led to a view of Taylor as a writer devoted to blazing or blazoning—the trumpeting of his own reputation and that of a range of bizarre things (geese, clean linen, twelve-pence, hemp-seed). But, Scott-Warren suggested, Taylor's blazings are always ironic, and are thus symptomatic of a print marketplace that can put a celebrity author's name into everyone's mouth, but cannot ensure that they pay for his wares.



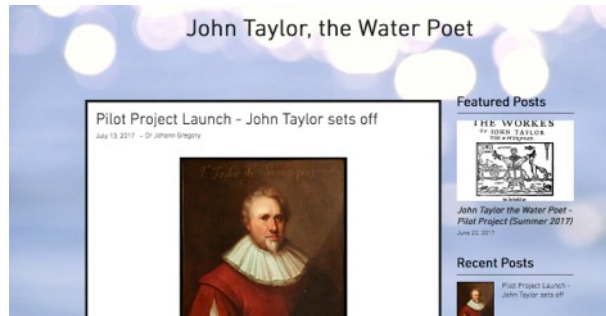
Day 2 struck out across Europe with a paper by Kirsty Rolfe (Queen Mary) on Taylor's imagined geographies, setting his 1620 journey to Prague in the context of the news culture of the Thirty Years' War. At this sticky political moment, when the appetite for news was at its height, James I issued a proclamation against the excess of licentious speech in matters of state—a classic case of an act of censorship that could not bring itself to say exactly what it wanted to censor. Unpicking Taylor's satire on 1620s news culture, Rolfe suggested his sharp awareness of the intricacies of the circulation of information, and his disingenuousness in claiming to stand outside it. Jemima Matthews (KCL) brought us back to London and to Taylor's Thames, including his involvement in the production of mayoral

pageants, in which the river was converted into a fantastical space of performance. Such entertainments had a long tradition of broaching serious matters in the guise of theatre, and Taylor's contribution to the genre, the 1634 *Triumphs of Fame and Honour*, was no exception, reminding the Mayor of his responsibilities to the river. Matthews set the pageant in relation to a variety of monopolistic schemes to exploit the river, showing how Taylor's pamphlet contributed to the representation of the Thames as a space of financial opportunity.

Andrew McRae (Exeter) and Alice Hunt (Southampton) presented papers that took us to opposite ends of Taylor's career. McRae took on the early works (meaning the 30-odd pamphlets that he published between 1612 and 1621), showing us how Taylor became the Water-Poet, a writer who rather than effacing his origins and his occupation chose to flaunt them. Taylor began as a surprisingly well-connected writer, but in his print wars with Fenner and Coryate came increasingly to define himself by his exclusion from elite literary circles. He was also relentlessly experimental, trying out numerous genres until he began to find his metier around 1620—at which time he also learnt to equate poetry with labour, in verse that represented a reinvention of georgic. Alice Hunt explored the Taylor of the 1650s, who was (after his ejection from London) no longer a Water-Poet, but a land-traveller undertaking a kind of existential journeying in search of the identity of the new, kingless Britain. Hunt noted the weariness of the late pamphlets, Taylor 'limping through the English countryside on a knackered nag'. But he had not lost his eye for the evocative detail, and his writing was subtle in its probing of political

allegiances. Exploring Taylor's evocation of the headless kingdom allows us to see that his royalism was not, and perhaps never had been, particularly reverend.

Our final session was opened by Will May (Southampton), who addressed itself to Taylor's place in the history of whimsy via a long-term history of nonsense. Drawing on Michael Dobson's suggestion that the history of English nonsense might be the history of works that use the word 'Basingstoke' for comic



effect, May excavated a notion of whimsy as a kind of fever of the brain—a fever that might be brought on by trying to trace the origins of the word 'whimsy' itself. Finally May set Taylor in a tradition of performative, public writer-eccentrics, including Thomas Hood and Marianne Moore. Altogether less whimsical was the concluding paper by Johann Gregory (Cardiff), reporting back on his recent project to live-tweet John Taylor's travels around Wales in 1652. This digital journeying was an innovative form of research that allowed Gregory to see where Taylor had elided aspects of his travels, raising questions about the faithfulness of seemingly spontaneous eyewitness accounts. But it was principally a form of public engagement that echoed Taylor's own projects, and suggested their ongoing vibrancy in the present day. Taylor has, we suspect, many travels left in him.

Anno Domini, 1650.

WHereas John Taylor doth intend to make a
*Progresse this Summer (hee knowes not when,
 or whither) to see some Friends in the Countrey, (hee
 knowes not who,) being certaine that his Journey and en-
 tertainments will bee (hee knowes not how;) and that hee
 purposeth to returne againe to London (hee knowes not
 what time;) and that hee intends to write a Relation of his
 perambulations (hee knowes wherefore:) That when hee
 doth give mee (or cause to bee delivered to mee) the said
 Relations aforesaid, that then I will freely give to him for
 the same, in good English money, the summe of some-
 what; though neither my selfe, or hee, knowes how much
 or little, that somewhat may bee: To the which engage-
 ment I have subscribed my name and dwelling: Where,
 if at his returne, hee doe kindly finde mee, hee shall
 friendly feele mee.*

CMT catalogathon

The 1st CMT/CUL Catalogathon, a gathering of volunteer early modernists, took place on 24 May in the University Library. Born from a frustration with the state of cataloguing of rare books, the Catalogathon aimed to add copy-specific information to the existing, skeletal entries in the online catalogue for as many sixteenth- and seventeenth-century books as possible, as quickly as possible. In the end, the team that we assembled managed to process just over 200 books, all but 40 of which contained some interesting evidence of use. Thanks to everyone who took part, and to the staff at the UL who supported the event so generously. We hope to run similar events in future—please get in touch if you would like to be involved.



Hero Chalmers, Tom Hamilton, Dunstan Roberts and Lucille Munoz.



Emily Dourish, David Pearson, Becky Tomlin, Edward Wilson-Lee and Micha Lazarus.

Selected CMT Exhibitions at the English Faculty, 9 West Rd

Reclaiming the Legends: Myth and the Black Arts Movement

Notes for an exhibition in the English Faculty Building, first floor, January-February 2017, curated by Alex Assaly

*Dropping his history books,
a young man, lined against the horizon
like an exclamation point with nothing to assert,
stumbles into the dance.*

– “Death as History” by Jay Wright



RECLAIMING THE LEGENDS: MYTH & THE BLACK ARTS MOVEMENT finds inspiration in the anti-historical world described by Wright. Its mysterious dance is the “cabinet of curiosities”: the defiance of categorical boundaries, the assembling of varied objects, the powerfully mythic rather than the historical, the rhythmic rather than the calculated. The exhibition also “plead[s]” like Wright’s dance. It asks visitors to abandon traditional epistemologies and participate in the microcosm it has created. This exhibition-world is a miscellany of anthropological & egyptological studies, revisionist histories, spiritualist & esoteric writings, books of poetry, and music record. It intimates some organizational principle, but finds time operating synchronically. Traditional

chronology, here, is corrupted: Amiri Baraka, Sonia Sanchez, Lorenzo Thomas, Bob Kaufman, Ishmael Reed, David Henderson, and Marvin X appear alongside Gerald Massey, George James, and Theodore P. Ford. Like Wright’s dance, its form is ritualized and its theme is mythical.

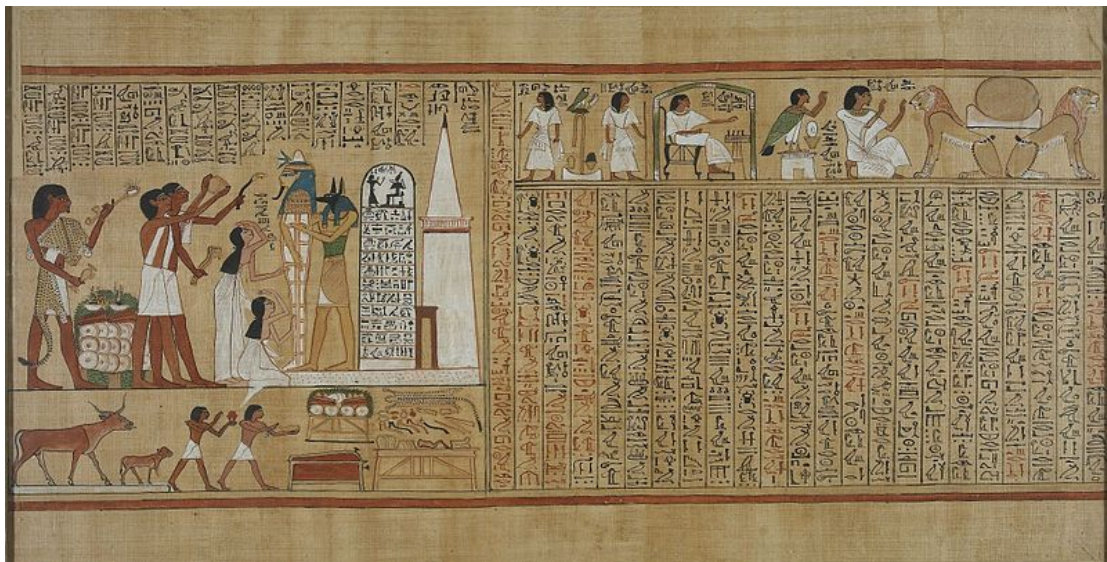
Although the exhibition looks above and beyond “history” (“visionary-wise”), it is from there where we begin. The symbolic birth of BAM occurred in the spring of 1965. Not long after the assassination of Malcom X, LeRoi Jones [Amiri Baraka] (1934-2014) moved from Manhattan’s Lower East Side to Harlem, where he, Larry Neal and others co-organised the Black Arts Repertory Theater / School. BAM (its artists, journals, and institutions) would soon spread across a number of major American cities—Detroit, Chicago, Washington D.C., San Francisco, and New York—; however, under repressive government measures like COINTELPRO, President Nixon’s strategy of pushing Black Capitalism as a response to Black

Power, and an ideological shift towards Marxism, BAM began to decline by around 1974.

Although BAM was largely a decentralized movement, its artists and thinkers did have a common political foundation: nationalism. James Edward Smethurst writes, “the common thread between nearly all the groups was a belief that African Americans were a people, a nation, entitled to (needing, really) self-determination of its own destiny” (15). BAM’s socio-political concerns bespeak of the radical significance of their historical moment. Yet, perhaps unexpectedly, “history” (as such) did not figure in the poetry and drama of BAM. In fact, many of BAM’s thinkers equated history, as Wright states, with “death.” History was the story and culture propounded by the tyrannical power of the white-West. BAM and Black Power politics wanted to change or, better, to drop “history” altogether. Neal writes, “the cultural values inherent in western history must either be radicalized or destroyed.” What was needed, Neal continues, was “a whole new system of ideas”: a system that would be alternative, black, and “mythic.”

The poetry and drama of BAM often served to build this alternative myth-world. In BAM’s literature, allusions to Akhenaten, Moses, Zipporah, warriors, gods, spirits, and orishas appear with more frequency than figures of recent history (Patrice Lumumba and Malcom X included). Symbols like the ankh or Egyptian hieroglyphs can often be seen integrated in artworks or poems. Ancient Egypt and Ethiopia regularly appear as the settings of a prosperous black past, now suppressed by white historians. If “history” distorted and oppressed, “myth” empowered. For BAM, this mythic past was also as an image of the future. Time, in the alter-world, functioned synchronically: its occupants could freely move backwards (to the glory she/he once was) or forwards (to the glory she/he will be). In infinity, as Sun Ra states “it doesn’t matter which way you go”—you will find free and everlasting life in all directions.

RECLAIMING THE LEGENDS: MYTH & THE BLACK ARTS MOVEMENT is a journey through the synchronic alter-world of BAM.

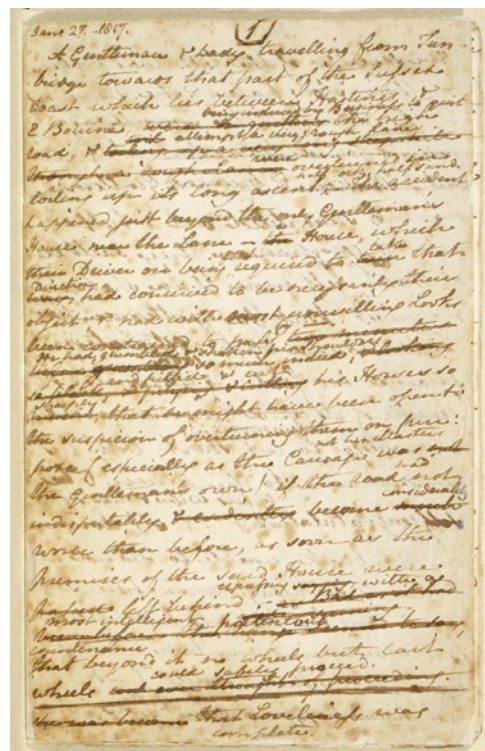


Jane Austen's *Sanditon*

Curated by Anne Toner, February-April 2017

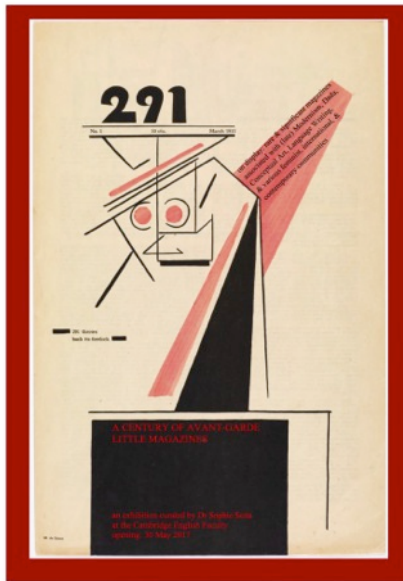
To coincide with a conference on Austen's last work, *Sanditon*—in the bicentenary year of Austen's death and that of this last, unfinished work—the CMT exhibited material tracing the public life and textual forms of *Sanditon*, with items loaned by the University Library and by King's College, from the collection of David Gilson, Austen's bibliographer. The exhibition explored the connection between King's College and the Austen family, and began with the first public reference to *Sanditon* in James Edward Austen-Leigh's Memoir of his aunt (1871), through to the first published edition (1925), the first facsimile edition (1975) and other continued, illustrated and translated editions, up to the 2010 digital text, *Jane Austen Fiction Manuscripts*, displayed on the exhibition screen.

Intersecting with the English Faculty exhibition was another display hosted by the University Library. In the Entrance Hall, Austen letters held in different Cambridge collections—the UL, the Fitzwilliam Museum and King's—were exhibited together for the first time. Alongside these were items from the University Library, including first editions of Austen's fiction and books from the collection of Geoffrey Keynes (another Austen bibliographer), among which is one of the few books bearing Austen's signature.



A Century of Avant-Garde Little Magazines

Curated by Sophie Seita, May-June 2017



When scholars, readers, and practitioners hear the word ‘avant-garde’, they usually think of a group or individual, with an anti-institutional attitude, producing stylistically innovative work, often with political aims in mind, sometimes articulated aggressively against the mainstream, a competing aesthetic tendency, or the political establishment. This has led to a seemingly coherent set of now canonical avant-garde movements with key players and clear manifestos. But (and this is a significant but) most avant-gardes published and continue to publish their work in little magazines.

While magazines look like little books, they must be considered their own medium. Magazines circulate differently from books in their periodicity, and since they usually have multiple contributors, they invite us to think about a community of practice. The ‘little magazine’ is usually understood to be a publication with a small budget that has a small print run and thus also a relatively small audience, and often a short life-span. It is also frequently associated with experimental forms of writing, art, and publishing. But the little magazine is a ‘dream category’, as Robert Scholes and Clifford Wulfman aptly call it, and has as many exceptions as it has matches. The assumed ‘littleness’ of the ‘little magazine’, for example, is up for debate. Some magazine editors deliberately keep operations small and non-commercial out of a belief in artistic integrity and independence, or do so simply for lack of funds, others by contrast are convinced that a wider audience and the promotion of radical politics and aesthetics can indeed go hand in hand. Although historically little magazines are paired with formal experiment and the avant-garde, they also often promoted conservative and rear-guard agendas, or published avant-garde and so-called ‘mainstream’ materials side-by-side. Digital publishing, in turn, not only rattles the littleness of contemporary magazines, it has also made many historical and rare magazines available to a wider public and given these publications a new material afterlife.

Moving from literary communities active in the early twentieth century to those at the beginning of the twenty-first century, from letterpress print technologies to digital publishing and near-print forms like the PDF, this exhibition celebrates the multifarious contributions magazines have made not only to the development of an individual writer’s or artist’s oeuvre, but to numerous national and international avant-garde groupings, and to cultural, political, and aesthetic tendencies more broadly. The exhibition emphasizes the material richness and collaborative spirit of experimental publications and publishing communities, drawing attention to their innovations in design, typography, and aesthetic form, and to the collective work of avant-gardes. That is to say, avant-garde publishing networks encompass not only editors and contributors, but also printers, booksellers, patrons, archivists,

curators, scholars, reviewers, readers, and friends, all of whom play an important role in how a group or individual work travels across time, and shapes what we understand a particular aesthetic or political form to mean. Across a century, then, magazines demonstrate the culturally transformative power of small-press (print) publishing and continue to generate symbolic value for diverse literary communities.

IV selected publications by members of the Centre, 2016-17

Ruth Abbott, 'D. W. Griffith, Victorian Poetry, and the Sound of Silent Film', in *Writing, Medium, Machine: Modern Technographies*, ed. Sean Pryor and David Trotter (2016), 84-105

Gavin Alexander, 'The Problems with Old-Spelling Editions', in *A Handbook of Editing Early Modern Texts*, ed. Claire Loffman and Harriet Phillips (2017), 97-102

--- 'Martin Peerson and Greville's *Caelica*: From Lyric Sequence to Songbook', *Sidney Journal*, 35 (2017), 1-20

Richard Beadle, *Henry Bradshaw and the Foundations of Codicology: The Sandars Lectures 2015* (2017)

Patricia Boulhosa, 'Narratives and Documents', in *The Routledge Research Companion to the Medieval Icelandic Sagas*, ed. by Ármann Jakobsson and Sverrir Jakobsson (2017), 164-74

Abigail Brundin, multiple entries on books and manuscripts in *Madonnas and Miracles: The Holy Home in Renaissance Italy*, ed. Maya Corry, Deborah Howard, and Mary Laven (2017), 56-7; 91; 98-103; 172-4

--- 'Poesia come devozione: leggere le rime di Vittoria Colonna', in *Al crocevia della storia: poesia, religione e politica in Vittoria Colonna*, ed. Maria Serena Sapegno (2016), 161-75

Christopher Burlinson, 'Maecenas and "Oxford-Witts"', in *Re-evaluating the Literary Coterie*, ed. Will Bowers and Hannah Leah Crumme (2016), 35-51

--- 'The Single-Author Edition and Manuscript Miscellanies', in Claire Loffman and Harriet Phillips, eds, *A Handbook of Editing Early Modern Texts* (2017), 150-3

Theodor Dunkelgrün, 'When Solomon met Solomon: A Medieval Hebrew Bible in Victorian Cambridge', *Journal of the Bible and its Reception* 3:2 (2016), 205-53

--- 'The Humanist Discovery of Hebrew Epistolography', in Scott Mandelbrote and Joanna Weinberg, eds, *Jewish Books and their Readers: Aspects of the Intellectual Life of Christians and Jews in Early Modern Europe* (2016), 211-59

David Ganz, 'Early Medieval Display Scripts and the Problems of How We See Them', *Graphic Signs of Identity, Faith and Power in the Early Middle Ages*, ed. I. H. Garipzanov, C. Goodson, and H. Maguire (2017), 93-107

--- 'A Carolingian Confessional Prayer in Bibliotheca Apostolica Vaticana Reginensis 991', in *Felici curiositate: Studies in Latin Literature and Textual Criticism from Antiquity to the Twentieth Century in Honour of Rita Beyers* (2017), 421-435

--- 'Character and the Power of the Letter', in *Graphic Devices and the Early Decorated Book*, ed M. P. Brown, I Garipzanov, and B. Tilghman (2017)

Giacomo Giudici, 'The Writing of Renaissance Politics: Sharing, Appropriating, and Asserting Authorship in the Letters of Francesco II Sforza, Duke of Milan (1522-1535)', *Renaissance Studies* (DOI: 10.1111/rest12296)

Boris Jardine, 'State of the Field: Paper Tools',
<http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0039368117301875>

Lauren Kassell, with Natalie Kaoukji and Michael Mazière, *Casebooks: Work towards an Exhibition at Ambika P3* (2017)

Bonnie Lander Johnson, "'The blood of English shall manure the ground": The Almanac in *Richard II*'s Vision of Soil and Body Management', in Hilary Eklund, ed., *Ground-Work: Soil Science in Renaissance Literature* (2017)

--- and Bethany Dubow, 'Allegories of Creation: Glassmaking, Forests and Fertility in Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi*', *Renaissance Drama* 45 (2017), 107-37

Raphael Lyne, 'Editing Oft-Edited Texts: Annotating Shakespeare', in Claire Loffman and Harriet Phillips, eds, *A Handbook of Editing Early Modern Texts* (2017), 154-8

Daniel Margocsy, Mark Somos, and Stephen N. Joffe, 'Vesalius' *Fabrica*: A Report on the Worldwide Census of the 1543 and 1555 Editions', *Social History of Medicine* 30 (2017), 201-223

Francesca Middleton, 'Abusing text in the Roman and contemporary worlds', *Transformative Works and Cultures* 21 (2016)
<http://dx.doi.org/10.3983/twc.2016.0672>

Laura Moretti, *Recasting the Past: An Early Modern Tales of Ise for Children* (2016)

Subha Mukherji, "'A kind of conquest": The Erotics and Aesthetics of Italy in *Cymbeline*', in Chris Stamatakis and Enza di Francisci, eds, *Shakespeare and Italy: Transnational Exchange, Early Modern to Present* (2017)

Richard J. Oosterhoff, 'Lovers in Paratexts: Oronce Fine's Republic of Mathematics', *Nuncius* 31 (2016), 549-83; doi:10.1163/18253911-03103002

- “‘Secrets of Industry’ for ‘Common Men’: Charles de Bovelles and Early French Readerships of Technical Print’, in Sietske Fransen and Niall Hodson, eds, *Translating Early Modern Science* (2017), 207–29

- Ed Potten, “‘The library whereof the librarian is deceit’: Decoration and Double Meaning at Mount Stewart House’, in *Mount Stewart: National Trust Historic Houses & Collections Annual* (2017), 48–55

- Mark Purcell, *The Country House Library* (2017)

- Lucy Razzall, ‘Small chests and jointed boxes: Material Texts and the Play of Resemblance in Early Modern Print’, *Book 2.0* 7 (2017), 21–32

- “‘Curious statues so cunningly contrived’: Plato’s Silenus, Inwardness, and Inbetweenness’, in Paul Basu, ed., *The Inbetweenness of Things: Materializing Mediation and Movement Between Worlds* (2017), 232–49

- “‘Like to a title leafe’: Face, Surface, and Material Text in Early Modern England’, *Journal of the Northern Renaissance* 8 (2017) [online]

- Dunstan Roberts and Jason Scott-Warren, library catalogue of Armagill Waad, online at *Private Libraries in Renaissance England* (<https://plre.folger.edu>)

- Matthew Schilleman, ‘The Bureaucrat Inside: Kafka, Office Media, and the End of Authorship’, *symplokē* 24.1–2 (2016), 99–119

- Jason Scott-Warren, ‘Bookkeeping and Life-Writing Revisited: Accounting for Richard Stonley’, *Past and Present* 230, suppl. 11 (2016), 151–70

- ‘Meet the Chillesters: The Printed Counterfeit in Early Modern London’, *English Literary Renaissance* 46 (2016), 225–52

- ‘How Letters Matter’, *Huntington Library Quarterly* 79 (2016), 525–32

- Sophie Seita, ‘Tom Raworth’s Little Magazines: *Outburst*, *Before Your Very Eyes!*, and *Infolio*’, *Critical Quarterly*, 59 (2017), 11–33

- with Danny Snelson, ‘Lodging & Dislodging the Little Magazine: A Google Document Conversation in Fifteen Parts’, commissioned article for the print and digital magazine *Hotel* (April 2017)
<<http://partisanhotel.co.uk/Sophie-Seita-Danny-Snelson>>

- Michael J. Sullivan, ‘Tennyson and *The Golden Treasury*: A Rediscovered Revision Copy’, *Literary Imagination*, 18 (2016), 230–238

- ‘Alfred Tennyson and Frederick Goddard Tuckerman: An Omitted Page of Correspondence’, *Notes & Queries*, 64 (2017), 131–3

Teresa Webber, 'Cantor, Sacrist or Prior? The Provision of Books in Anglo-Norman England', in *Medieval Cantors and their Craft: Liturgy and the Shaping of History*, ed. K. A-M Buggy, A. B. Kraebel and M. Fassler (2017), 172-189

Hannah Yip, "The text and the occasion mingled together make a chequer-work, a mixture of black and white, mourning and joy": Visual Elements of the Printed Funeral Sermon in Early Modern England', in Antoinina Bevan Zlatar and Olga Timofeeva, eds, *What is an Image in Medieval and Early Modern England?*, *Swiss Papers in English Language and Literature*, 34 (2017)

Andrew Zurcher, 'Parting with 'Much We Know': Digital Editing and the Early Modern Text', in Claire Loffman and Harriet Phillips, eds, *A Handbook of Editing Early Modern Texts* (2017), 171-5

V the future

Plans for the coming year include a major international conference on the subject of paper, to be held in September 2018 as the culmination of Orietta da Rold's British Academy-funded project on medieval paper manuscripts. We are looking forward to a rich seminar programme, punctuated by more **catalogathons** and a couple of **masterclasses** in bookbinding to be delivered in November 2017 by **David Pearson**. We're hoping for further visits from the scribe **Paul Antonio**, both in association with the ongoing projects on *Genius Before Romanticism* and *Making Visible*, and in relation to the Global Palaeography initiative that is bringing together experts from across humanities departments and schools. And we hotly anticipate the publication of the first CMT-related book—a collection of essays entitled *Text, Food and the Early Modern Reader*, edited by **Jason Scott-Warren** and **Andrew Zurcher** and emerging from the CMT conference on the theme of 'Eating Words'. (If it still hasn't come out by September 2018, we will eat our words, with relish).



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